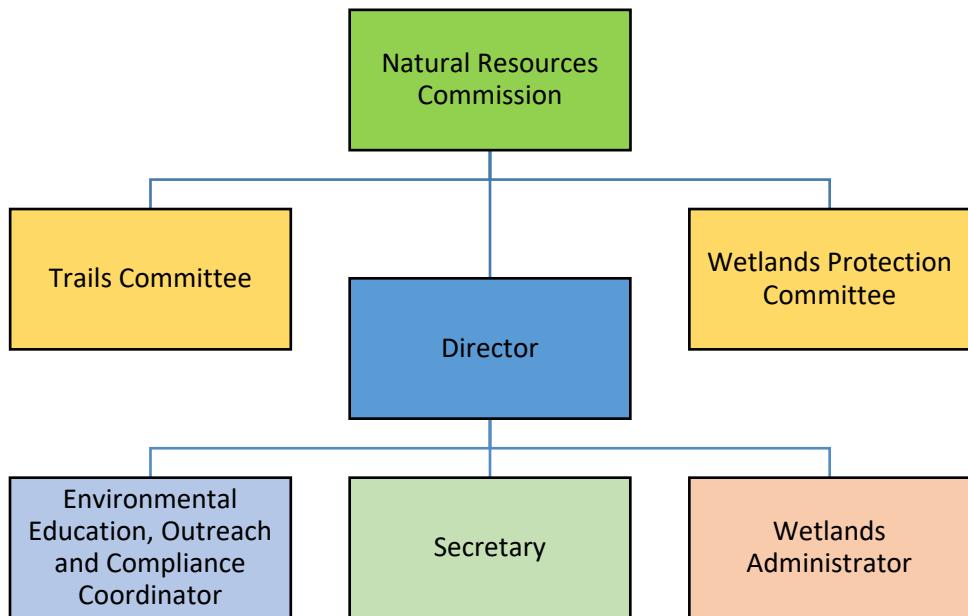

Natural Resources Commission



Mission Statement

It is the mission of the Natural Resources Commission to provide stewardship of, education about, and advocacy for the Town of Wellesley's parks, conservation, recreation and open space areas so the full value of the Town's natural assets can be passed onto future generations.



Department Description

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) consists of five elected members with staggered terms of three years. The Natural Resources Commission appoints the 5-member Wetlands Protection Committee for three-year terms and the 10-member Trails Committee for one-year terms. The Commission also appoints the Landscape Advisory Committee, the Long-Range Planning Committee, and other ad hoc committees as required.

The department is currently staffed by 4 full-time employees including the director, the wetlands administrator, secretary and environmental education outreach and compliance coordinator.

Office of the Natural Resources Commission

The NRC is charged with the statutory responsibilities of *Park Commissions, Conservation Commissions, Tree Wardens, Shade Tree and Pest Control Officers, and Town Forest Committees* under Massachusetts General Laws Chapters 40, 45, 87, 131 and 132. The NRC appoints and oversees the Wetlands Protection Committee and the Trails Committee.

The NRC, serving as the Conservation Commission for the Town, delegates to the five-member Wetlands Protection Committee (WPC) the power and authority to administer and enforce the Wetlands Protection Act and the Town Wetlands Protection Bylaw. The WPC is supported by the Wetlands Administrator.

The Wellesley Trails Committee promotes, develops, and maintains the town's trail system. There are 47 miles of trails in Town, 28 of which are marked and have accompanying descriptions. Departmental staff supports the Trails Committee in an administrative capacity.

Representatives from the NRC also serve on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), the Trails Committee, the Playing Fields Task Force, the Mobility Committee, and the 3R Working Group.

Accomplishments

The NRC is proud to report on progress in the following areas:

Climate Change

- Partnered with regional organizations to address gas leaks, protect trees and lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Participated in the Charles River Watershed Climate Compact to prepare and mitigate stormwater and flooding issues
- Participated in formation of the Town's Climate Action Plan
- Continued implementation of the Town's Unified and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) plan

Preservation of Tree Canopy

- Implemented the Town Forest Management Plan
- Continued the annual Tree Planting program for residents and on parkland
- Conducted initial analysis of the Town Tree Canopy
- Participated in the "MassTreeOrgs" group, an informal association of town and municipal organizations with responsibility for tree protection that meets to share information.

Sustainable Landscapes: Protecting Public Health through eco-friendly landscaping practices

- Supported Grow Green Wellesley's "Pollinate Wellesley" initiative to promote biodiversity through the planting of native species
- Supported State-wide pesticide reduction bills
- Continued the Town's Organic Integrated Pest Management policy on Town-owned lands, including playing fields and playgrounds

Active and Passive Recreation

- Designed and replaced Hunnewell Field (Aqueduct) Bathrooms
- Approved lighting fixture retrofit to replace outdated, energy-inefficient sports lights at the Diane Warren Field and the Hunnewell tennis courts
- Restored Perrin Park basketball courts, with the addition of two pickleball courts
- Advanced Morses Pond Shoreline Restoration: installation of nature-based shoreline reinforcements to stabilize slopes, protect trees, and reinforce public access points. Project includes removal of invasive species and planting of native species
- Trails Committee made maintenance and improvements, including:
 - Resumption of guided walks; initial trail restoration at Centennial Reservation and repair of trail map houses

Education, Outreach and Compliance

- Continued environmental educational outreach to schools, organizations, and the public through innovative programming, including outdoor learning classes and self-guided lessons
- Executed two popular town-wide Citizen Science projects
- Facilitated projects with Boy and Girl Scouts for program advancement, including invasives species management and path construction
- Created Wetlands protection educational materials (video and mailing) for the general public as well as properties under jurisdiction
- Follow-up and resolution on wetland violations and encroachments

Warrant Article Requests

The NRC anticipates submission of one Warrant Article associated with the Wetlands Protection Bylaw, Article 44. The current bylaw states that "*whoever violates any provision of this bylaw, regulations hereunder, or permits issued hereunder, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$300*". The attorney General has advised that fines must be specific, and not a range or "up-to" amount. The proposed change will correct this error by identifying a specific fine, and further defining what constitutes a violation.

FY2024 Goals

The following goals were identified at the NRC's annual retreat, held on October 3 and 11, 2020.

- Promote Environmental Stewardship and Education

- Preserve and Expand the Town’s Tree Canopy*
- Promote health and pollinator friendly landscapes on Town land and on private property⁺
- Ensure planning, preservation and maintenance of passive and active open spaces[⊗]
- Protect the Town’s surface, ground and drinking waters
- Continue efforts to repair Wellesley’s gas leaks
- Advocate for Legislation that supports these goals

Each of these goals relates to Action and Policy recommendations explicitly outlined in the Unified, Municipal Vulnerability or Climate Action Plans, including promoting protection and enhancement of the tree canopy, managing properties to promote habitat and biodiversity, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and raising public awareness about landscape best management practices by public and private property owners.

The FY24 Capital and Operating Budget requests allow the NRC to meet its statutory requirements as Park and Conservation Commission, including the enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act and bylaw. The funds will also enable the Commission to educate the public about the importance of Wellesley’s natural resources and support efforts to protect them through the *Grow Green Wellesley* campaign, allow regulatory advocacy including legislative and grass-roots support of environmental policies (waste reduction, gas leak repair, tree protection), and fund landscape and watershed improvements (public shade trees, well-maintained trails[¥], pesticide-free and pollinator friendly parks, and ecologically healthy and recreationally functional watersheds). The NRC will also leverage these funds and grant opportunities associated with the Town Forest Stewardship and Bird Habitat Plan[¥], the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness campaign: *Wellesley Will*, and grants such as the Accelerating Climate Resiliency Grant Program. The NRC also manages the Morses Pond Capital[¤] and Operating budgets, as outlined below.

Operating Budget Summary

The NRC has made every effort to minimize budget increases. The NRC Operating budget total increase of 2.10% includes an assumed 2% or 3% increases for all staff members, and modest increases in 5 expense categories (Other professional services, advertising, office supplies, travel and Trails improvements.) This budget is below the suggested guideline.

Similarly, the FY24 Morses Pond Operating Budget includes modest increases in expense categories. These increases will cover payroll increases and additional hours for harvesting manpower and machine maintenance, as well as additional consultation time with Ken Wagner, our professional lake manager. The total budget increase of \$4,500 results in a 2.98% increase from FY23 to FY24, under Advisory guidelines.

Revenue

The NRC receives filing fees for Administration of the Wetlands Protection Act and Wellesley’s local Wetlands Bylaw. The revenue received depends on both the number and type of permits submitted. The Department anticipates approximately \$15,000 in revenue for FY23. Total revenue from both State and local bylaw fees for FY22 was \$11,778.

Out of Guideline

Both the Departmental and Morses Pond budgets are within guideline.

*FY23 Capital Request of \$55,000 for Tree Planting and Management. This item is listed as a key action in the Unified and Climate Action Plans, and tree planting and protection will likely be a critical step in achieving the Town's greenhouse gas reduction goals.

+FY23 Capital Request of \$35,000 for Natural Landscape Development, which includes Organic Integrated Pest Management Program, Pollinator Corridor landscape improvements and Invasive Species Control in Fuller Brook Park. These action steps support one of the three critical Actions listed in the MVP Summary of Findings: Implement a Sustainable Landscape Program. These actions also protect Human and ecological health within the community.

⊗Request of \$15,000 for Park Path, Sidewalk and Parking Lot Repairs. This is used as an urgent maintenance item and is the most cost-effective method to ensure the Town's parklands are safely accessible.

^eThe major Capital Expense for FY23 is a request of \$150,000 for Comprehensive Pond Improvements. Dredging of Reeds and Duck ponds has been identified as a necessary step to ensure the ponds' ecological health and ability to capture stormwater.

| PERMANENT STAFFING (FTEs) | FY20 Actual | FY21 Actual | FY22 Budget | FY23 Request | FY24 Request |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Position Titles: | | | | | |
| Director | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Wetlands Administrator | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Secretary | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Education and Outreach | 0.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 1.0 | 1.0 |
| Total Number of Positions | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 4 | 4 |

Natural Resources Department FY24 Operating Budget Request

| Org | Object | Account # 01-171 Account Title | FY20 Actual | FY21 Actual | FY22 Actual | FY23 Budget | FY24 Request | \$ Variance FY23-24 | % Variance FY23-24 |
|--|--------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| PERSONAL SERVICES | | | | | | | | | |
| 01171100 | 511010 | Senior Administrator | \$ 99,281 | \$ 101,374 | \$ 103,656 | \$ 105,885 | \$ 107,588 | \$ 1,703 | 1.61% |
| 01171100 | 511220 | Other Professionals | - | - | - | - | - | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171100 | 511220 | Other Professionals | 24,279 | 29,295 | 31,036 | 68,222 | 62,070 | \$ (6,152) | -9.02% |
| 01171100 | 511260 | Wetlands Administrator | 60,023 | 61,289 | 65,666 | 70,445 | 71,898 | \$ 1,453 | 2.06% |
| 01171100 | 511370 | Clerical | 25,048 | 30,958 | 34,985 | 45,673 | 51,104 | \$ 5,431 | 11.89% |
| 01171100 | 569570 | Wetlands Support | - | - | - | - | - | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171100 | 575120 | Unemployment Compensation | - | - | - | - | - | \$ - | 0.00% |
| PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL | | | 208,631 | 222,916 | 235,342 | 290,224 | 292,659 | \$ 2,435 | 0.84% |
| | | Benefits | - | - | - | | | | 0.00% |
| PERSONAL SERVICES SUBTOTAL + BENEFITS | | | 208,631 | 222,916 | 235,342 | 290,224 | 292,659 | \$ 2,435 | 0.84% |
| EXPENSES | | | | | | | | | |
| 01171200 | 517040 | Tuition Reimbursement | - | - | - | - | | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 530900 | Other Professional Services | 2,677 | 1,250 | 486 | 4,500 | 7,500 | \$ 3,000 | 66.67% |
| 01171200 | 534010 | Postage, Printing | 558 | 900 | 2,280 | 2,250 | 2,250 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 543030 | Computers Supplies | 1,750 | 253 | 2,332 | 2,000 | 2,000 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 534030 | Advertising- General | 677 | 107 | 456 | 1,000 | 1,500 | \$ 500 | 50.00% |
| 01171200 | 534035 | Advertising- Employment | - | - | - | - | - | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 534050 | Telecommunications | 894 | 881 | 1,079 | 1,400 | 1,400 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 542010 | Office Supplies | 2,490 | 2,260 | 649 | 2,500 | 3,000 | \$ 500 | 20.00% |
| 01171200 | 549090 | Other Food Service Supplies | 28 | - | 15 | 250 | 250 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 552085 | Fowl food | 134 | 164 | 105 | 250 | 250 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 557010 | Programs and Activities | 459 | 1,040 | 662 | 750 | 750 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 555070 | Electronic Media | - | - | 73 | - | - | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 571010 | Travel - Mileage | 977 | 552 | 507 | 850 | 950 | \$ 100 | 11.76% |
| 01171200 | 571120 | Conf. Meetings-Prof Staff | 565 | 640 | 1,326 | 2,000 | 2,000 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 571190 | Conf. Meetings-Others | 125 | 50 | 100 | 750 | 750 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 573020 | Dues-Professional Staff | 460 | 450 | 379 | 500 | 500 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 581512 | Encroachment Markers | - | - | - | 1,000 | 1,000 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 581513 | Porous Pavement Maintenance | 26 | - | 1,453 | 1,500 | 1,500 | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 581661 | Trails Improvements | 2,264 | 3,636 | 2,707 | 8,500 | 8,700 | \$ 200 | 2.35% |
| HISTORICAL EXPENSES | | | | | | | | | |
| 01171200 | 534040 | Printing & Mailing Expense | | 59 | | | | \$ - | 0.00% |
| 01171200 | 578015 | Late Fees/ Interest Chgs | 15 | | | | | \$ - | 0.00% |
| | | EXPENSE SUBTOTAL | 14,099 | 12,243 | 14,610 | 30,000 | 34,300 | 4,300 | 14.33% |
| 01171200 | 570000 | Other Charges and Expenses | 71 | | | | | \$ - | 0.00% |
| | | DEPARTMENT TOTAL | \$ 222,801 | \$ 235,159 | \$ 249,952 | \$ 320,224 | \$ 326,959 | \$ 6,735 | 2.10% |

