
Historical Commission

The Commission, aided by our partner organization the Berlin Art and Historical Society, has worked hard this year to renew our commitment to restoration/renovation of the Bullard House and to relocate the Town Collection to the new curatorial building. We thank the residents of Berlin for approving the Community Preservation Act funding of two articles for historic preservation at the November special town meeting. This funding will make possible improvements to the Bullard House foundation and drainage and digital imaging of the Town Collection's early inventories and high priority artifacts.

Members reorganized in June by electing a new Chair, June Miller. Later in the fall, the Select Board appointed Janet Woodward and Carl Wickstrom to fill the Commission's two outstanding vacancies. We acknowledge with much appreciation the Chairmanship of Barry Eager who served in that capacity for many years. Barry's knowledge of our local history and the larger historical context in which it continues to be played out is an exceptional resource. One of our goals is to encourage and provide venues for Barry to share the stories of Berlin's past and offer a narrative that tells of our special places, community events, and the people that gave character and substance to this small town.

Plans for an open house at the 1870 Town Hall in October were cancelled due to concern for increases in covid transmission. We hope to reschedule this opportunity to share recent work and upcoming plans.

Bullard House

Two priorities recommended in the *Building Survey of the Bullard House c.1780* (December 2020) prepared by Timothy Wohlhueter of Squaw Hollow Restoration LLC were completed: weatherization of the building's exterior and sill replacement which were funded from the Highland Commons Mitigation allocation. Sill replacement by Kronenberger & Sons Restoration, Inc. sets us firmly on our path toward realizing our mission, opening the Bullard House as a local history museum.

Relocation and removal of items stored in the Bullard House have been ongoing. These items include donations to the Town Collection, Berlin Art and Historical Society display materials, and building supplies. We are grateful for the Highway Department's help removing debris from previous renovations and neglected groundskeeping.

The Town Collection and Curatorial Building

After our curatorial building's heating and cooling unit was installed and our occupancy permit was issued in June, we moved the Town Collection in stages from its temporary home at the Town Offices in Room 113. Again, we had the help of the Highway Department who moved heavy file cabinets and shelving. We also thank Cemetery Commissioner Robert Guild for transporting part of the collection that required an open trailer. Volunteers Bob Blair, Dave Westerling, Scott Hawkins, and Ross Harpestad came with trucks to relocate items, some too large for our new building but capable of being stored in an unheated place. Thank you to these able volunteers for their much-needed help and to the Select Board for allowing us temporary space in the old red fire station.

Our curatorial building is full! We continue to be open on Wednesday afternoons from 2:00-4:00 pm. Please come and visit. Give us a call if you have a question we can research ahead of time.

Demolition Delay

The buildings at 58 South Street were declared not historically significant and approved for demolition.

The buildings at 65 Walnut Street were declared not historically significant because of their severely deteriorated condition. A freestanding chimney remains as a reminder of this early greenhouse operation; intact glass panels from the greenhouses were salvaged for reuse.

There were other building projects which involved interior changes not visible from the street.

The passing bell was tolled as in years past. Regretfully, a number of our deaths have been attributable to the pandemic virus.

Congratulations to the following who celebrated 90th birthdays in 2021: Eva C. Donfro, Patricia A. Dufford, Faith Linzee, Edward Lipka and Marjorie A. Pond.

Respectfully submitted,
June Miller, *Chair and Clerk*; Barry Eager, *Custodian of the Town Collection*; Elaine Wickstrom, *CPAC representative*; Carl Wickstrom and Janet Woodward

Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is an agent of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, responsible for administering the Wetlands Protection Act in Berlin to protect our water supply and environment. The Conservation Commission is also responsible for the acquisition and management of open space conservation land. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of every month at 7:00 PM in the Berlin Town Offices, Room 218, or by Zoom Webinar.

Commission Chair John Aney and members Steve Beard & Liz Dichiaro all stepped down this year. We thank them for the time they dedicated to the town and the Conservation Commission. We welcome new members Holly Kennedy-Degruttola, Adrian Moses (Aj), and Kyle Tucker. The remaining Commission members are Louise Janda, Walter Bickford, Robin Berry, with Carolyn MacDonald, returning to the Chair position.

The Conservation Commission finally got some much-needed assistance with the hiring of a part-time Conservation Agent. Mattie VandenBoom started on November 1st and is a most welcome addition to the Commission. In her short time with us, she has already proven herself to be invaluable.

The public is invited to attend any meeting, including by Zoom Webinar. The link for access to the Zoom meetings can be found on mytowngovernment.com. Members of the public are also encouraged to bring any conservation or wetlands-related questions to the Commission at any time. We can help ensure that your planned activities are in accordance with the State of Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. We can save you time and expenses if you contact the Conservation Commission before any activities take place. Relevant activities that are subject to review are those that are within 100 feet of ponds, wet meadows, forested swamps, seasonal or vernal pools, or intermittent streams or within 200 feet of perennial streams (those that flow all year). Contact any commission member, attend any regularly scheduled meeting or email us at conservation@townofberlin.com for more information.

Financial Position

As of the end of the Fiscal Year, June 30, 2021, there was \$236,881.59 in the Berlin Open Space Fund, there was \$11,695.47 in the Berlin Wetlands Protection Fund (which is funded by applicants filing Notices of Intent (NOI's) and other filing fees), and \$137.09 in the Annual Budget Fund. Our annual mitigation payment of \$50,000 from the Solomon Pond Mall arrived in November. We have 3 remaining payments after we receive this one.

Land Protection Efforts

The Conservation Commission, acting either alone or working with Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), continued with the goal of protecting open space in Berlin. For more information on all of our projects with SVT, visit their website at www.svtweb.org. While some of these conservation opportunities take years to develop and finalize, we remain committed to protecting open space, wetlands, important ecological parcels of land, and agricultural land to help maintain the unique and rural character of our town and the integrity of our habitats.

With the assistance of SVT and CPA funds, the Commission is in the process of acquiring the final large piece of land in the Mt. Pisgah recreation area. This is the result of many, many, years of negotiation and effort on the part of the Commission and SVT. Also, the Commission is still in the process of finalizing a CR for land off of Highland Street, as part of the Homes at Highland Ridge development.

Conservation Land Management

The CC continues to work with local and state authorities to keep our trails clear and to address destructive or inappropriate use of conservation lands, such as motorized dirt bikes, ATV traffic, illegal campsites, littering, fires and graffiti. We would like to thank the Berlin Police Department for its enforcement successes to date.

Trails

Due to the pandemic Berlin's conservation land has seen a marked increase in use and enjoyment of our trails and conserved lands. It has also seen an increase in the misuse of our conservation land which has resulted in us needing to dismantle 2 illegal campsites and 2 gun target practice areas, clean up a dumpsite on Mt. Pisgah, and block various rogue trails.

In December Kyle Tucker was recommended to head of our newly formed Trails Committee, which is a subcommittee of the CC. They will be helping with issues that may arise on town conservation land as well updating our trail maps and blazing. Volunteers can contact Kyle or any other member of the CC through email, conservation@townofberlin.com, or our Facebook page.

Community Outreach

The CC has had to limit the number of sponsored events and activities due to the COVID 19 pandemic. The CC still helped to coordinate the Earth Day Town wide clean-up on April 24th. For several years, the Earth Day clean-up has been organized by Laurence Holyoak. She continues to find new and innovative ways to get more people involved and make picking up trash fun. We held a fundraising event that benefitted the Berlin food pantry and Hands on Nature and with prizes donated by local businesses. Many thanks to Laurence, Bridge Realty, Hudson Disposal, the Berlin Highway Department, and all the volunteers for their continued efforts and support.

Go to "Berlin Conservation Commission" on Facebook, where information about trails, environmental education, and volunteer opportunities can be found. Residents can post photos and stories of their encounters with Berlin's diverse wildlife and use of the trails. The Berlin Meadow area continues to be used by "Hands on Nature," an educational program run by Heather Simpson. We look forward to planning more activities soon to help promote and educate residents' knowledge and enjoyment of our unique community and its resources.

Official Business

The CC was able to proceed with all necessary official business last year, and was able to issue permits and rulings within normal timelines via the use of Zoom meetings. We held four Notice of Intent hearings, resulting in Order of Conditions approvals. We held seven Requests for Determination of Applicability public meetings (as opposed to public hearings). We issued three Certificates of Compliance, and one Partial Certificate of Compliance. And finally, the Commission had to issue six Enforcement Orders in 2021 because of violations of the Wetlands Protection Act. Two Enforcement Orders remain unresolved from prior years.

Other Conservation Commission Business

- Worked with various other boards, to give and receive input and work towards resolving issues as needed.
- Inspected multiple sites for proper erosion control measures pre-construction.
- Visited various sites in town to inspect/ monitor conditions, including possible encroachment issues.
- Reviewed inspection reports submitted by the contracted monitor of two large construction projects in town.
- Attended workshops and participated in several webinars through the MACC (Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners) and other organizations. We have found that these workshops and webinars have enhanced our knowledge of and our ability to better implement the Wetlands Protection Act on behalf of the town.
- Wrote and campaigned for a wetlands bylaw to be voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. The attempt failed by a slim margin. The town's lack of a wetlands bylaw continues to limit the CC's ability to fully protect wetlands in Berlin.
- The Open Space/Recreation portion of the town's Master Plan was finally accepted by the state.

Continuing Projects and Goals

The Conservation Commission, along with administering the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, will continue to strive to protect Open Space in Berlin emphasizing agricultural land, stream, and wildlife habitat preservation.

Respectfully submitted,

Berlin Conservation Commission:

Robin Ann Berry, Walter Bickford, Louise Janda, Holly Kennedy-DeGruttola, Carolyn MacDonald (*Chair*), Adrian "AJ" Moses, Kyle Tucker