



## **TOWN OF OXFORD**

Conservation Commission  
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### **Rules for Hiring Outside Consultants**

#### **1. Purpose.**

As provided by MGL Ch. 44 § 53G, the Oxford Conservation Commission may impose reasonable fees for the employment of outside consultants, engaged by the Conservation Commission, for specific expert services deemed necessary by the Commission to come to a final decision on an application submitted to the Conservation Commission pursuant to the requirements of the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL Ch. 131 § 40), Conservation Commission Act (MGL Ch. 40 § 8C), or any other state or municipal statute, by-law or regulation, as they may be amended or enacted from time to time. The Conservation Commission may also impose fees for other consultant services, related to application review, or permit conditioning or monitoring, under any of the above-referenced laws or regulations.

#### **2. Special Account.**

Funds received by the Conservation Commission pursuant to these rules shall be deposited with the Oxford Town Treasurer who shall establish a special account for this purpose. Expenditures from this special account may be made at the direction of the Conservation Commission without further appropriation as provided in MGL Ch. 44 § 53G. Expenditures from this account shall be made only in connection with the review of a specific project or projects for which a consultant fee has been collected from the applicant.

#### **3. Consultant Services.**

Specific consultant services may include but are not limited to resource area survey and delineation, analysis of resource area values, hydrogeologic and drainage analysis, impacts on municipal conservation lands, and environmental or land use law. The consultant shall be chosen by, and report only to, the Commission and/or its Agent.

#### **4. Notice.**

The Conservation Commission shall give written notice to the applicant of the selection of an outside consultant. Such notice shall state the identity of the consultant, the amount of the fee to be charged to the applicant, and a request for payment of said fee in its entirety. Such notice shall be deemed to have been given on the date it is mailed or delivered. No such costs or expenses shall be incurred by the applicant if the application or request is withdrawn within five days of the date notice is given.

#### **5. Payment of Fee.**

The fee must be received in its entirety prior to the initiation of consulting services. The Commission may request additional consultant fees if necessary review requires a larger expenditure than originally anticipated or new information requires additional consultant services. Failure by the applicant to pay the consultant fee specified by the Commission within ten (10) business days of the request for payment, or refusal of payment, shall be cause for the Commission to deny the application based on

lack of sufficient information to evaluate whether the project meets applicable performance standards in 310 CMR 10.00. An appeal stops the clock on the above deadline; the countdown resumes on the first business day after the appeal is either denied or upheld. A denial for lack of information may be based solely on the lack of the third party consultant review identified as necessary by the Commission. The Commission shall specify in its denial the nature of the information lacking which its chosen consultant would provide, e.g., the questions it needs answered.

#### **6. Appeals.**

The applicant may appeal the selection of the outside consultant to the Oxford Board of Selectmen, which may only disqualify the outside consultant selected on the grounds that the consultant has a conflict of interest or does not possess the minimum required qualifications. The minimum qualifications shall consist of either an educational degree or three or more years of practice in the field at issue or a related field. Such an appeal must be in writing and received by the Board of Selectmen and a copy received by the Conservation Commission, so as to be received within ten (10) days of the date consultant fees were requested by the Conservation Commission. The required time limits for action upon the application shall be extended by the duration of the administrative appeal.




#### **7. Return of Unspent Fees.**

When the Commission's review of a project is completed and an Order of Conditions or Determination of Applicability issued, any balance in the special account attributable to that project shall be returned within 30 days. The excess amount shall be repaid to the applicant or the applicant's successor in interest. For the purpose of this rule, any person or entity claiming to be an applicant's successor in interest shall provide the Commission with appropriate documentation. A final report of said account shall be made available to the applicant or applicant's successor in interest.

**Date Adopted :** April 2, 2014

**Oxford Conservation Commission**

  
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