



A Call to Civic Engagement

BY DAVID HENKELS, CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

With the passing of the old year and the burgeoning of the new, I reflect on the importance of volunteerism, and its tremendous capacity for positive change. Every contribution of time and effort, no matter how trivial it may seem, can have an impact. However, taking the first steps towards getting involved can seem daunting. We often need to clear our heads and re-orient ourselves before we can take on new ventures.

One great way to serve your community is to get involved in your local government. The town of Sudbury has numerous boards, commissions and committees, each undertaking crucial roles and making decisions in service of the public good. The success of these bodies depends on folks like you, the reader, making the commitment to actively participate.

One such volunteer body is the Conservation Commission. It consists of seven residents, each tasked with stewarding the Town's vital natural resources. In addition to ensuring the protection of various wetland resource areas, they also work to ensure that we always have natural lands set aside for conservation, with some also serving a recreational or agricultural purpose. Perhaps you are familiar with some of them: Davis Farm, Lincoln Meadows, and Hop Brook Marsh, to name a few. It is easy to take for granted that they exist, and are free and open to all.

Many of us, perhaps even you, have explored these conservation lands. If so, then you know the wonderful experiences that await. Walk into these lands, and you walk through open farmlands, heavily wooded forests, and wetlands. Lands where the reminders of glaciation abound in the form of kettles, eskers, moraines, drumlins, and erratic boulders. You also do not need to look very long to find evidence of the town's more recent agrarian past: countless stone walls, wolf trees, occasional barbed wire, road cuts, and an odd dam.

It's not just the landscape, but the people you meet. In my own time, I have been blessed to walk these trails alongside many fellow travelers. An amateur geologist exploring glacial functions and formations. A wetland scientist examining soils and vegetation. A blood specialist who just happens to be an excellent observer of all things avian.

Inactivity leads down the path of disengagement. With this New Year, may I suggest that you instead resolve to take a different path. A path that begins at a trailhead to one of our conservation lands. You may find that, as it did for me, the path leads to meaningful and rewarding engagement in our community.