

Massachusetts House of Representatives

Bill Summary

Bill #:	H.5524
Title:	An Act relative to the membership of the Conservation Commission in the town of Chatham
Sponsor:	Rep. Hadley Luddy and Sen. Julian Cyr
Committee:	Municipalities and Regional Government
Hearing Date:	July 22, 2026
Current Law:	Section 8C of MGL Chapter 40 authorizes the establishment of conservation commissions in cities and towns. The law lists the powers and duties of conservation commissions, as well as their composition. Conservation commissions may consist of between 3 and 7 members, appointed by either the board of selectmen or town manager with approval of the board of selectmen, to serve three-year terms. Vacancies are filled in the same manner. There is no provision in the current law for associate members to be appointed. Special legislation is required.
Summary:	This home rule petition would allow the Chatham Conservation Commission to have three voting associate members to ensure that a quorum for doing business exists at each meeting. Section 1 of the bill authorizes the Chatham Selectboard, notwithstanding contrary language in the applicable state law, to appoint three associate members to the Conservation Commission for terms of one year each. The language authorizes the Chair of the Conservation Commission to designate an associate member to sit in case of absence, inability to act or conflict of interest on the part of a regular member of the commission, or when a vacancy exists until the vacancy is filled per Chapter 40. Section 2 provides for this act to take effect immediately upon passage.
Notes:	Approved as Article 48 at the May 10, 2025 Annual Town Meeting by a majority voice vote. According to the Town Meeting warrant explanation, the Chatham Conservation Commission consists of seven voting members and three non-voting associate members. This proposal would grant associate members the ability to vote when a regular member is absent, unable to act, has a conflict of interest, or when a vacancy exists.