

**SOUTH HADLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 8, 2020
As Approved**

Present: Bill DeLuca, Chair; Jim Canning, Vice-Chair; Bill Bacis, Member; Neva Tolopko, Member; Tom Dennis (arrived at 6:10 PM), Member; Anne Capra, Conservation Administrator/Planner; Colleen Canning, Senior Clerk Planning and Conservation; Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road; Mike Fontaine, IGM Management; Dan Delaney, Fuss and O'Neil; Stephen Franz, 300 North Main Street; Mark Gilmore, SHELD; April Dorokski, Tighe and Bond

Chair DeLuca called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Agenda Item #1 --- Public Meeting Continuance for Request for Determination filed by Michael Matyszewski for removal of trees at 7 Valley View Drive (Map 23, Parcel 115)

Chair DeLuca read the Public Meeting Continuance Notice aloud at 6:00 PM.

The Conservation Administrator explained that the applicant did not have the information from an arborist that the Commission had request. The applicant had requested to continue the Public Meeting until the February 12, 2020. She expressed to the applicant that the Commission would like to act on the Request at that time.

Motion: Vice-Chair Canning moved to continue the Public Meeting to February 12, 2020 at 6:00 PM. Commissioner Bacis seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) Commissioners present voted in favor of the motion.

As the next scheduled agenda item was advertised to be taken up at a later time, the item was skipped and would be returned to at an appropriate time.

Agenda Item #4 --- Draft Conservation Land Management Plan

The Conservation Administrator offered a summary of the proposed Conservation Land Management Plan. She explained that the information was based on site visits and mapping of Conservation Areas. Tasks in the plan were ranked on a prioritization scale from high to low and the associated costs were based upon recent work. A request for allocation of funds from Town Meeting will be made this Spring in the amount of \$5-\$10K, and could be supplemented with grant funding.

Chair DeLuca advised to increase the importance of petitioning DCR to purchase town-owned land along the Mount Holyoke Range from low to high.

The Conservation Administrator noted that the Town Administrator advised to include maintenance and plowing of parking areas at Conservation Land trail heads to the budget proposal.

Commissioner Dennis arrived at 6:10 PM.

Vice-Chair Canning inquired about funding for emergency tree removal. The Conservation Administrator explained that funding would be requested as required if costs exceed funds allocated in a given fiscal year.

Commissioner Bacis inquired about routine mowing at Warner Conservation Area. Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road, recommended that it be mowed during the months of July and August. The Conservation Administrator noted that the maintenance history of the site was unclear so an assessment of the site would be beneficial for site improvements and trail use.

As the advertised time the Public Hearing under agenda Item #2 had passed, the Commission decided to pick up Agenda Item #2 and table Agenda Item #4.

Agenda Item #2 --- Public Hearing Continuance for Notice of Intent filed by Ledges Golf Club for general maintenance of the golf course at 18 Mulligan Drive (Map 23 & 42, Parcels 1, 48, 71, 72 & 73)

Chair DeLuca read the Public Hearing Continuance Notice aloud at 6:19 PM.

Mike Fontaine, IGM management, was present at the hearing along with the engineering consultant, Dan Delaney of Fuss and O'Neil.

The Conservation Administrator reviewed the updated information received. At the previous hearing, the Commission asked the applicant to show what best practices were being used to reduce any potential negative impact the course had on the surrounding environment. The applicant's previous general maintenance Order of Conditions included an environmental plan. The applicant had since submitted a pesticide management report which was drafted by UMass-Amherst faculty along with a pesticide use report submitted by one of the course's licensed applicators.

The Conservation Administrator reviewed information regarding the initial water withdraw permit filed in 1999 and the requirement for monitoring wells at that time. Well monitoring was not required after 2011 if the results of the testing showed no or low detection of the chemicals tested for. The Conservation Administrator added that the applicant's previous general maintenance order of conditions did not require well monitoring. Chair DeLuca asked for the location of the well samples. Mike Fontaine responded that the current monitoring wells were located at holes 3, 5, 7, 13 and 14.

Dan Delaney addressed the Commission and reviewed the updated the draft plan. The maintenance plan was updated to reference jurisdictional areas by their regulatory name rather than 'environmentally sensitive areas' as was in the initial draft. Additionally, direction of play arrows were added to the plan for easier review. Portable bathrooms located near hole 7 and hole 8 were removed from the draft as they won't be installed. He added that the draft plan would be reviewed by Ledges management staff and sent to the Commission after their review.

Commissioner Schwellenbach inquired what still needed to be addressed regarding the monitoring wells. The Conservation Administrator explained that well monitoring was not required within the Commission's previous general maintenance order. The Commission could

seek documentation of the monitoring up to 2011. Dan Delaney added that testing the wells would cost tens of thousands of dollars. Commissioner Tolopko noted that nitrate testing could be an affordable testing option.

The applicant and the Commission discussed scheduling a site visit to assess the wetland delineation on January 27, 2020 at 9:00 AM.

Stephen Franz, 300 North Main Street, addressed the Commission. He inquired if he could look at the list of pesticides used at the course. The Conservation Administer directed him to the posted link on the Town's website.

The Public Hearing needed to be continued to allow the Commission to perform a site visit and for the applicant to submit updated materials.

Motion: Vice-Chair Canning moved to continue the Public Hearing until January 29, 2020 at 7:15 PM. Commissioner Bacis seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) Commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Agenda Item #3 --- Public Hearing for Notice of Intent filed by South Hadley Electric Light Department for replacement of an existing three-pole distribution line structure and overhead lines at Titans Pier Road (Map 54, Parcel 1)

Chair DeLuca read the Public Hearing Notice aloud at 6:50 PM.

Mike Gilmore, South Hadley Electric Light Department, was present at the hearing along with the engineering consultant, April Doroski of Tighe and Bond.

April Doroski addressed the Commission and offered an overview of the proposed project. She explained that SHELD was seeking to restring wiring and replace three existing electrical poles within Riverfront Area to connect to a substation in Holyoke. Conservation Commission approval from Holyoke would be sought separately.

Mark Gilmore described the purpose of the proposed site development. He explained that the hook up to Holyoke's electrical power would function as a 'doomsday backup' in the event the Town lost power. He explained that the present infrastructure crossing has existed since the 1950s.

Commissioner Tolopko asked what the current site conditions were. Mark Gilmore explained that the site presently has wooden three-pole structures. They were proposing to replace the wooden poles and do some clearing to restore the crossing.

Vice-Chair Canning inquired about tree removal. April Doroski responded that trees were proposed to be removed. She explained that the wooden poles and the existing crossing had not been maintained over the years. Clearing would need to be performed to access the site and install the work pad.

Chair DeLuca inquired what the lifespan of the wooden electric poles were. Mark Gilmore responded that the existing poles on site were installed in the 1950s. He estimated that wooden electrical poles have around a 50 year life span.

Vice-Chair Canning inquired about ongoing site maintenance. Mark Gilmore replied that access to the site would need to be maintained and tree growth near the wiring would need to be cleared periodically. No chemicals were proposed to be used for ongoing maintenance.

The Conservation Administrator asked how the project would meet performance standards as the site was within Riverfront and had associated Bordering Land Subject to Flooding. April Doroski replied that a wildlife evaluation was performed so no perching trees would be removed. The impacted area would be about 20% of the total parcel and based upon the analysis it was not believed that the project had a negative impact relative to the total project. Mark Gilmore added that the wiring would be suspended 20 feet into the air and would not be impacted by the site's designation as a Bordering Land Subject to Flooding.

Chair DeLuca observed that site's location was within proximity to both the Connecticut River and the Mount Holyoke Range so impacts needed to be minimized. April Doroski responded that the site had existing infrastructure so the area was already previously degraded. Impact would be minimized were possible. For example, at certain locations trees would be topped rather than cut.

The Conservation Administrator inquired what mitigation the applicant was proposing. She observed that 25 trees were proposed to be cut which would put the Commission's local tree removal mitigation requirement of 2:1 replacement trees at 50 trees. Considering the site's small size, there could be possibility for off-site mitigation. The applicant would work with the Commission to find appropriate mitigation.

Commissioner Schwellenbach noted that there were two access roads proposed to the work site. Mark Gilmore responded that during construction two access paths would be helpful. After completion of construction, restoring one access road could be considered to reduce the project's impact.

The Commission scheduled a site visit with the applicant on January 17, 2020 at 9:00AM.

Stephen Franz, 300 North Main Street, addressed the Commission. He asked what the Commission's mitigation requirement for tree removal was. The Conservation Administrator responded that the Commission has a 2:1 replacement ratio but site constraints could be evaluated in mitigation.

Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road, addressed the Commission. She noted that topping trees often leads to tree death within five years of topping.

The Public Hearing needed to be continued to allow the Commission to visit the site and allow the applicant time to update their submittal.

Motion: Commissioner Bacis moved to continue the Public Hearing until January 29, 2020 at 7:45 PM. Commissioner Tolopko seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) commissioners voted on favor of the motion.

Agenda Item #4 --- Draft Conservation Land Management Plan

The Commission continued discussions regarding the Conservation Land Management Plan.

Commissioner Tolopko asked for clarity on the funding of Leaping Well Nature Trail. The Conservation Administrator responded that the trail was not under the control on the Conservation Commission and funding for maintenance was allocated at Town Meeting when the project was originally funded.

Chair DeLuca recommended including the need for a forest assessment to the document's opening general considerations.

Chair DeLuca recommended implementing 'trail counters' at trail heads to track the use of Conservation properties.

Commissioner Tolopko recommended adding donation boxes at Conservation Area trail heads.

Linda Young, 15 Westbrook Road, addressed the Commission. She inquired about the installation of a kiosk at Hahn-Warner Arboretum. She was interested in working with the High School to install a kiosk there. The Conservation Administrator responded that kiosks along the road should be within a similar style to create continuity amongst Conservation Areas. However, within the Conservation Area kiosks could depart from that style. The Conservation Administrator would send Linda Young information about the kiosks so she could proceed with her work with the High School.

Stephen Franz, 300 North Main Street, addressed the Commission. He recommended considering not managing conservation lands for timber harvest or tree cutting but advocated "proforestation". The Conservation Administrator replied that an ecological assessment would be beneficial to implementing a management plan.

Commissioner Tolopko recommended adding signage at the upper trails of Bachelor Brook-Stony Brook Conservation Area.

Agenda Item #5 --- Summer Internship Project Ideas

The Conservation Administrator explained that a Summer Internship opportunity would require development of a work scope to be reviewed by Mount Holyoke College. After intern selection, training and supervision would be required all summer long. As this would be a large task, she expressed concern for managing an intern and her exiting work load.

Vice-Chair Canning noted that two interns could work better than one as they would be able to offer one another support.

Commissioner Schwellenbach noted that there didn't appear to be a net benefit to having a summer intern as it would require lots of training and supervision from the Conservation Administrator.

Chair DeLuca commented he could communicate with Mount Holyoke College to see if there was a possibility of the college hosting an independent study to perform an ecological assessment of Town Conservation Areas.

Agenda Item #6--- Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 18, 2019

Draft minutes of the December 18, 2019 meeting were previously transmitted to the Commission for their review.

Motion: Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to approve the draft minutes of December 18, 2019. Commissioner Bacis seconded the motion. Five (5) out of six (6) members voted in favor of the motion. Commissioner Tolopko abstained from voting as she was not present at the December 18, 2019 meeting.

Agenda Item #7--- Administrator’s Report including updates on projects, violations, next meeting dates

Site Visits for Upcoming Scheduled Public Meetings

Two Public Meetings would be held on the next Conservation Commission Meeting on January 29, 2020. Therefore, site visits needed to be scheduled to aid in review of the Requests for Determination (RFD). The Commission tentatively scheduled the site visits back-to-back on the morning of January 23, 2020. The Commission planned to meet at 9:00 AM at 177 Woodbridge Street and would continue on to 470 Granby Road after.

Climate Change Listening Session

The Conservation Administrator invited everyone to attend the next Climate Change Preparedness listening session which would be held in the Selectboard Meeting Room on Wednesday January 15, 2020. The topic of discussion would be South Hadley’s rivers and ponds.

Agenda Item #8 --- Other New Business

There was no new business addressed

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
As Approved
Colleen Canning, Senior Clerk Planning and Conservation

Appendix

Document	Document Location
Draft Conservation Land Management Plan	Conservation Files
Ledges Golf Club Pesticide Management Plan revised June 2015	Conservation Files
Ledges Golf Club licensed applicator pesticide report 2018	Conservation Files
Ledges Golf Club NOI File# 288-0461	Conservation Files
Ledges Golf Club 1/8/2020 updated maintenance plan	Conservation Files
SHELD NOI File# 288-0462	Conservation Files