

**Conservation Commission Meeting
November 28, 2018
First Floor Mtg Rm, Amherst Town Hall**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Ms. Angus at 7:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Angus, Brooks, Allen, Butler, Fair

Staff: Ziomek, Willson

CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS

Willson stated we received the Hickory Ridge solar project NOI which will be coming to our 12/12/18 mtg. We don't have a second mtg in December. We also received an Environmental Notification Form, MEPA application, for the Hickory Ridge Project. Angus stated she can't make the ENF site visit. Willson will get ENF electronically and email to Commission. Willson stated comments on ENF are due to MEPA 12/11/18. Willson stated there is a table in your packet of the current wetland filing fees compared to other towns. The table shows proposed increases to Amherst fees. Willson stated the Commission can vote on these tonight or think about it and vote at next mtg. Brooks stated it needs to be clear what the per acre charge for RDAs means. New fees will not be effective until beginning of FY20, so July 1, 2019. DZ to confirm has to be July 1 not Jan 1, 2019.

Willson stated there are two letters from Eversource in the Commissions packet regarding minor transmission line work that they consider exempt so are not filing just notifying the Commission. She stated there are monitoring reports from Pulpit Hill, UDrive, and West St. The Pulpit Hill report includes pictures outside the fence at the southwest corner where erosion had been occurring. Erosion control seems to be working. Angus asked how often in the monitor there? Willson responded weekly and after storm events.

Willson stated the flood zone mapping project is ramping up again. The Town has a consultant who is updating the flood zone maps. They had almost completed their update when the Town decided based on advice from FEMA to re-do the calculations using a new regression analysis. The re-analysis is done and the Town is organizing again how to have the new maps publicly reviewed per FEMA requirements prior to being approved by FEMA. Ziomek stated it will take a few months, the maps will probably come to the Commission maybe in March/April 2019. Ziomek stated new analysis uses data on storm events from the Pioneer Valley vs regional data. He added it will be very accurate for Amherst. Butler asked if the aerial photography is LIDAR, at what resolution? Willson said yes, she thinks 1ft contours.

Ziomek stated the budget process is starting, they don't really know the schedule because of the new Town Council, but there will be budget hearings in December and budget get formulated in January. He will be asking for more money for summer staff and to make the Assistant Land Manager full time. He will be looking for money for a pickup truck, and long term money for Puffers Pond. Two upcoming NOIs are DPW for East Hadley Rd and Cons Dept for State St. parking changes. Butler asked if we ever

lease trucks vs buying new. Ziomek said no Town hasn't but something to think about.

MINUTES

Review minutes of 3-28-18

Butler moved and Brooks seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to approve the minutes of 3-28-18.

PERMITS/DISCUSSIONS

7:15 PM Conservation Land Management

Request for Event on Conservation Land – Jenny Coy/The Common School for Forest Fridays at Larch Hill Conservation Area.

Jenny Coy presented, she's a kindergarten teacher at the Common School. Her class is interested in using the Larch Hill Conservation Area once a week for an hour for investigating nature. Ziomek stated the class came to Town Hall yesterday to deliver their request and talked about their plans, they will be practicing leave no trace methods. Butler asked if they would be playing in water areas, he's concerned about erosion. Coy said no, they will be playing directly behind the Common School in an upland area.

Brooks moved and Allen seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to approve the event request.

Request for Event on Conservation Land – Jan Novak for a wedding ceremony at Mt. Pollux Conservation A

Willson stated this application was withdrawn.

No vote.

FY20 CPA Projects

Ziomek stated this year there is about 1 million in CPA funds available. Willson brought up a map on the overhead showing the Open Space land acquisition projects we're asking for CPA funds to support. Ziomek stated there is the Keet Haskins property, about 45 acres, owned by Cows Inc., and we've submitted a LAND Grant for \$400K for the purchase but haven't heard if we got the grant yet. We're asking for about \$200K from CPA. The property has frontage along the Cushman Brook and abuts other conservation land. It has been logged.

Ziomek stated the second property is the Szala property on Sunderland Rd. It is located between the Podick and Kathryn Cole Conservation Areas. Kestrel is working with the Szala family to preserve over 150 acres over the line in Hadley. Ziomek had an appraisal done and it's not really valuable land, there is a curb cut. Butler asked if we would continue to farm it. Ziomek said possibly. The third property is an approximately 45 acre farm on Stanley St. owned by Mr. Tracus. We're really just keeping an eye on it, he's not ready to sell at the moment. Ziomek thinks this would be a great project to do with affordable

housing groups. The fourth property is the Poor farm on Pomeroy Lane, approximately 50 acres. Another project where we could do some limited development by the road and protect the rest. Butler asked what happened to the recent delineation RDA? Willson said they withdrew because of the season but will probably re-apply in the spring. Butler said this has more pressure on it, Ziomek agreed yes something will get done with the property soon.

7:30 PM Notice of Intent – Jonathan Roberge/Eversource Energy for underground electric conduit replacement at 17 Pomeroy Court (Map 20C, Parcel 69).

Willson stated they withdrew their application today.

No Vote.

Miscellaneous Untimed Items:

- Revise Wetland Filing Fees

Discussion in CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS section of minutes.

Butler moved and Brooks seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to accept revised wetland filing fees as presented in 11-18-18 tabulated document.

- Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Adjournment

Voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 8:12 PM.