

**Conservation Commission Meeting
April 24, 2019
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Mr. Brooks (VC) at 7:02 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Butler, Brooks, Allen, Clark, Fair

Staff: Ziomek, Willson

CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS

Willson stated there are monitoring reports for University Drive and Pulpit Hill solar in the Commission's packets. Work will also start up again at West St subdivision soon. There is also a letter from the railroad regarding vegetation management involving the use of herbicides. (Ziomek not at meeting yet).

MINUTES

No Minutes

PERMITS/DISCUSSIONS

7:10 PM Conservation Land Management

Agricultural Licenses – Amethyst Brook & Wentworth Farm

Ziomek stated Wm Levine, a long time farmer at Amethyst Brook, is retiring/leaving. We need to decide what we want to do in terms of a new license for the land. We are also thinking about what do to with the community gardens at Amethyst. For this year we may issue an RFP for farming at Wentworth Conservation Area, but probably not Amethyst.

Wm Levine stated he has loved farming at Amethyst, and thanks the Town for allowing him this opportunity. He hopes the land will stay in farming, he has planted and cared for a number of perennials including fruit trees that he would hate to see go to waste. The land has been mostly farmed and managed by his associate Ryan Karb for the last few years, and Ryan, who also runs Many Hands Farm, is a very hard working farmer and would be the most logical replacement for Wm.

7:15 PM Notice of Intent (cont'd from 4-10-19 mtg) – Charles Kovacic/Direct Energy Solar for installation of a solar array and associated access roads, utility poles, transformer pad, and fencing within Riverfront, Bordering Land Subject to Flooding, and buffer zone to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands at 191 West Pomeroy Lane (Map 19D, Parcel 10).

Alex Patterson, ESS Env., presented minor revisions to application since last meeting including BLSF impact calculations and methodology, and details on NHESP process. Commission discussed special conditions for the project. Conditions include:

1. Meet all requirements of NHESP including applying for a Conservation & Management Permit.
2. Meet all requirements of the bridge evaluation report.
3. Hire an erosion control monitor.
4. 1st 100' of Riverfront in turtle habitat restoration area be re-forested, planted with trees/shrubs
5. There must be invasive management in restoration area
6. Wetland Administrator to work with applicant on acceptable seed mix for solar arrays.

Butler moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-1, Fair abstained) to close the public hearing and issue the Order of Conditions with Special Conditions as discussed.

7:30 PM Notice of Intent – Amherst Conservation Dept. for work associated with rotary construction and creation of designated parking within Riverfront along State Street (Map 5B, Parcels 34, 130 & 1-33).

Stephanie Ciccarello, Amherst Sustainability Coordinator, presented the project. Work mostly consists of re-marking driving lanes and parking on existing pavement. Widening in two locations for angled parking, and new impervious pavement at turn around. Portions of the work are in Riverfront, however, there are no wetland impacts. There are three areas of restoration proposed for Riverfront mitigation. One is planting along the edge of the first angled parking to act as a barrier to people parking beyond the edge and into wetlands. The second is restoring the current handicapped parking area on the south side of State St. closest to the bridge. The third is restoration of a cleared area sometimes used for parking just east of the second angled parking.

Butler asked if the turn around is larger enough for trucks. Ciccarello said yes. Brooks asked if the wetlands had been delineated by a wetland scientist. Ciccarello said no, but they are very obvious near the first angled parking area. Brooks said he would like to have the edges at least flagged so the Town knows where to put the erosion control. Ciccarello said yes, we will do that. Butler asked what's going to happen when parking is full? Ziomek responded that although the purpose of this project is to improve safety, the total number of parking spaces will decrease which may lower the number of people at Puffers. Eventually Town may enact some kind of parking payment system. Ciccarello said the Town is looking for advice from the Commission on a planting plan for the restoration areas. Fair said that plan should be in place before construction.

Ciccarello to mark wetland line before next meeting.

Clark moved and Butler seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to continue the public hearing to May 8, 2019 at 7:30pm. Applicant agreed to continue.

7:45 PM Request for Determination – Amherst Conservation Dept. for construction of a dog park within buffer zone to bordering vegetated wetlands at 95 Old Belchertown Rd (Map 21B, Parcel 8).

Jim Pistrang and Anna Devlin-Gauthier, Dog Park Task Force, presented the project. The Town is planning to construct a dog park on approximately 1.5 acres of the old landfill on the south side of Belchertown Rd. There will be a large dog area and a small dog area. MADEP has been conferred with about how not to impact the landfill cap, as well as NHESP in terms of the endangered grasshopper sparrow. There will be a fence, and grading of fill brought to the site. A drainage swale will be constructed along the eastern side of the site to infiltrate and direct drainage. The idea will be to control drainage so water doesn't continue to erode and flow down to the adjacent kettle pond. The Dog Park Task force has applied for a grant to fund construction.

Butler moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to close the public meeting and issue a Negative Determination #3 for work in the buffer zone that doesn't impact a resource area.

8:00 PM Notice of Intent (cont'd from 4-10-19 mtg) – Amherst DPW for roadway widening to accommodate bike lanes and a multi-use path within resource areas on East Hadley Rd (Map 17C, Parcel 40).

Paul Dethier, Amherst Department of Public Works, presented the project. First half of the project complete, consisted of western end between South Point Dr. and Brittany Manor Dr.. Phase II is from Brittany Manor Dr. to West St. Project consists of constructing a 6-10 ft wide multi-use path, widening the road to add bikelanes & bus pull offs, and updating the stormwater system. Originally the plan included upgrading the outfalls, but MADEP said we can't touch them unless we can move them farther from Bank and the road is too close. Dethier described the work sequence.

Dethier stated the plans show an area to be excavated for compensatory storage, however, it will be seen from multi-use trail and might not be as attractive as lawn. Commission supports creating compensatory storage at that location. Dethier said other compensatory storage created through installation of vegetated swales along north side of road. Drainage improvements include the swales, deep sump catch basins, drywells, and 5 stormwater treatment units. NHESP letter received, project not a take, they have no other concerns. No BVW impact anymore since outfall work not occurring, so not mitigation needed.

Special conditions: Willson to inspect erosion control before each phase.

Brooks moved and Allen seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to close the public hearing and issue an Order of Conditions with special conditions as discussed.

Miscellaneous Untimed Items

- Emergency Cert – MADCR for breaching beaver dam off Norwottuck Rail Trail

Willson stated the beavers continue to be a problem along the rail trail. Integrated Wildlife will be contracted to breach a dam and repair the overflow structures along the trail.

Brooks moved and Fair seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to ratify the Emergency Certificate.

- Emergency Cert – Eversource Energy for breaching beaver dam off Pomeroy Court

Willson stated Integrated Wildlife got in touch with her about doing some work in the Eversource ROW off Pomeroy Court. They would like to breach a dam and possible trap, but will get in touch with the Health Dept about trapping.

Brooks moved and Fair seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to ratify the Emergency Certificate.

- Certificate of Compliance – Lot 22 Linden Ridge Rd.

Willson stated this is an undeveloped lot that was included in the overall infrastructure Order of Conditions for Amherst Hills.

Brooks moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to issue the Certificate of Compliance.

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

Adjournment

Voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 8:54 PM.