

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Ms. Angus, Chair at 7:05 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Angus (C), Boice, Healey, Brooks

Staff: Ziomek, Willson

CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS

Willson stated narrow trenching along Norwottuck Rail Trail between Station Rd. & Hop Brook is root cutting done as part of trail rehab. Photos were provided. Willson stated she spoke with MassDOT and C&A contracting who said erosion control would not have fit between trench and slope to wetland. They apologized for not informing anyone that the trenching was taking place. Brooks stated some dirt had been released into the wetland. Willson added the project currently has finished tree work, cut all trees but did not remove stumps or roots, and did root cutting. Work starts again in March, they may replace decking and fencing at S.E. St. bridge this winter. Angus asked if Willson had inspected erosion control yet. Willson stated no, not up yet. Boice asked if we could talk with Hadley Con Com about their experience so far with NRT rehab. Willson stated she will talk with Janice Stone/Hadley administrator.

Willson stated she inspected erosion control at Presidential Apts. They have cleared the site, and will be working as much as possible through the winter. She also visited Olympia Oaks where she observed erosion occurring and asked them to replace silt sacks in catch basins, sweep roads, and use matting on slopes.

Healey stated she had noticed that the signs at the UMASS disc golf course were washed out, can't read them. Willson stated she would call Brian Giggey.

Ziomek stated in 2013 we closed on the Ricci property (about 20 acres), Brunelle property (about 17 acres), and South East St. (about 5 acres). We did a dedication ceremony for Ricci, Brunelle not interested in ceremony, and there will be a ceremony for SE St. in the spring. Brunelle family requested the land be called the Muddy Brook Conservation Area.

Ziomek stated Saul property acquisition contingent on CPA funding. On January 23rd CPAC will be discussing the Saul project. CPAC will be meeting tomorrow (Jan 9) to create their list of questions for all proposed projects. Commission members are welcome to come support the Saul project at the Jan 23rd mtg, 7pm in Community Rm at Police Station. Kestrel Trust, Grow Food Amherst and Stephanie Ciccarello will be there to discuss proposed farming use.

Brooks stated that the trees that were taken down in the Plum Springs Cons. Area should be removed now before turtles start moving around in the spring. Ziomek stated the trees would be chipped in February.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION'S ACTION

APPROVE MINUTES

Approve minutes of 2-13-13 & 3-13-13.

Boice moved and Angus seconded. Commission VOTED (2-0-0), Healey & Brooks abstained) to approve the minutes of 2-13-13.

Healey moved and Boice seconded. Commission VOTED (3-0-1, Brooks abstained) to approve the minutes of 3-13-13.

PERMITS/DISCUSSIONS

7:15 PM Informal Discussion – Northeast Solar for installation at 463 Sunderland Rd.

Zack XX, Northeast Solar Design stated they are interested in building a community solar farm on Sunderland Rd. A community solar system provides residences who can't install solar at their homes a way to access electricity from solar. The property on Sunderland Rd. is good because it's near a WMECO switching station. He provided a map and list of questions. He is looking for concerns from Con Com and answers to some questions.

Angus stated last time we talked about this property it was for an RFD to mow portions so property could be shown to potential buyers. Willson provided maps of property showing streams and wetland areas from DEP MassGIS with 50' setbacks. Angus stated they would need to delineate the property. Boice asked how they planned on getting equipment, etc. to rear of property with considering location of streams. Zack stated they would need a crossing, culvert probably. He added they would need to take down some trees and have a vegetation control plan which could include herbicides and pesticides.

Willson asked if applicant is willing to be flexible with number of arrays considering once the site is delineated there may not be a lot of space that's not resource area. She added that with a crossing you will probably have to replicate which would take up more of your space. She added this will require filing an NOI. Zack stated there is some flexibility, they need to stay in the relatively flat areas and could decrease the number of arrays if they had to. The goal is 500 KW. Angus stated DEP is proposing a limited project provision for the WPA regs for renewable energy projects. It's not law yet, but is being proposed.

Willson asked how they are installed, what do they sit on? Zack stated they are pole mounted, screw driven, with telescoping top. They are set into the ground 4 to 8 feet and leveled with telescoping top. Angus stated there is a small fringe of Priority Habitat on the property. Ziomek added vegetation management in an area with so much wetland and streams is going to be important.

7:30 PM Discussion – Proposed wetland application fee increase.

Willson provided a table with proposed application fee increases compared to fees of nearby towns. Angus asked if we need to change the regs. Willson replied yes change the regs but not the bylaw. Boice asked if increases are based on other communities current fees. Willson stated we're adding fees for

documents that we currently don't charge for but that take time to process and other towns do charge for. Healey suggested making the Emergency Cert. application \$75.

Boice moved and Brooks seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-0) to approve the application fee increases as presented in the “Wetland Filing Fees Comparison – 1/8/13” table.

Miscellaneous Untimed Items:

- Emergency Certification – MA DCR Norwottuck Rail Trail

Ms. Willson stated Thanksgiving weekend storm washed over the drainage channel bank and washed out a gravel road belonging to Amherst College. They fixed the road. DCR asked for this Emergency Cert to repair the drainage channel bank that was damaged.

Boice moved and Brooks seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-0) to ratify the Emergency Certification.

- Update – Local Water Withdrawal Subcommittee

Ms. Angus stated that the LWWSC last met on 11/25/13. That was the 3rd mtg. Have done a lot of research into what/if other communities are doing in regard to small water withdrawals and found little information. Have found local irrigation and water conservation restrictions, and a lot of new banning on commercial water withdrawals (bottled water). Ms. Angus stated the original goal was to identify water bodies and come up with thresholds for withdrawals based on scientific data for impact, documented flow rates, and proposed removal rates. She added there is not a lot of local stream flow data available. Ms. Healey stated she has been researching impact and has not been able to find applicable research/data. Mr. Ziomek asked if they had looked at the SWMI data or conclusions. Mr. Brooks stated SWMI folks have not been too responsive. Mr. Ziomek said he could look into that. Ms. Willson stated that on-line there is SWMI GIS interactive map that shows the watersheds in Amherst.

Ms. Angus stated current approach is instead of setting quantifiable thresholds we would amend our current regs saying we do consider withdrawals impact, require NOIs, and review on a case by case basis. Ms. Healey added in this way we are putting the burden on the applicant to provide flow and impact data. She stated she and two interns will continue to research impact. Ms. Angus stated we need to come up with what specifically applicants would need to provide and they would need to be tied into specific resource area performance standards. Applicants would need to provide an alternatives analysis (wells, ponds, crops that don't require a lot of water). We're not giving up.

- Sign LAND Grant Agreement Saul Property

Boice moved and Healey seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-0) to approve and sign the LAND Grant Agreement for the Saul Property.

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

ADJOURNMENT

VOTED unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 8:10 p.m.