

**Conservation Commission Meeting  
August 10, 2016  
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall**

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Meeting called to order by Ms. Angus, Chair at 7:06 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

Present: Angus, Boice, Clark, Butler

Staff: Ziomek, Willson

**CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS**

Willson stated the Hampshire College solar project is underway she inspected their silt fence. UMASS solar project at Lot 44 has also started she has visited that site a couple times and asked for additional erosion control and for gasoline generators to be moved off of catch basins. Willson showed the location of those projects on the overhead. She said conservation staff mowed the trail that was permitted through wetlands at Bluebird Meadow Cons Area. DPW has started re-paving Northeast St. and Willson inspected erosion control. There is an Emergency Cert on tonight's agenda for replacement of a culvert as part of that re-paving project.

Ziomek said things at Puffer's Pond going well. The Puffer's Pond Pancake Breakfast raised about \$6,500. The majority of the work under the LWCF grant is complete, we still need to get the roof on the kiosk and Willson will design the materials to go in the kiosk. Hitchcock Ctr will be moving to their new location, so Ziomek in discussions with Hitchcock about how much they would still like to use the Larch Hill site. Bluebird Meadow will be mowed soon. Because it's so dry conservation staff was able to mow all of Atkins Flats. Ziomek meeting with volunteers regarding new location for community gardens and other needs for gardening. The idea would be for the gardeners to form a board or group so they could govern themselves and do all maintenance. Willson added that Carol Gray got in touch again about her signs for Bluebird Meadow and would like to send them electronically and discuss them at the Commission's next meeting. She added there are a couple hard copies here of the updated draft LMP for Mt. Pollux, we plan to take final comments at our next meeting and vote to approve.

**MINUTES**

**No minutes to review**

**PERMITS/DISCUSSIONS**

**7:15 PM Informal Discussion**– Christopher Young for trail and bridge behind Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 867 N. Pleasant St.

Willson stated Christopher Young is proposing a trail and bridge project to get his Eagle Scout badge. She provided a map of the parcel on the overhead. She stated there are approximately 5-10 ft of wetland on either side of the stream bank. Willson said she asked Christopher to come in for an informal discussion so the Commission could decide what kind of application they would like from him. She added Chuck Dauchy has delineated portions of the resources areas on this parcel for both this project and another project the church is proposing.

Christopher said the church would like a trail and bridge for people who walk that way to the church and for the pre-school to use for env. education. He said there is already a cleared walking path from the church to the stream. He would continue that path by installing a bridge and clearing a path on the other side to the field. The bridge would be 12-14' long, it would extend over the bank approximately 2'. Boice asked if he has plans already for the bridge? Young said he has a basic idea but no plan yet. Angus asked if other permitting would be needed from the Town. Ziomek said no, the banks aren't steep enough to require a building permit.

Angus stated if you want to keep the permitting simple and not have to do mitigation the bridge must completely span the wetlands. Young said he could expand the bridge so it goes over the wetlands. He can design one that won't need anything in the middle for support. Clark stated there is a bridge further east for a dirt road that crosses the stream. He said you could have the trail come around the church and go to the east and use that bridge. Young said he thinks the brush is very thick there and it would take a lot of clearing.

Commission decided Young should try to design a crossing that does not impact wetlands and could, therefore, submit a RFD. If wetlands impacted must submit NOI. Young to get in touch with Willson with final design.

**7:30 PM Request for Determination (cont'd from 7/27/16 mtg)**– Hitchcock Center for the Environment for installation of footpaths and temporary bog bridging within resource areas off West St. (Map 22D, Parcels 10, 11, 13 & 15).

Angus stated she wasn't here for the last meeting so needs a summary of the project. Boice stated Hitchcock would like to construct walking trails behind their new building. They provided a plan at the last meeting, however, it didn't have the wetlands delineated and the Commission asked them to come back with more information.

Pete Westover, Conservation Works, stated that NEE has since delineated the resource areas and created a map. Willson showed the map on the overhead. Westover showed where the trail and bridge will be located. Butler said the trail looks very close to the wetland in the NW corner. Westover said it stays in the buffer zone. He added that moving day for the Hitchcock Ctr is in two weeks and opening day one month. He said he will back in a year or two when funding is available to make the trails ADA

accessible. The bridge uses diamond piers for footings, they have very little impact when you put them in and they are very secure once in. The bridge completely spans the wetland so no impact to resource areas. Tedd Watt, Hitchcock Ctr., said he's walked where the trails are will go and it's a nice diversity of habitats for educational purposes. He wanted to note that on the map the blue trails are Hampshire College and they won't let Hitchcock use those because they use them for their farm.

**Boice moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-0)** to close the public meeting and issue a Negative Determination 3 for the footpath and bridge installation.

**7:45 PM Enforcement Order (cont'd from 7/27/16 mtg)** – Eversource Energy for filling of an intermittent stream bank off Henry St. (Map 6A, Parcel 91).

Boice stated this is our third meeting regarding this enforcement order, at the last meeting we came to a consensus on the bridge and we talked about some mitigation ideas. We don't have a quorum so can't vote to approve Enf. Ord #3 or any other decision tonight but we should still continue the mitigation discussion. Boice will not be at our 8/24/16 mtg.

Devleena Ghosh-Brower, Eversource Energy, and Kate Wilkens, Tighe & Bond, presented. Ghosh-Brower stated they met with the Hitchcock Ctr, Town Engineer, Wetland Adm, and some abutters on 8/3 and discussed replacement of the salamander tunnels as a mitigation option. Met on-site. There is drainage issues and damage to the wing walls and head wall. They plan to replace the entire crossing, construct a swale on the western side outfall so water can flow in that direction better, extend the tunnels on both sides, and rebuild wingwalls for drift fencing to attach to. She asked Hitchcock if the grated top was necessary, they responded yes. She needs clarification on Hitchcock's recommendations.

Brandon Hedrick, UMASS, Ted Watt & others, Hitchcock Ctr. presented. Watt thanked the Commission for thinking of the tunnels as a mitigation project. Tunnels on Henry St. are the first amphibian tunnels in North America. Hitchcock Ctr is in charge of maintaining the tunnels and running the migration nights in early spring. Tunnels are 30 yrs old and in disrepair. The amphibians do use the tunnels less because they don't function as they should. He did speak with Jason Skeels, Town Engineer, who is on board for using a grated top again for the tunnels. Hitchcock has now had time to research and their recommendations are different from when we originally met. They would like the safety bollards.

Hedrick stated Hitchcock conducted a study last fall on how efficient the tunnels are. Traffic studies indicate traffic volume hasn't changed much since 1987. Studies show that without the tunnels 84% of the population would be killed in each year which would eventually bring the end of the population. Studies show that the tunnels should be 2'X2' for the salamanders to want to enter, they need to be lit, and have a natural substrate. Salamanders can swim but they don't seem to like a flooded tunnel. The drift fences need to be taller, they need a lip, and attached to the wing walls better (no gaps). Landscaping fabric could be used at the transition from the drift fence to the wing wall. ACO (tunnel company) produces a drift fence system. A grate on top both lets in light and moisture. ACO has a new tunnel system that could be considered. Fixing the dry wells and constructing a swale on the western side would greatly improve drainage.

Ghosh-Brower stated one issue with the grated top is sand accumulation in the tunnels. Hedrick said they clean the tunnels each year. The grates work great because after they clean the muck they pour sand, soil back in for substrate through the grates. Ghosh-Brower stated on the east side there is a very steep grade so putting in a 2'x2' tunnel (would need to be over a ft lower) and extending it out from the road would require quite a lot of excavation. Goodman added the tunnels should be sloped to the west so water will flow through them. Watt added the top would follow the grade of the road but the bottom of the tunnel would be sloped.

Willson stated Hitchcock should summarize/itemize what's needed for the project. Tunnel, grate top, wing walls, dry wells, and fencing. Katy Wilkens stated there are still questions regarding the grate top being used on a public road. Hedrick stated Jason Skeels, Town Engineer, was OK with the grate top and these tunnels with grate tops are used at airports. Jeremy, Tighe & Bond engineer, stated an ordinary drainage grate is not as sturdy as the ACO grated tunnels. Watt stated Jason Skeels has already provided some grated materials he's fine with.

Willson to organize a meeting with Hitchcock, Eversource, Tighe & Bond, and Jason Skeels to finalize design. Willson to discuss Enforcement Order and MADEP 401 Emerg. Cert review with Dave Foulis. Will also discuss new access to Eversource ROW off Markethill Rd at next meeting.

**No quorum no vote. Eversource will come back on 8/24/16.**

#### **Miscellaneous Untimed Items:**

- Emergency Certification - Amherst DPW for culvert replacement on Northeast St. Willson presented a map on the overhead showing the culvert location. Culvert was crushed, work has been completed, Commission is just ratifying.

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

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

#### **Adjournment**

**Voted** unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 8:45 PM.