

**SOUTH HADLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 10, 2021**

<https://vimeo.com/522914310>

As Approved

Present: Bill DeLuca, Chair; Neva Tolopko, Vice-Chair; Jim Canning, member; Bill Bacis, Member; Stephanie Clymer, member; Garth Schwellenbach, Member; Tom Dennis, member; Mary Grover, associate member; Anne Capra, Conservation Administrator/Planner; Colleen Canning, Senior Clerk Planning and Conservation Department

Chair DeLuca called the virtual meeting to order at 6:00PM and reviewed the protocols for virtual meetings.

Agenda Item # 9--- Open Public Forum

Rudy Ternbach, Ferry Street, submitted a request to address the Commission during the open public forum. He stated that there was a Conservation Commission in the state of Massachusetts that was appointed through local election. He requested that the Commission consider the concept at a future meeting as the South Hadley Conservation Commission was appointed through the Selectboard.

Agenda Item #1 --- Request for a Certificate of Compliance for #288-0449 from Loomis Communities, Inc. at 246 North Main Street

Robert Bucknell, Facilities Director for Loomis Village, was present at the meeting.

The Conservation Administrator explained that Loomis Village was issued Orders of Condition to upgrade 4 crossings associated with the trail system at their housing development. This Order was separate from their standing order for ongoing site maintenance. The associated work was completed and confirmed through a site visit with the facilities director.

Chair DeLuca inquired about the ongoing special condition #38 which related to the installation of railings. The Conservation Administrator explained that the condition only related to the scope of work as defined in the Orders of Condition which explicitly related to crossings.

Robert Bucknell agreed with the Conservation Administrator's assessment of the site conditions.

Motion: Vice-Chair Tolopko moved to issue a Certificate of Compliance to DEP File #288-0449 issued to Loomis Communities for improvement to four trail crossings at 246 North Main Street with ongoing conditions. Commissioner Canning seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #2 --- Public Meeting for Request for Determination of Applicability filed by James and Kathryn Watkins for removal of trees within Buffer Zone at 13 Sycamore Park

James Watkins, owner of 13 Sycamore Park, was present at the meeting.

James Watkins explained that members of the Commission attended a site visit to assess the proposed removal of seven dead trees on his property. He offered to plant blueberry bushes as mitigation for their removal.

The Conservation Administrator explained that there were a number of trees of the property which the applicant wished to remove. However, not all of them were within jurisdictional areas. Seven trees identified for removal were within the outer Buffer Zone of an intermittent stream which is what triggered the need for the Commission's review.

Vice-Chair Tolopko, who was on the site visit, stated that there was a tight cluster of dead trees on the property which warranted removal. Commissioner Canning, who was also on the site visit, agreed with the Vice-Chair's assessment.

The Commission considered appropriate mitigation for the proposed removal. The survival of blueberry bushes was questioned as it required dry soils to thrive. The mitigation plantings were required to survive for two years to satisfy the conditions of the determination. The Commission was comfortable with mitigation plantings – either bushes or trees – given that the Conservation Administrator approved the species selected.

Motion: Commissioner Dennis moved to issue a Negative Determination #3 for the removal of trees within the Buffer Zone at 13 Sycamore Park with special conditions. Commissioner Schwellenbach seconded the motion. Six (6) out of seven (7) members voted in favor of the motion through roll call. Commissioner Clymer abstained from the vote.

Agenda Item #3 --- Public Meeting for Request for Determination of Applicability filed by Daniel R. Blaney for construction of a seasonal floating dock on the Connecticut River at 317 River Road

Daniel and Elizabeth Blaney, owners of 317 River Road, were present at the meeting.

Daniel Blaney explained that he was interested in installing a seasonal dock across the street from his house. The property was owned by Holyoke Gas & Electric and he had their approval for the installation. Natural Heritage reviewed the application and determined no take of habit would result from the installation. The dock would be constructed utilizing barrels and further design specifications were available in the application materials.

The Conservation Administrator stated that an abutter to the project location called with concerns relating to downed trees at the project site and the presence of concrete pads. Daniel Blaney stated that trees would not need to be removed to create access to the dock. The referenced concrete pad was a few houses away and not near the location of the proposed dock.

Chair DeLuca asked if a permanent pathway would be created to access the dock and how materials to construct the dock would get to the site. Daniel Blaney explained that a permanent

pathway was not proposed. The dock materials would be transported to the site via the Connecticut River.

Chair DeLuca asked how the dock would be stored during the winter months. Daniel Blaney explained that the dock materials could be disassembled and stacked on top of one another. He stated that a few of his neighbors had docks and some brought the materials up to their house while others stored them within proximity to the river bank.

Commissioner Canning asked how steep the grade of the land leading to the dock was. Daniel Blaney explained that the grade was not steep and was easily traversable.

Paul Lusignan, 396 River Road, addressed the Commission. He inquired about the agreement the applicant had with Holyoke Gas & Electric (HG&E). As he recalled, HG&E only allowed for the installation of docks under certain conditions. Additionally, he advocated for the dock materials to be stored by the applicant's residence during the off season. Daniel Blaney stated he had an agreement with HG&E to install the dock as would be required as they own the property.

The Commission considered the need for a site visit. The majority of commissioners felt they had enough information to render a determination.

The Commission considered special conditioning to be associated with their determination. The dock was authorized to be in-use from the months of May to October. During the months when the dock was not in use, it was to be stored in a manner that would not negatively impact the Riverfront Area. No storage was to take place within the historic canal.

Motion: Commissioner Clymer moved to issue a Negative Determination #2 for the installation of a seasonal dock across the street from 317 River Road with special conditions. Commissioner Schwellenbach seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) members voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #4 --- Public Meeting for Request for Determination of Applicability filed by Michael Russo for removal of trees within a Bordering Vegetated Wetland and Buffer Zone at 42 San Souci Drive

Michael Russo, owner of 42 San Souci Drive, was present at the meeting.

Michael Russo explained that there were dead and damaged trees located on his property which he wished to remove. A site visit was held with members of the Commission to evaluate the request. Commissioner Schwellenbach, who was on the site visit, stated that the applicant's assessment was accurate.

Chair DeLuca inquired how the area would be accessed during removal. Michael Russo explained that removal would not take place until next autumn or winter when the removal would be less impactful to site conditions.

The Commission discussed appropriate mitigation. Associate Member Grover recommended that the trees in the existing wetland could be used as a reference for appropriate mitigation species. The applicant's mitigation plan would require a 2:1 replacement ratio with approval from the Conservation Administrator on tree species.

Motion: Commissioner Clymer moved to issue a Negative Determination #2 and #3 for removal of trees within Bordering Vegetated Wetland and Buffer Zone at 42 San Souci Drive with special conditions. Commissioner Bacis seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #5 --- Public Hearing for a Notice of Intent filed under Chapter 240 Wetlands Bylaw by Eversource Energy for activities associated with a maintenance project along Lines 1327/1428/1447 between Hadley Street (Route 47) and Brainerd Street

David Askew, representative of Eversource Energy, was present at the hearing along with the project consultant, Melissa Coady of Tighe and Bond.

Associate Member Grover recused herself from the hearing as she had a professional relationship with the applicant.

Melissa Coady explained that a site visit was held with the Commission to evaluate the proposed work. During the visit, the commissioners saw the 8 wooden structures to be replaced which required matting in resource areas for access and/or work padding.

Chair DeLuca remarked that Eversource received permitting for work in this right-of-way in the past. He inquired what differentiated this filing from the previous ones. Melissa Coady explained that this filing sought to replace existing wooden structures. Previous filings were for the replacement of the wiring systems located on different structures within the same right-of-way.

Melissa Coady detailed how the work areas would be accessed. There was an existing utility road near McCray's Farm which would be used to access the first site. All access paths and work areas within resource areas would utilize timber matting. Replacement of two existing structures would take place in resource areas and selective trimming would be required near another structure. No tree cutting would occur.

Chair DeLuca inquired when the work was scheduled to happen. David Askew stated that the work was scheduled for June 2021. Chair DeLuca noted that the work was scheduled during the height of bird breeding season. Unfortunately, it was not feasible to change the work schedule and the importance of the work was acknowledged.

Department staff noted that a phone call was received from a project abutter, Ron Grzesick at 106 Alvord Street, who identified that the utility right-of-way was used by unauthorized motorized vehicles.

Joanna Brown, Charon Terrace, submitted a question through the meeting's 'question and answer' function. She asked if herbicides would be used during maintenance. Melissa Coady

responded that no herbicides would be used and any maintenance performed would be done with mechanical tools.

Motion: Commissioner Bacis moved to issue Order of Conditions under the local wetland bylaw to Eversource Energy for activities associated with maintenance projects along lines 1327/1428/1447 with special conditions. Vice-Chair Tolopko seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) members voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #6 --- Administrative Change Request to #288-0467 filed by Eversource Energy

The Conservation Administrator explained that the applicant was not prepared to address the topic tonight. Considerations for the request would be taken up at a future meeting.

Agenda Item #7 --- Hiring Peer Review for an Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) filed by South Hadley Electric Light Department (SHELD) for 545 Granby Road/Route 202

The Conservation Administrator explained that SHELD filed an ANRAD to affirm the wetland delineation for the property located at 545 Granby Road. This location was the anticipated site of SHELD's new administrative offices. Affirming the wetland delineation would help inform the applicant's decision in placement of the new building footprint. To aid in the Commission's review and approval of the delineation, a peer-review could be performed. The Conservation Administrator solicited proposals for peer-review. A vote of the Commission could be required to allow her to enter contact. The public hearing to consider the ANRAD would open at the Commission's next meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Canning moved to authorize the Conservation Administrator to enter into contact with a qualified firm under MGL Chapter 44, Section 53G to perform peer-review of the ANRAD filed for 545 Granby Road. Commissioner Bacis seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #8 --- Approval of February 17, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Draft minutes of the February 17, 2021 meeting were previously sent to the Commission for review. Chair DeLuca identified spelling errors in the draft.

Motion: Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to approve the February 17, 2021 minutes as revised. Commissioner Canning seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call

Agenda Item #9 --- Open Public Forum

There were no additional comments made during the open public form.

Agenda Item #10 --- Administrator's Report

315 Amherst Road

The Conservation Administrator explained that the grant to help fund the acquisition of 315 Amherst Road required that the sale be finalized by June 1, 2021. To remain on schedule, she initiated a contact with a wildlife biologist to generate a Baseline Document Report and was in the process of soliciting proposals for a land survey. In the near future, the Commission would need to consider a name for the property and appropriate signage.

Chair DeLuca inquired what a baseline document entailed. The Conservation Administrator explained that the document sought to identify the existing conditions of the site. It could be used to identify encroachments in the future.

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR)

The Conservation Administrator explained two local APRs received offers from the State. If the current land owners accepted that offer, the Town would be required to offer a match to secure the restriction. The commission was using their funds to help acquire the aforementioned property at 315 Amherst Road. Therefore, the Commission's available funding would likely not be enough to contribute the required match. An allocation of funding through Town Meeting would likely be required to secure the APRs if the property owners wished to peruse it.

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant

The Conservation Administrator explained that a meeting was held with town departments and the town's consulting engineer to discuss the results of a town-wide culvert assessment. The next step would involve identification of the most compromised culverts followed by preliminary engineering designs for each.

Chair DeLuca inquired if the assessment included review of critical linkages. The Conservation Administrator explained that the assessment did not directly incorporate critical linkages but the assessment did incorporate an index of ecological integrity.

Conservation Area Tree Removal

The Conservation Administrator explained that there were a number of trees downed along trails in multiple conservation areas. She was in the process of seeking price quotes for their removal.

Queensville Dam/ Titus Pond Dam Removal Feasibility Study

The Conservation Administrator explained that she was working with DPW and an engineering consultant to craft a grant application to evaluate the feasibility of removing the Titus Pond dam. As the dam and pond were in degraded condition, the study could provide insight on how to improve the ecological functions of the area.

Agenda Item #11 --- Other New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
As Approved
Colleen Canning, Senior Clerk, Planning and Conservation Department

Appendix

Document	Document Location
Meeting Q&A report	Attached
Rudy Ternbach e-mail	Conservation Files

March 10, 2021 Conservation Commssion Meeting 'Question and Answer' Transcript

#	Question	Asker Name	Asker Email	Answer(s)
1	Will there be any herbicides applied in the course of this work?	Joanna Brown	joannabr@comcast.net	live answered
2	Thank you	Joanna Brown	joannabr@comcast.net	live answered