

**SOUTH HADLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 17, 2023**

Present: Neva Tolopko, Chair; April Doroski, Vice-Chair; Bill DeLuca, Member, Garth Schwellenbach, Member; Tom Dennis, Member; Kathleen Davis, Member; Louise Croll, Associate Member; Rebekah Cornell, Conservation Administrator; and Colleen Canning, Planning/Conservation Coordinator

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

Agenda Item #1 --- Open Public Forum

No members of the public spoke during the open forum.

Agenda Item #2 --- Minutes

Draft minutes of the May 3, 2023 meeting minutes were sent to the Commission for review.

Motion: Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to approve the meeting minutes of May 3. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Five (5) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion. Members Davis and Schoendorf abstained from the vote.

Agenda Item #3 --- Public Hearing: Notice of Intent filed by Val Shvets to secure an Order of Conditions permitting the applicant to install an elevated walkway extending to a floating dock on a cove of the CT River at 80 River Road (Parcel 22 Map 5). DEP File #288-0477

The applicant's consultant, Mike Mocko, was present at the hearing. He explained that the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) had reviewed the project and approved it following some minor revisions. A botanist would be required to be on site during construction. As envisioned, work to construct the walkway and dock would take 2-3 days. Lawn mats will be placed to allow a mini excavator to access the work site. The dock will be built first and the walkway will be built starting on the riverbank and then moving back towards the residence. The mats will be removed as construction is completed.

Commissioner Schoendorf asked if plugs would be planted in disturbed areas. Mike Mocko responded that plugs could be planted but he recommended that the site naturally revegetate.

Commissioner Schoendorf questioned if the vegetation beneath the temporary mats would be disturbed during site work. Mike Mocko did not indicate concern for negative impacts to the vegetation as it would not be covered for more than a week.

Commissioner DeLuca observed that a draft condition included allowance for a footpath. Administrator Cornell replied that the condition was associated with a previous OOC which allowed for construction of the home. The condition would be eliminated.

Commissioners considered requiring reseeding and/or planting of plugs at areas of disturbance. Commissioner DeLuca indicated support for the condition as it was typical for decisions of the Commission.

The Commission reviewed the special conditions for permit approval issued by NHESP.

Motion: Vice-Chair Doroski moved to issue Order of Conditions #288-0477 for installation of an elevated walkway and floating dock at the cove of the Connecticut River at 80 River Road with special conditions as identified during the hearing. Member Schoendorf seconded the motion. Four (4) out of Four (4) eligible voting Commissioners (Tolopko, Doroski, Schwellenbach, and Schoendorf) voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #4 --- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

The Commission picked up discussion on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) which began at the previous meeting. Unlike the previous meeting, all members were present so the Commission could consider steps furthering desired initiatives. Administrator Cornell provided the Commission with a compilation of topics discussed at the previous meeting which identified short and long term goals; as well as areas of study and subcommittee objectives. The Commission decided to schedule a subcommittee meeting for May 23 to further discuss implementation of DEI efforts.

Agenda Item #5 --- Growing Wild South Hadley

The Growing Wild South Hadley initiative had established a series of educational lectures with the next session being held on June 8 at the South Hadley Public Library. A subcommittee meeting would be held the following week to discuss additional initiatives. Commissioner Dennis had been researching the price and availability of plugs in preparation for a give-way event.

Agenda Item #6 --- 2023 Farm License Agreements

Local farmers had historically hayed certain properties owned by the Town and the Conservation Commission. As intended, the farmers would enter an agreement with the Town which stipulated which properties would be hayed and required payment from the farmers for use of the property. McCray and Barstow Farms both were both interested in continuing the arrangement which would require approval from the Commission for use of the property for the 2023 growing season.

Commissioners discussed haying practices and harvesting methods which benefited conservation efforts as follows: 1) maintenance of pollinator pathways; 2) strategic timed hay cuts around bird breeding periods; 3) utilization of a flushing bar and reduced speed when mowing for protection

of bees; 4) delaying mowing while plants in bloom; 5) consideration of differences between mowing and haying; 6) rotation of crops to keep soil healthy; and 5) mowing in patterns that prevent turtle mortality.

Administrator Cornell had spoken with the farmers and they were amenable to adjusting the timing and number of cuts for certain parcels within the agreement. As the scope of the agreement was narrow, encouragement for methods which reduced negative impact could be part of future conversations and education. Administrator Cornell was working towards fostering a good relationship with local farms and farmers. The farming agreement was only for one year and needed to be executed to allow work to commence with appropriate documentation and to allow the Town to receive payment.

Motion: Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to execute a Farm License Agreement with McCray and Barstow Farms for the 2023 season. Commissioner Dennis seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) Commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #7 ---Administrator's Report

Administrator Cornell detailed the following items:

- *South Hadley Library* - The Department of Public Works would remove several dying trees at the library. Replacement trees would be planted at a 2:1 ratio and would be located in an area which increased their chance for survival.
- *153 Newton Street* – The Commission issued an Enforcement Order to the property for unauthorized vegetation removal. The owner successfully complied with replanting requirements. Authorization had been granted for removal of 1 declining tree on site.
- *Upcoming projects* – The Commission could anticipate reviewing the following applications at a future meeting: 1) RDA for trail improvements along the Robert Frost Trail; 2) RDA for improvements to the parking lot at the River-to-Range Trail; 3) RDA for a replacement sign at Chapdelaine's Furniture Store; and 4) an NOI for vegetation management along Eversource's Right-of-Way.

Vice-Chair Dorkoski noted that she would likely need to recuse herself from deliberations on the Eversource project as her employer worked closely with the utility company.

Agenda Item #8 --- Other New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Adjournment

Motion: Commissioner DeLuca moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Colleen Canning, Planning/Conservation Coordinator

Appendix

Document	Document Location
NOI 288-0447 - 80 River Road -Filing (3/8/2022)	Conservation Files
NOI 288-0447 - 80 River Road - NHESP Comments (4/11/2023)	Conservation Files
NOI 288-0477 - 80 River Road - Plan (3/8/2022)	Conservation Files
NOI 288-0477 - 80 River Road - NHESP Conditions (4/21/2023)	Conservation Files
DEI Comment Compilation (5/17/2023 Agenda Materials)	Conservation Files