

**SOUTH HADLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 7, 2023**

Present: Neva Tolopko, Chair; April Doroski, Vice-Chair; Bill DeLuca (arrived at 6:35 PM), Member; Tom Dennis, Member; Kathleen Davis, Member; Jessica Schoendorf, 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 17 meeting were sent to the Commission for review. Outside of spelling and grammar errors, commissioners discussed the accuracy of items relating to discussion of *Agenda Item #6 – 2023 Farm License Agreement*. Staff would incorporate the edits into a new draft for the Commission to consider at their next meeting

Agenda Item #3 --- Public Meeting: Request for Determination filed by Chap De Laine's Furniture to remove an existing sign and replace with new within Riverfront Area at 136 College St (Map 41 Parcel 49)

The applicant, Lisanne Chapdelaine, was present at the meeting.

The furniture store, Chap de Laine's, was seeking to reface an existing sign that was within the Riverfront Area of Stony Brook. The sign's existing steel frame would remain in place and only the wooden face would be replaced with new material. Sign replacement would require removal of two existing shrubs. The Commission's mitigation policy would require replanting of four shrubs. A native shrub variety was recommended.

Commissioner Schoendorf asked if erosion controls would be implemented during site work. Lisanne Chapdelaine confirmed that erosion controls would be installed.

Motion: Vice-Chair Doroski moved to issue a negative determination #2 for replacement of an existing freestanding sign at Chap de Laine's Furniture, 136 College Street, with conditions as identified during the meeting to include erosion control implementation and replacement ratio of 2:1 for shrubs removed. Commissioner Dennis seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #4 --- Public Meeting: Request for Determination filed by Kestrel Land Trust to relocate 600' of the Robert Frost Trail within buffer zone of an intermittent stream. (Map 62 Parcel 11)

The project consultant, Ward Smith of Wendell Wetland Services, was present at the meeting. He explained that Kestrel Land Trust was seeking to relocate a segment of the Robert Frost Trail as the current trail location would seasonally flood. The intention was to relocate the trail north to allow the trail to cross the stream over a bridge. The project had been reviewed by the *Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program* (NHESP) and a botanist had assessed the area. Conditions of approval as issued by NHESP were as follows: 1) plants needed to be tagged prior to site work; 2) all work would be done with battery operated or hand tools; and 3) turtle training would be required for all site workers.

Motion: Commissioner Davis moved to issue a negative determination #3 for relocation of a segment of the Robert Frost Trail with conditions as identified during the meeting including compliance with required conditions of NHESP. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #5 --- Public Hearing: Notice of Intent filed by Eversource for vegetation management activities associated with the Lines 1327 and 1428 right-of-way

Vice-Chair Doroski recused herself from the hearing as her former employer had a professional relationship with the applicant.

David Askew of Eversource Energy was present at the meeting along with project consultant Melissa Coady of Tighe and Bond. Melissa Coady explained that, with the recent installation of updated electrical towers, safety requirements for clearance were now 30 feet. Therefore, the historic limit of maintained clearance would be expanded to allow for the 30 foot clearance requirement to be satisfied. There was no change to the existing limit of the right-of-way as all necessary clearing would be performed therein. Tree and vegetation removal under this project would represent the new limit of clearing for future routine maintenance.

Commissioner Schoendorf asked how the areas of tree and vegetation removal would be managed. Melissa Coady responded that the locations were not typically re-seeded as the area needed to be maintained for access. However, woody material could remain in particular locations given individual circumstances.

Commissioners addressed concern for the potential for invasive species to take over newly cleared areas. David Askew responded that Eversource did manage certain invasive species as part of targeted removal. Eversource crews were trained in invasive plant management and the utility focused their efforts on invasive shrubs.

Commissioner DeLuca joined the meeting at 6:35 PM.

Chair Tolopko asked how the site would be accessed and what equipment would be used for removal. David Askew responded that the majority of the cyclical work would be accessed by foot. The majority of removal would be done with hand tools and through cabling.

Chair Tolopko noted that Sumac Trees were identified for removal and asked if they grew to a height which warranted removal. David Askew stated that they could grow over 15 feet which necessitated removal.

Administrator Cornell noted that a pre-work site meeting with the Conservation Administrator could be conditioned under issuance of Order of Conditions.

Motion: Commissioner Schoendorf moved to grant a waiver for the proposed vegetation removal within the 50' Conservation Zone. Commissioner Dennis seconded the motion. Four (4) out of four (4) voting commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call. Vice-Chair Doroski recused herself from deliberations and Commissioner DeLuca was not present during the entire hearing.

Motion: Commissioner Schoendorf moved to issue Order of Conditions 288-0484 with special conditions as discussed during the hearing and to accept mitigation payment of \$23K for offsite mitigation. Commissioner Dennis seconded the motion. Four (4) out of four (4) voting commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call. Vice-Chair Doroski recused herself from deliberations and Commissioner DeLuca was not present during the entire hearing.

Agenda Item #6 --- Public Meeting: Request for Determination filed by the Town of South Hadley to install a vegetative drainage swale, bio-retention area, and conduct parking lot improvements at River to Range Trail within Buffer Zone.

Administrator Cornell detailed the proposed project as the filing was submitted on behalf of the Town. Existing stormwater systems at the River to Range Trail parking lot had proven to not be adequate as the parking lot periodically flooded. This presented dangerous icy conditions during the winter months. Enough funding had been secured to install a swale and raingarden in efforts to redirect and detain stormwater more effectively than current conditions. During site work, a silt fence would be installed to demarcate the limit of work.

Commissioner Schoendorf recommended resizing the raingarden by elongating it along the swale. Commissioners supported the recommendation.

Commissioner DeLuca questioned how it was determined that site work would improve conditions. Administrator Cornell explained that the proposed design was created with input from the DPW Director, Planning Director, and Parks Department.

Commissioner DeLuca asked how deep the swale would be and questioned if the project needed review for historic or archeological significance. Administrator Cornell replied that the swale would be no deeper than 12". During permitting of the trail system, archeological artifacts were

found. A condition could be applied which required affirmation that the site location was not determined to have historic or archeological significance.

Chair Tolopko noted concern for construction sequencing and the presence of milkweed and monarch butterflies. However, it was intended that all work would take place within areas of existing mowing so milkweed would not be affected.

Commissioners reviewed conditions of approval as follows: 1) the orientation of the raingarden will be elongated; 2) the project location will be confirmed to not impact areas of historic or archaeological significance; 3) construction staging will be on the parking lot; 4) excavated material will be disposed of offsite; 4) top soil will remain on site; 5) an educational sign will be placed at the raingarden; and 6) test pits will be done before site work.

Motion: Commissioner DeLuca moved to issue a negative determination #3 for installation of a swale and associated site improvements to the River to Range Trail parking lot located at 240 Ferry Street with special conditions as reviewed during the meeting. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #8 --- Other New Business

Mount Holyoke College – Utility Maintenance and Repair

Chris Domina, Assistant Director of Landscaping and Cleaning Services at Mount Holyoke College, was present at the meeting.

Administrator Cornell explained that Mount Holyoke College had an Order of Conditions (OOC) for general maintenance. The OOC identified that different types of work had different notice and approval requirements. One such category of work was ‘bridge maintenance’ which required prior approval from the Conservation Commission for bridge work requiring tarping and work over water.

Chris Domina explained that two utility conduits running the length of Prospect Bridge needed to be repaired. Firstly, an electrical line conduit had rotted away and the existing wiring needed to be replaced. To replace the wiring, excavation would need to be done on either side of the bridge. Scaffolding would be utilized to complete the repairs. The second unity line needing repair was for steam and condensate as the lines were leaking. Tarps and scaffolding would be utilized. Chris Domina anticipated that work would take one week to complete.

Motion: Commissioner Davis moved to issue approval for repair of utilities running along Prospect Bridge under Mount Holyoke College’s existing maintenance OOC #288-0396. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #7 --- Administrator’s Report

Administrator Cornell detailed the following items:

- *Upcoming Projects* – The Commission would consider permitting the following projects at a future meeting: 1) Notice of Intent for Titus Pond Restoration; 2) Notice of Intent for Mountain Ave culvert replacement and 3) Request for Determination of Riverfront clean up at 44 Canal Street.
- *Community Events* – The following events and workshops would be held: 1) Queen’s Circle stormwater workshop on June 10; 2) Growing Wild lecture at the library on June 8; and 3) River-to-Range clean up event on June 10.
- *DEI Subcommittee* – Conversations were underway regarding hosting a joint event with the Hampshire Bird Club.
- *SHELD* – Administrator Cornell conducted a site visit to review the completed electrical utility connection at Titan’s Pier. The Commission could anticipate considering a Certificate of Compliance at a future meeting.
- *Mountainbrook Subdivision* – Development of lots was nearing completion. Administrator Cornell conducted site visits to review the limit of approved clearing.

Agenda Item # 8 --- Other New Business

Associate Member Croll shared an email regarding the ‘grow native Massachusetts’ program which could benefit discussions of the Growing Wild South Hadley subcommittee.

Chair Tolopko would not be in attendance at the Commission’s next meeting on June 21. Vice-Chair Doroski would chair the meeting with the exception of public hearings involving her employer, Fuss and O’Neill. Commissioner DeLuca was appointed to chair those hearings.

Adjournment

Motion: Commissioner DeLuca moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Colleen Canning, Planning/Conservation Coordinator

Appendix

Document	Document Location
RDA - Chap de Laine’s Furniture Store	Conservation Files
RDA - Robert Frost Trail	Conservation Files
NOI - Eversource	Conservation Files
RDA - River to Range Parking lot	Conservation Files
Meeting Background Notes - Mount Holyoke College Bridge Repair	Conservation Files

