

SOUTH HADLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 16, 2020
<https://vimeo.com/459128097>
AS APPROVED

Present: Bill DeLuca, Chair; Jim Canning, Vice-Chair; Bill Bacis, Member; Neva Tolopko, Member; Steph Clymer, Member; Garth Schwellenbach, Member; Tom Dennis (arrived at 6:22 PM) , 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. Six (6) out of six (7) Commissioners were present at the virtual meeting.

Agenda Item #1--- Public Hearing for Notice of Intent #288-0467 filed by NSTAR Electric DBA Eversource for the Line 1113 Structure Replacement Project which traverses an area northeast to southwest from East Street in Granby near the South Hadley town line to New Ludlow Road

Chair DeLuca called the Public Hearing to order by reading aloud the hearing notice at 6:04 PM.

Jonathan Roberge, Eversource Energy, was present at the Public Hearing along with his consultants from GZA; Mary Brittain, Dan Nietzsche, and Robin Casioppo.

The Conservation Administrator explained that Eversource submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) to upgrade their transmission structures at Line 1113 which crossed over multiple municipalities including South Hadley. She clarified that the NOI was not submitted as a 'limited' project under the Wetlands Protection Act and that the *National Heritage and Endangered Species Program* reviewed the project and determined 'no take' of habitat resources within the South Hadley portion of the project.

Mary Brittain overviewed the project scope and presented the plan sets. She reviewed each of the plan sheets which spanned from the South Hadley town line at Granby to the town line at Chicopee. Gravel work pads and access ways were required to be constructed though Buffer Zone. Utility structure replacement within Buffer Zone was required as well. There was no permanent gravel proposed in wetland resource areas. To create adequate access, grading would be required within the inner Buffer Zone near structure 10287.

Commissioner Dennis arrived at 6:22 PM.

Chair DeLuca inquired about the white hatching on the plan set. Mary Brittain responded that it represented tree removal or trimming. There was an estimated 750 sq. ft. of removal proposed in Bordering Vegetated Wetland.

Matting was proposed through an Isolated Vegetated Wetland (IVW) between structure 10289 and 10290. However, Eversource was engaging with a private property owner to gain alternative access to structure 10290 which would not require matting within jurisdictional areas at that location.

Chair DeLuca inquired how the structures were accessed during emergency situations. Jonathan Roberge explained that much of Eversource's projects are permitted to allow for access in emergency situations. In cases of work within Conservation Commission jurisdiction, the area would need to be matted or Eversource could work with private property owners to gain alternative access.

Vice-Chair Canning asked for clarity in where trees and vegetation would be removed within jurisdictional areas. Mary Brittain explained that tree clearing was proposed near structure 10281 and 10292. Tree cutting and trimming were allowed activities within the deed restriction tied to the utility easement. Robbin Casioppo added that trees were only proposed for removal for safety reasons. Chair DeLuca stated that the Commission typically considers mitigation for trees removed within jurisdiction. As it would not make sense to replant trees within the utility right-of-way, the Conservation Administrator advocated for financial mitigation to install boulders at the Bynan Conservation Area trailheads. Motorized vehicle use had been reported and the Commission had expressed interest in installing measures to curb the prohibited use. The ATVs and dirt bikes were accessing Bynan through use of the utility-right-of way; as well as the public roads. The Conservation Administrator observed that the utility structure upgrades included defining access routes throughout the right-of-way which could be utilized by motorized vehicles. She added that installation of boulders at one trail would cost \$1100. Jonathan Roberge offered \$2,100 in mitigation on behalf of Eversource Energy.

The hearing was closed at 7:32 PM.

Motion: Vice-Chair Canning moved to issue Orders of Condition to DEP File # 288-0467 for the Eversource line 1113 structure replacement project with special conditions to include mitigation for vegetation removed in the amount of \$2,100 to implement measures to control motorized vehicle access to Bynan Conservation Area. Commissioner Clymer seconded the motion Seven (7) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #2--- Discuss and Consider FY21 Conservation Land Stewardship Plan

Due to the monetary mitigation requirement associated the OOC #288-0467 discussed under Agenda Item #1, the Commission no longer needed to use their own funds to install boulders at Bynan Conservation Area trailheads to curb motorized recreational vehicle use. As the Commission had previously agreed to installation of the boulders, the Conservation Administrator had already solicited price quotes for the work. Therefore, the installation could begin soon.

As was discussed at the previous meeting, the Tree Committee had expressed interest in installing kiosks at the Hahn-Warner Arboretum. The Conservation Administrator explained that Ted Boulais, Chair of the Tree Committee, had engaged with a few private companies who were interested in donating materials and labor to install the kiosks. The Conservation Administrator would work with the Chair of the Tree Committee and the Town Administrator to ensure that all legal requirements were satisfied to accept the donation if offered.

Due to these recent developments in funding for land management activities, the Conservation Administrator stated she would report to the Commission at their next meeting on alternative activities to allocate spending for.

Agenda Item #3 --- Administrator's Report

MVP Action Grant

The Conservation Administrator explained that the Town was awarded \$105,000 through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant program. The funding would be used to undergo a Town-wide culvert assessment which would identify the most compromised culverts and offer preliminary engineering designs for upgrades. Additionally, the grant included funding for a Town-wide tree planting campaign and funding to update the Town's stormwater bylaw. To receive funding through the grant, the Town would be required to contribute a 25% match. This could be achieved through \$16,100 as in-kind labor through staff and volunteers and through allocation of \$20,000 from the Commission's mitigation fund.

Motion: Commissioner Clymer moved to authorize the use of \$20,000 from the Conservation Commission's mitigation account as the required in-kind match for the MVP Action Grant. Vice-Chair Canning seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

315 Amherst Road- Chapter 61A Property

The Conservation Administrator explained that Chair DeLuca and department staff walked the property at 315 Amherst Road to perform an initial assessment. She was planning to schedule another site visit with representatives of the Department of Fish and Game, who were in review of a grant application to help the Conservation Commission acquire the property. The Conservation Administrator noted that commitment to restoration of the site could make for a more competitive application.

Invasive Plant Management – Water Chestnut

The Conservation Administrator explained that herself and volunteers pulled hundreds of pounds of Water chestnut from within Bachelor Brook. The initial work party was scheduled earlier in the season but was cancelled due to concerns of cyanobacteria. However, the work party was rescheduled after the water testing rendered results under the recommended EPA threshold for cyanobacteria for posting a recreational swimming advisory.

Dog Attack

The Conservation Administrator explained that the Public Health Department reported to her that a dog was attacked at Bachelor-Stony Brook Conservation Area. The owner of the attacked dog requested that signage be installed near the site of the attack reiterating that dogs needed to be leashed. The Conservation Administrator explained that the attack took place near the Connecticut River at a location where trails were not formalized. The dogs who were the aggressors in the incident pulled up to shore on a boat. The rules for use of Conservation Areas were posted at the trailheads. While the Commission was sympathetic to the incident, the

location would not be appropriate for signage and the Commission acknowledged that some visitors of the Conservation Areas would not adhere to the rules regardless of how many signs were installed.

Meeting Dates

The Conservation Administrator reviewed the upcoming meeting date schedule. In keeping with the regular schedule, there would be a meeting on December 30, 2020. As that fell on a popular vacation week, the Commission members were agreeable to postponing that meeting to January 6, 2021.

Minutes

Draft Minutes of the August 26, 2020 meeting were previously transmitted to the Commission for review.

Motion: Vice-Chair Canning moved to approve the draft minutes of August 26, 2020. Commissioner Clymer seconded the motion. Seven (7) out of seven (7) members voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #4 ----Other New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:12 PM

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

Appendix

Document	Document Location
Notice of Intent # 288-0467	Conservation Files