

MINUTES OF JULY 27TH, 2023 MEETING

Virtual access via phone (646) 558 8656 or web at www.zoom.us with Meeting ID 831 7535 0798 / Password 102426

A meeting of the Longmeadow Conservation Commission was called to order by Chair John Bresnahan at 7:03 P.M. on July 27th, 2023 and was conducted in a hybrid format, consistent with the March 29, 2023 Bill extending certain provisions that were previously held during the state of emergency.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair John Bresnahan, David Dumais, Patrick Carnahan, Andrea Chasen, Kimberly Barton.

Absent: Kiernan Mulcahy

OTHERS PRESENT: Ryan Nelson from R Levesque & Associates.

COMMISSION REORGANIZATION: Andrea Chasen made a motion, and was seconded by Ms. Barton, to nominate John Bresnahan as Chair and David Dumais as Treasurer for the new fiscal year. Roll call vote - Mr. Dumais: yes; Mr. Carnahan: yes; Mr. Bresnahan: yes; Ms. Chasen: yes; Ms. Barton: yes. All in favor 5-0, motion passed. While there will be no change in these roles, the commission will prepare to transition to a new administrative assistant due to Ms. Bianca Damiano's departure later this summer; she continues to will work diligently with the Town Manager's Office and HR to find a suitable successor in a timely manner.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING: Chair John Bresnahan made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Dumais, to accept the minutes of June 15th, 2023 as presented. Roll call vote - Mr. Dumais: yes; Mr. Carnahan: yes; Mr. Bresnahan: yes; Ms. Chasen: yes; Ms. Barton: yes. All in favor 5-0, motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Salary \$6,200.00; Maintenance: \$5,000; Office Supplies \$100; Miscellaneous \$1,900; Conservation Agent \$21,705; Wetlands Protection Fund \$7,877.15; ConCom Trust Fund \$9,811.94. The new category of Conservation Agent was introduced for this fiscal year after it was approved at Town Meeting.

DISCUSSION – RIVERFRONT AREA SURVEYING/MAPPING PROJECT: Mr. Nelson proceeded to provide the following highlights:

- a) Any project to enhance the Conservation's riverfront area will require the filing of a Notice of Intent (NOI) and a review from the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and the recommendation is to file these applications concurrently.
- b) The commission is still tasked with reviewing the NOI and steps should be taken to address any potential conflicts of interest that could arise. MassDEP may appeal the final decision if there are issues.
- c) The design scheme presents a 6-space, ADA-accessible parking area and an ADA-accessible pedestrian path within the property that branches out towards two seating areas where concrete pads would exist to anchor outdoor picnic tables and continues towards the river bank.
- d) It also proposes the removal of a small number of trees and, in their place, the planting of native species (as found on other portions of the CT River) that require less maintenance and are shorter in height to allow for ample views of the river. A couple of trees have been identified as diseased/past their useful life or dead and removal is also recommended for these to ensure public safety as well as systematic removal of invasive species in specific areas.
- e) Also recommended is the removal of old pieces of concrete that are embedded in the riverbank, though it was cautioned that this would be a costly and elaborate endeavor.

Some of the strategies discussed by the commissioners on how to execute the project were:

- a) Obtain an itemized estimate of the entire project (with categories dedicated to construction/earthwork, tree work, invasive species management, outdoor furniture, others) and submit this cost as part of a CPC grant application at their next season.
- b) Assign each of these estimate categories to commissioners in order to distribute the burden of specification development and subcontractor follow up.
- c) Contact MassDEP's Mark Stinson for guidance on how to sustainably and sensibly achieve the goal of creating the river viewing area.

- d) The parking area could be relocated in a northeast direction to eliminate the “roundabout” created by an existing tree, though this would require the relocation of an existing utility pole.
- e) A portion of the accessible walkway would also be relocated to allow for a larger open area that would be easier to mow and would be a better backdrop for recreational activities.

The commission is deeply grateful to Mr. Dumais for the extensive work he’s performed with R Levesque & Associates and encouraged him to proceed to the next phase of fund securement with the CPC program that is set to begin in the coming months.

DISCUSSIONS – BEAVERS IN FLOODPLAINS: Recently Chair John Bresnahan and DPW Director began a collaboration, which included communications with the town’s Health Director, to mitigate flooding impacts to nearby infrastructure and farm fields. The commission provided an Emergency Certification to manually reducing the dams’ heights in specific areas but as of date the Health Department has not been contacted regarding beaver entrapment permits. Additionally, Mr. Bresnahan met with Beaver Solutions at the site of the two beaver dams and discussed all the possible alternatives to address the issue with beaver entrapment being the pragmatic approach due to the depth of the water and other factors. Kimberly Barton proposed considering the use of creosote, a wood preservative that is an active ingredient in many pesticide products, around trees to deter beavers from using them to build dams. Though the use of such product raised some concerns, the commissioners encouraged Ms. Barton to do some research on the matter and share her findings with the group at a later time.

OTHER BUSINESS – The following items were discussed:

1. The state’s Pesticide Bureau has been investigating the Baggott Farms’ operations at Gasek Farm in recent weeks and, while citations were issued at the time, such violations have since been addressed and the farming operations are now in compliance: field workers have now been provided with portable hand and eye washing stations as well as posted educational materials on the safe handling of pesticides.
2. This season extensive flooding in the floodplains, due to a combination of unusually high precipitation values and beaver activity, has severely impacted harvesting at Gasek Farms as numerous crops have been lost or large portions of the fields have remained under water for long periods of time. Patrick Carnahan has suggested both the commission and the Town Manager’s Office consider the possibility of providing Baggott Farms with some form of compensation.
3. Chair John Bresnahan continues to engage in communications with Town Manager Lyn Simmons, DPW Director Sean Van Deusen and Police Chief Robert Stocks as they continue to review floodplain issues related to farming and illegal activity (unauthorized vehicle use, trash dumping) and discuss the future of the area. The alternative of abandoning farming activity in the area isn’t feasible on a number of fronts: land that has been farmed for an extensive period of time gets overpopulated with invasive species once farming activity stops (unless a meticulous, multi-year and costly restoration program is executed) and the unsightly landscape would promote abandonment and entice the very legal activities the Town continues to battle against.
4. On August 9th Tighe&Bond is scheduled to provide a presentation about Cooley Brook’s recent hydrologic and hydraulic study. Commissioners are encouraged to study the material in advance of the presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 9:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bianca Damiano