

MINUTES OF AUGUST 30TH, 2023 MEETING

Virtual access via phone (646) 558 8656 or web at www.zoom.us with Meeting ID 818 8343 4644 / Password 032834
Physical Location: Longmeadow Public School's Central Office, Room A15 – 535 Bliss Rd., Longmeadow, MA 01106

A meeting of the Longmeadow Conservation Commission was called to order by Chair John Bresnahan at 7:02 P.M. on August 30th, 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, Kimberly Barton, Patrick Carnahan, Andrea Chasen. **Absent:** Kiernan Mulcahy.

OTHERS PRESENT: Selectman Dan Zwirko, Town Engineer Tim Keane, Al Laakso, Chris Karney, Tracy DeMarco, Phil Schafer.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING: Chair John Bresnahan made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Dumais, to accept the minutes of August 9th, 2023 as presented. Roll call vote - Mr. Dumais: yes; Mr. Carnahan: abstained; Mr. Bresnahan: yes; Ms. Chasen: abstained. All in favor 2-0 with two abstentions, motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Salary \$5,376.59; Maintenance: \$5,000; Office Supplies \$100; Miscellaneous \$1,176; Conservation Agent \$21,705; Wetlands Protection Fund \$8,264.65; ConCom Trust Fund \$9,828.51.

Commissioner Kimberly Barton joined at 7:06pm.

CONTINUATION, NOI – DEP 205-340 - 82 DUNN ROAD, HOME RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT: Due to the ongoing NHESP review process and the ongoing effort to close out prior projects on the property per MassDEP's recommendations, Mr. Chris Karney from Pioneer Land Planning, LLC and the commissioners agreed to continue the hearing of this matter to the next available meeting date.

RDA – TREE REMOVAL AT 126 WHEELMEADOW DRIVE: A large red oak tree has been on a steady decline in recent years despite efforts to periodically trim dead limbs. Nearby oak trees have fallen recently, causing damage to other both healthy and deceased trees. Removing this particular tree, which is past its useful life and continues to decline, is a proactive approach to ensure the wellbeing of the resource area. The work is to be performed with a crane due to the size of the limbs and the cut logs are to be placed perpendicular to the bank without blocking the stream; the tree is at the top of the steep hill line and its roots are already exposed on the lawn-facing side.

Chair John Bresnahan made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Dumais, to issue a Negative Determination #2 and #6. 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.

NOI – DEP TBD – LEAF RECYCLING PROGRAM ON WEST ROAD: As of the start of the meeting, MassDEP had not released a DEP number for this case. Mr. Keane indicated the following:

- a) The proposal reflects the same scheme and best practices that have been previously approved and implemented in previous years. The program operates during the Fall season and is open to the residents during specific times of the week.
- b) Since 1990 the Town uses the Gasek farm property, located on the floodplains, for the management and reuse of Longmeadow citizens' leaf collection material.
- c) The program has and will continue to be managed by DPW and consists of leaf collection at a drop-off location and ultimately spread onto the agricultural property to provide natural compost, thus reducing the need for artificial soil amendment.
- d) The project is outside the NHESP jurisdiction.
- e) The plan proposes the same traffic slow as previous years (vehicles accessing the south end of West Road via Tina Lane and its rail crossing station) and will continue to conduct ground elevation surveys twice per year to monitor any changes. The current log, going back several decades, continues to show that elevations have not changed over time.

- f) Since the groundwater sample and testing requirements have always produced results within acceptable ranges, the Town is requesting that this requirement be removed from the project moving forward.

With no members of the public present to voice their opinions, Chair John Bresnahan made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Carnahan, to close the public hearing portion of this review. 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.

The commission discussed establishing the following special conditions:

1. Program directional signs are to be in place prior to work commencement—this to ensure last year’s mishap of individuals driving down the wrong street and causing disturbance on that neighborhood.
2. All leaves are to be spread in its entirety by December 30th.
3. Leaf drop off will only be allowed in areas agreed upon by DPW and the commission.
4. Proper trash receptacles are to be provided in the drop-off area to prevent littering.
5. Appropriate restroom facilities and handwashing stations are to be provided to field workers.
6. Field elevation monitoring is to continue twice per year.
7. A meeting with representatives from the commission, DPW and the farmer are to be conducted twice per year (in the spring before planting and in the fall after harvesting) to review field conditions.

The commission also discussed the possibility of requesting soil testing in lieu of groundwater testing but such a change may prove cost-prohibitive without added benefits. There were also considerations about potential scenarios in which a farmer would be unavailable to tilt the leaves; while this is a situation that has never occurred since the program’s genesis, it was also noted that such scenario is unlikely due to the constraints placed by the contract with the operating farmer. Due to a lack of DEP number, the commission will defer further discussions and final deliberations to the next available meeting.

DISCUSSION – RUSSELL ROONEY BROOK PRESENTATION: Ms. Barton shared with the commission a series of photos taken in recent times of various parts of Russell Rooney Brook (defined as an intermittent stream per regulations and established databases) which show the presence of water for an extended period of time. She also presented a 1920 map showing the brook in a minimally developed area and an infrastructure map showing a nearby stormwater drainage system with the final outfall at the head of the brook. With the recent hydrologic and hydrology study performed on Cooley Brook indicating how said brook is fed nowadays by a series of outfalls without any natural source of groundwater, she concludes there are similarities between the two cases. Based on the photographic evidence presented, she encourages the commission to redefine the brook as perennial and to consider solutions that may help reduce the collection of water pollutants before they reach the brook. While the commission is aware that relabeling streams and brooks perennial or intermittent is not within the authority of local governments and that there are extensive procedures for such task laid out by Massachusetts regulations, which have been circulated to the group in the past, the group is interested in utilizing the review of Russell Rooney Brook’s headwaters as an opportunity to engage a wetlands consultant for an educational experience for the group. Ms. Barton will contact the homeowners within that area in writing to request permission for a future site visit.

OTHER BUSINESS – The following items were discussed:

1. New Conservation Agent Leah Grigorov, with prior conservation experience, will begin her tenure on August 31st and will be based in the DPW building. She has been briefed on ConCom procedures and file locations and will assist the commission with administrative duties until a new individual is onboard. The commission looks forward to working with her in the future.
2. The commission bid a heartfelt farewell to outgoing ConCom Admin Assistant Bianca Damiano. She is deeply grateful to the group for their support and camaraderie during these formative years and encourage all to continue their hard work—let the record show that they made her cry in a good way.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bianca Damiano