

Conservation Commission

Minutes

February 14, 2023

Attendance: David Miller, Chair, Reed Pugh, Steve Cohn, Martha Hoyt, Ann Storer, Leri Layton, Elaine Vreeland, Administrator.

Minutes: The minutes of January 24, 2023, were approved unanimously.

Miyawaki Forest: Discussion. Presentation by Prassede Calabi, who presented information regarding the forest habitat and its functions. She noted that it is an urban forestation technique, that it creates dense mature forest in 1/3 to 1/10 of the usual time, it has up to 30 times the leaf surface area of grassland, provides excellent ecosystem function and carbon sequestration, is maintenance free 3 years after installation, and that it becomes more natural over time. She noted its success at over 3,600 sites worldwide, and that it the forest provides large increases in vertebrate and invertebrate species over time, due to the forest's ability to retain moisture, protect soil microorganisms with shade and to recycle nutrients through leaf litter. She added that the cost is about 50/50 with labor and materials, and that planting can be done by volunteers with some assistance from machinery. She concluded by saying that other benefits include that it builds community, educates, and can be installed on any size lot. Following the presentation members discussed possible locations at Swanton Street near the river, the High School, and at Wright-Locke Farm.

Muraco School Culverts: Con't. Public Hearing, Notice of Intent. It is proposed to install two 8-foot diameter culverts in the Aberjona River to supplement existing box culverts under the MBTA railroad crossing near the Muraco Elementary School at 33 Bates Road. It was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously to open the public hearing.

- Information Presented:
 - Supplemental Information Letter, dated 2/2/23, from Klaire Gubler, VHB.
 - Site Plans, VHB, dated 1/19/23.
- Representatives, Luke Boucher and Klaire Gubler, VHB

Luke Boucher presented the above cited information and responded to questions regarding dewatering and water treatment. He explained that the proposed dewatering process does not use a slurry, so extensive erosion control is unnecessary, and erosion control as shown in the plans is adequate. He noted that some trees will be removed to accommodate the jacking pit and river widening, as well as the need to remove of trees required for the roadway from the Transfer Station. Areas to be replanted have been identified, but the project will be unable to meet the

linear feet replacement number. He also noted that work on the nearby MWRA line will not interfere with this project as each project is scheduled for a different time. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to close the hearing and to issue an Order of Conditions. Assigned Commissioner: David Miller.

Washington Street Bridge Repair: Con't Public Hearing, Notice of Intent. It was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously to open the public hearing.

- Information Presented:
 - Revised Plans dated 1/30/23.
 - Response to Comments Letter 2/6/23, Alexandra Gaspar.
 - Engineering Comments, 2/13/23, Bryan Manter.
- Representative: Scott Brusco, PE, Weston and Sampson.

Scott explained that the project would make use of a sandbag coffer dam, first on one half of the riverbed and then on the other. He stated that the project would cause minimal vibration, as may be expected of construction making use of a Bobcat, paving equipment, and hand tools. He also stated that he expected that the duration of the work to be two to three months. No restoration of the riverbank will be required. It was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously to close the hearing and to issue an Order of Conditions. Assigned Commissioner: Martha Hoyt.

Cross Street Bridge Repair: Con't. public Hearing, Notice of Intent. It was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously to open the public hearing.

- Information Presented: Cross St. Notice of Intent Plan Set dated 1/30/23.
- Response to Engineer Comments Letter, dated 2/6/23, Alexandra Gaspar.
- Representative: Scott Brusco, PE, Weston and Sampson

The meeting opened with a discussion of the time of year restrictions for migrating herring, and the Commission determined that they wanted no "in-water" work to take place from April 1st to June 30th, and from September 1st to November 15th to accommodate the herring migration. It was also determined that no restoration would be required, as there would be no disturbance outside the bridge. It was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously to close the public hearing and to issue an Order of Conditions. Assigned Commissioner: Martha Hoyt.

10 Converse Place: It was noted that the applicant had appealed the Commission's decision, and to hold all correspondence in the event they would be needed at a later date.

Winning Farm: Request for Certificate of Compliance.

- Representatives: Mark Vaughan, Esq. and Christine Hung, Esq.

David Miller gave a background of the project. He noted that the applicant had submitted a Conservation Restriction to the state as per the Order of Conditions, and that there would be supplemental changes. He also stated that two proposed easements had been reviewed, and changes sent to town counsel to be forwarded to the applicant. It was moved, seconded, and approved to issue a provisional Certificate of Compliance pending submission of as-built plans acceptable to the town engineer, revised easements documents, and confirmation that a shipping container had been removed from the public parking area.

Town Hall HVAC Installation Minor Project: Discussion. Whether a project involving work located within the buffer zone, outside the floodplain, the Riverfront Area, limited to resetting approximately 40 feet of curbing, repaving approximately 310 square feet of existing parking lot, and no addition of impervious area, can be considered an Exempt Minor Project under 310 CMR 10.02(2)(b)(2)(p), which reads:

“Pavement repair, resurfacing, and reclamation of existing roadways within the right-of-way configuration provided that the roadway and shoulders are not widened, no staging or stockpiling of materials, all disturbed road shoulders are stabilized within 72 hours of completion of the resurfacing or reclamation, and no work on the drainage system is performed, other than adjustments and/or repairs to respective structures within the roadway.”

The applicant stated that although the project is a parking lot rather than roadway, the proposed work could be considered pavement repair, that erosion control will be installed at the perimeter of work, all disturbed areas will be stabilized within 72 hours, and no work on the drainage system is proposed. One tree will be removed and replanted on site. The matter was continued to February 28 to allow for conditions to be prepared.

High School Drainage Repair Minor Project: Discussion.

The proposed work for this project will include a raised crosswalk at the driveway entrance to the parking lot off Nelson Street, installation of a double grate catch basin on Nelson Street southwest of the driveway to the parking lot, relocation of a pipe connecting the newly constructed storm drain to the existing storm drain, and installation of two new manholes, one outside the 100-year floodplain, and located more than 200’ from the Aberjona River. All work will be level with existing elevations, so there would be no impact on floodplain storage. In addition, it was proposed to clean the storm drain lines, and to remove a rock and tree roots. This project was requested under Wetlands Protection Act Regulations at 310 CMR 10.02(2)(b)(2)(i):

Installation of underground utilities (e.g., electric, gas, water) within existing paved or unpaved roadways and private roadways/driveways, provided that all work is conducted within the roadway or driveway and that all trenches are closed at the completion of each workday.”

It was determined that this work would qualify as an Exempt Minor Project and would not require a filing with the Commission.

Tree Bylaw: Update. David Miller reported that the Tree Bylaw Committee has determined that their goals could be better served by revitalizing the existing Permanent Shade Tree Committee and reviewing its existing regulations.

Spreadsheet of Work by Resource Areas: Continued to February 28, 2023.

Conservation Commission comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals: Discussion. David Miller explained that the ZBA has requested more detailed commentary from the Conservation Commission for all applications, regardless of location. He presented a Power Point presentation regarding the interaction between the Wetlands Protection Act, the Winchester Wetlands Bylaw, and the ZBA regulations. He noted the timing each one follows, the need to obtain one permit before the other, and suggested methods to make the process operational. He concluded by noting he and Elaine are in currently discussions with David Feigenbaum, Chair of the ZBA.

Aberjona Initiative and Aberjona River Day/Earth Day: Discussion. Reed Pugh reported that he has been speaking with the Cultural District, and that the Commission and the Cultural District would be holding their respective events the same day. He noted that they are preparing an outdoor sculpture, a large wire fish, to be filled with trash collected from the river. The event will be held on Earth Day, April 22nd. There will be further efforts on advertising.

Submitted by:

Elaine Vreeland