

Holyoke Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes 2/11/2021 (Remote via Zoom)

Conservation Commission Members Present: Michael Dodge (Chairperson), Bernice Bowler (Vice Chairperson), Mary Moriarty, Jeffery Horan , Price Armstrong

Conservation Commission Members Absent: Rosemary Arnold

Staff Present: Yoni Glogower (Holyoke Conservation Director)

Members of the public present: Christopher Karney (R. Levesque and Associates), Melissa Coady (Tighe & Bond Inc.), Gary Roberts (Tighe & Bond Inc.), John Perdrizet (Resident).

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Michael Dodge called the public meeting to order at 6:16 PM. He explained the protocols for remote open meetings.

2. Public Hearing (continued) – Notice of Intent (DEP 186-0286)

Applicant: Peter Martins, Salmar Realty Inc.

Representative: R Levesque Associates, Inc.

Location: 500 Easthampton Road (MBP 213-00-003)

Description: Commercial Development within the Buffer Zone of Bordering Vegetated Wetlands

Chairperson Dodge invited Christopher Karney to present the project on behalf of the Applicant. He explained that they were close to wrapping up the stormwater plan with the City Engineer, and were only waiting to learn the required length of the deceleration lane from the transportation engineer.

Christopher Karney also said that Assistant Director of Planning Jeffery Burkott had requested that the Conservation Commission sign off on the project prior to a determination by the Planning Board, at least so far as the permanent improvements within limits of work are concerned. He shared a map onscreen showing the limit of work silt fence up to the edge of existing pavement on the site, with a few areas outside to remove utility poles cut at grade, plant trees shrubs and sow seed mix. He requested that the Conservation Commission at least approve these work limits for the Planning Board, as well as the installation of a guardrail along the paved boundary.

Chairperson Dodge asked if there were questions from Commissioners. Commissioner Horan clarified with Christopher Karney that those boundary approvals would not be required at this meeting, and further asked if there had been further conversations with the City Engineer about how to manage storm flow off of Easthampton Road. Christopher Karney answered that they had discussed the need to segregate the flows generated on-site and on the road, but that they were still in dialogue about the best way to accomplish this. Commissioner Moriarty asked if there were any updates on the designated snow storage areas. Christopher Karney answered that currently the snow storage areas were the same as in prior plans.

Commissioner Horan asked what the lingering concerns of the Planning Board. Christopher Karney answered that the main concern was traffic from the drive-thru backing up onto Easthampton Road and obstructing southbound traffic. Director Glogower asked if a third party traffic study would be requested by Planning, Christopher Karney answered that they were working with McMann Associates for traffic study information and that they did not anticipate a third-party review.

With no questions from the public, the Commission voted unanimously with one absent to continue this item to the 2/25 Public Meeting.

### 3. Public Hearing – Notice of Intent (HWPO 02-2021)

Applicant: Holyoke Water Works

Representative: Tighe & Bond Inc.

Location: Apremont Highway (MBP 193-00-001)

Description: Construction of a new water storage tank and appurtenant site features within the Buffer Zone of Isolated Wetlands

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to open the Public Hearing for this item.

Chairperson Dodge invited Melissa Coady and Gary Roberts of Tighe & Bond Inc. to present this project on behalf of the Applicant. Melissa Coady shared a map on screen showing the proposed location of a new water tank to serve Western Holyoke, on a site chosen for ideal location, elevation, existing infrastructure, and soils. The work would involve clearing about 1.5 acres to build a second water tank and associated access road and piping.

Gary Roberts offered background on the existing water tank on site that was built in 1987, and explained that Holyoke Water Works determined that a second storage tank should be constructed to better meet water needs and build in redundancy so that the old tank could be taken offline for maintenance without interruptions to service. Out of a dozen sites, this area was determined to offer the least impact to wetlands or MESA habitat while still being viable for HWW's needs. He explained that the proposed construction would allow the water to flow in series in one direction.

Gary Roberts shared a map onscreen that laid out the proposed work areas in relation to wetland jurisdictional areas, including clearing of a corridor to connect the new tank to existing piping on Apremont Highway, underground valve vaults to control water flow into the new tank and conduct water sampling, expanded paved access road including widening near the existing entrance, two stormwater detention basins, de-chlorination chamber, and the cleared area for the tank itself ringed by broken traprock. They hoped the construction would be able to take place the same year.

Chairperson Dodge confirmed with Tighe & Bond that abutter notifications had been successfully submitted along with the NOI application. Chairperson Dodge opened the hearing to questions from Commissioners. Commissioner Moriarty asked for clarification on the

different locations where work would take place within the 100 foot buffer zone. Melissa Coady identified these locations on the map, and reiterated that no work was proposed within the 50 foot no-build zone. Commissioner Moriarty requested clarification on what vegetation would be cleared in the proposed work area, and Melissa Coady confirmed where trees would be removed.

Commissioner Moriarty asked if permeable pavement had been considered, Gary Roberts answered that they had not, since they were able to meet the stormwater requirements with the standard impervious paving at a lower cost. Commissioner Moriarty asked where the two stormwater basins and de-watering structures would discharge. Gary Roberts explained that a hydrant placed outside the 100 foot buffer zone would be used to remove residual water from the tank during draining. The stormwater basins do not discharge to the sewer system. Commissioner Moriarty suggested looking into pervious pavement to mitigate flows into these structures, and Gary Roberts said he would look into that option for the next meeting. Commissioner Moriarty asked about proposed timeline, Gary Roberts answered that a site contractor would be hired to clear the site prior to contract award to save time and cost, and complete clearing activities prior to amphibian migration. Melissa Coady explained the process of NHESP “sweeps” whereby a licensed biologist would examine the site just prior to work and ensure that target species are not present prior to commencement of clearing activities. NHESP had given approval for this to take place during the geotechnical borings. Commissioner Moriarty asked when the vertebrate study would take place, and why any work could take place before that point. Melissa Coady explained that they had coordinated with NHESP and have a call scheduled to discuss the best way forward.

Commissioner Bowler asked about what types of erosion controls would be put in place, whether they would impact amphibian spring migration, and if there are any alternatives. Gary Peters answered that they would at least be there for the duration of the current years migration, and Melissa Coady explained that they would look into erosion control design that could leave openings for species to move through and final traps for predators in their conversations with NHESP. Commissioner Horan suggested that the new impervious surface might be attractive to amphibian species, and asked if the old tank would be taken offline permanently. Gary Peters answered that it would be offline only temporarily during repairs and repainting.

Commissioner Horan asked about alternatives to piping that had been considered outside of the 100 foot buffer. Gary Peters and Melissa Coady showed other options that they had looked at, but chose the current configuration due to the desire to minimize rock removal and operational considerations. Commissioner Horan and the Tighe & Bond representatives discussed the hydrology, topography, and parent material of the site.

Commissioner Bowler asked about the Operation and Maintenance (O &M) plan for paved portions for the site. Melissa Coady answered that it was a component of the Stormwater Plan and shared the applicable section on snow management. Commissioner Bowler requested the addition of signage to designate snow storage outside of wetland areas. Director Glogower noted that the lower detention basin would appear to be an appealing place to push snow if left unmarked.

Commissioner Moriarty requested that answers to the questions about NHESP approval and viability of permeable pavement be provided in advance of the next meeting. Melissa Coady answered that they would do so to the best of their ability. The Commission, Director Glogower, and Tighe & Bond agreed to schedule a site visit on Tuesday February 23rd, in advance of the next public meeting.

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to continue this item to the 2/25 Public Meeting.

#### 4. Formal Vote – Approve Minutes from 11/12/20 meeting

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to approve the minutes from 11/12/20 as prepared by Director Glogower

#### 5. Discussion – Holyoke Climate Change Planning

Commissioner Armstrong and Director Glogower led the Commission in a conversation about the logistics of creating a climate action plan for Holyoke. They considered the extent to which the role of the Conservation Commission would include such planning, or whether it would be more appropriate under the Office of Planning and Economic Development. Commissioner Armstrong cited other plans in nearby communities, and Director Glogower reviewed related grant programs that address resiliency and energy efficiency, such as Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Green Communities.

The Commission ultimately determined that Director Glogower should initiate a conversation with colleagues at OPED and Holyoke Gas & Electric to discuss options for moving forward with such a plan, and that the Conservation Commission could play a supporting and advisory role rather than lead the effort.

#### 6. Mail/other items not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

Dr. John Perdrizet and the Commission discussed his nomination from the Mayor to join the Conservation Commission pending approval from the full City Council. They discussed the responsibilities of the role.

Director Glogower shared that Dr. Perdrizet would be going before the Public Service Committee at their 2/17 meeting, and encouraged Commissioners to attend.

#### 7. Adjourn

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to adjourn at 8:55 PM.