

Holyoke Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes 08/22/2024 (Remote via Zoom)

Conservation Commission Members Present: Bernice Bowler (Chairperson), Jeffrey Horan (Vice Chairperson), Mary Moriarty, John Perdrizet, Patricia Normand, Michael Dodge

Conservation Commission Members Absent: Rosemary Arnold

Staff Present: Yoni Glogower (Holyoke Conservation and Sustainability Director)

Members of the public present: Rob Levesque (R. Levesque Associates), Pierre Richard

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bowler called the meeting to order at 6:17 p.m., explained the protocols of remote meetings, and requested that visitors sign in via the chat.

2. Public Hearing – Notice of Intent WE 186-0306 (continued from 7/25/24)

Applicant: Salmar Realty, Inc.

Representative: R. Levesque Associates

Location: 500 Easthampton Road (MBP 213-00-003, 212-00-001)

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

Chairperson Bowler announced that another continuance has been requested to October 24, 2024, as they aim to resolve matters with the planning board and with the Natural Heritage review.

Commissioner Perdrizet made a motion to continue to October 24, 2024. Commissioner Moriarty seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve said continuance, 6-0.

3. Public Hearing – Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation WE 186-0307 (continued from 7/25/24)

Applicant: Holyoke Gas & Electric

Representative: Fuss & O'Neill

Location: Ashley Reservoir and Gulf & Atlantic Railroad Right-of-Way (MBP 180-00-001)

Chairperson Bowler informed that they have an email request to continue the project to the meeting on September 26, 2024, because they are still working on updating their plan set because of DEP's request for changes.

Commissioner Moriarty made a motion to continue to September 26, 2024. Commissioner Dodge seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve said continuance, 6-0.

4. Enforcement Order Order – Issued 6/7/24 (continued from 6/13/24)

Location: 361 Whitney Avenue (MBP 176-00-036), 14 Bobala Road (MBP 176-00-038)

Description: Mowing and soil disturbance within detention swale/banks, dumping in BVW

Chairperson Bowler explained how the two different parcels have the same issue and thus were grouped into one enforcement. She noted a letter submitted by R. Levesque Associates, and invited Rob Levesque to address the board. He shared the aforementioned letter and a sketched map of the area via Zoom. He described work in 4 specific areas. He reviewed the items detailed in the enforcement order, including the requirement to repair and seed areas with soil disturbance, to remove sediment and overgrown vegetation, to establish a vegetation mowing schedule for certain areas, and to mow the bottom of the basin as needed to prevent woody vegetation from establishing. He then showed on the map where the required work would take place. He also shared and gave a brief overview of the operation and maintenance plan from August 2013.

Chairperson Bowler invited questions from the board. Commissioner Moriarty asked about area 4 on the map and how it may be mowed since it appears on the map to be so wet, and also asked for clarification for what "as needed" means in regards to when mowing is required. Pierre Richard and Mr. Levesque explained that a new contractor would be hired, the culvert would be cleared and a new process for mowing including wooden mats would possibly be used, but that the work is costly. Vice Chairperson Horan said that this is now a functioning wetland. He said the 2013 O&M plan is problematic. If that plan is used the same problem will occur in the future. He suggested not mowing the basin, just the sides with possibly some hand pulling. Mr. Richard agreed. Mr. Horan asked what is planned for area #2. Under what conditions and how will area #2 be treated. He also asked how the swale along the parking lot will be maintained. Mr. Levesque said they're happy to put together a revised O&M draft for review prior to the next public hearing.

Commissioner Normand expressed a desire to continue mowing along a certain walkway so people can easily walk between the two parking lots. Mr. Richard assured them that they intend to continue what they had been doing in that area and not make changes.

Vice Chairperson Horan inquired as to whether more description is needed about how sediment would be removed from the basin in area 2 on the map. Mr. Levesque expressed his willingness to have an inspection done of area 2 in order to provide a detailed description.

Commissioner Normand asked whether there are animals in the area that need to be considered, and Mr. Levesque affirmed that there may be, and that wildlife habitats will be taken into account, with proper relocations to take place if necessary.

Vice Chairperson Horan made a motion to continue the administrative hearing for the enforcement order to September 26, 2024. Commissioner Normand seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve said continuance, 6-0.

5. Formal Vote – Minutes from 7/25/24 Meeting

Commissioner Moriarty made a motion to approve the Minutes of July 25, 2024. Commissioner Perdrizet seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve said Minutes, 6-0.

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

Chairperson Bowler announced that there are no items on the agenda for the September 12, 2024 meeting, and therefore it will be canceled.

Chairperson Bowler mentioned that she and Yoni spent time on the phone discussing applicants for the open 20-hour administrative aide position, and that there are 8 applicants who will all be interviewed starting the coming Wednesday.

7. Adjourn

Vice Chairperson Horan made a motion to adjourn at 6:58 p.m., and the meeting adjourned.