

Holyoke Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes 09/2/2021 (Remote via Zoom)

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

Conservation Commission Members Absent: Rosemary Arnold

Staff Present: Yoni Glogower (Holyoke Conservation and Sustainability Director), Alexandra Maysonett (Conservation Commission Clerk)

Members of the public present: Alan Weiss (Cold Spring Environmental), Joseph LaFreniere (Revampit), Robert Dion (resident), Erika McElwey (resident), Adam Mulcahy (resident), Don Oyer (resident) Steven Bern (Holyoke BESS)

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Dodge called the public meeting to order at 6:18 PM. He explained the protocols for remote open meetings

2. Public Hearing (continued) – Notice of Intent (DEP 186-0290)

Applicant: Revampit, LLC

Representative: Cold Spring Environmental Consultants, Inc.

Location: 461 Mountain Road (MBP 190-00-030)

Description: Construction of a single-family home within Buffer Zone of Bordering Vegetated Wetlands

Chairperson Dodge stated for the record that he had listened to the recording from the 8/12/21 meeting that he had missed and would therefore be eligible to participate in the conversation and votes regarding this item.

Chairperson Dodge invited Alan Weiss to provide an update on the project. Vice Chair Bowler asked to review the updated Variance Request. Alan Weiss displayed the request onscreen and reviewed the alternatives analysis, including discussion on existing lot constraints, zoning, and Title V requirements. Vice Chair Bowler and Alan Weiss discussed the well and what type of equipment would be used inside the 50-foot buffer to dig up the well. The equipment used would be a tire rig that comes in and uses air rotary to drill down. Any excavated soil would be placed alongside replaced immediately following the installation of the water line.

Commissioner Moriarty asked about trees she had seen on the site visit that appeared to be along the line of the proposed line. Alan Weiss responded that in the event that trees needed to be removed, perhaps the commission could consider for every tree that gets cut down it will be replaced with the twice the number of trees. Commissioner Horan agreed that would be a reasonable course of action. Alan Weiss and Commissioners discussed the potential impact of drawing from the well on local wetland resources.

Vice Chair Bowler requested clarification on terminology used in the Alternatives Analysis related to the Title V. Alan Weiss explained the various requirements for septic system and leach field setbacks and how they were considered for the present project, as well as zoning requirements. House dimensions and layout were clarified in the site plans. Since there were no feasible alternatives for siting the well outside of the 50 foot buffer zone while still meeting these other requirements, the Applicant was requesting a Variance.

Commissioner Horan and Alan Weiss discussed possible locations for mitigation planting. They identified planting trees along the 50-foot buffer zone to demarcate the line as a possible course of action. Commissioner Moriarty requested that metal track and other debris currently on site also be removed as a condition of the work. Alan Weiss answered that if determined to be on the subject property, the Applicant would be amenable to removing it without disturbance. Commissioner Horan cautioned that asking the Applicant to remove wetland debris outside the current limit of work could lead to further issues if not permitted properly.

Vice Chair Bowler asked about the access driveway location and how the area of work was calculated. Alan Weiss reviewed the different polygons and how the areas were derived using AutoCAD software. The 7,500 s.f. limit of work would not need to include clearing in all areas, but only the portion necessary for building activities. Soil from the foundation excavation would not be located within the buffer zone, nor would anything enter the 50 foot buffer with the exception of the well drilling equipment and activities. Vice Chair Bowler requested additional detail on existing and proposed structures on the site plan.

Commissioner Perdrizet and Alan Weiss discussed the machinery that would be used to drill the well and what measures would be taken to stabilize the soil during activities. Chairperson Dodge asked how long the drilling would take. Alan Weiss answered that it would take place in only a few days with utilities installed and soil fully stabilized within two weeks.

Vice Chair Bowler asked for a full mitigation plan to be provided. Commissioner Horan suggested mitigation plantings along the 50 foot buffer line as recommended by Alan Weiss. Commissioner Moriarty recommended placing boulders to help demarcate the line, interspersed with the tree and shrub plantings. Alan Weiss stated that these markers were already noted on the site plans. The Commission requested that the Applicant return at the next meeting with updated mitigation and landscaping plan as well as further detail on the alternatives analysis, in order to be consistent with the standard established in previous projects. Alan Weiss also agreed to investigate whether the metal girder is present on the Applicant's property. The Commission and Alan Weiss further discussed the state and local regulations related to drilling of water wells.

With no further questions from Commission members, Chairperson Dodge Opened the discussion to comments from the Public. Residents asked questions about the two-acre requirement for buildable lots in this area, and raised concerns over whether vibrations from drilling would have an impact on other nearby wells. Chairperson Dodge reminded the public that the purview of the Conservation commission is restricted to the wetland regulations. Alan Weiss answered that the Building Commissioner stated that it was a buildable lot, and that activities would not raise a safety concern since they would take place in accordance with Title V regulations, and the review of the parcel showed no evidence of ledge. After concerns were raised about the potential need for blasting, Vice

Chair Bowler suggested addition of extra special conditions in the event that blasting be required. Residents also asked whether it would be feasible to bring water to the site via Rock Valley Road instead of drilling a well. Commissioner Moriarty suggested that such a discussion be included in the alternatives analysis. The Commission reviewed information requested to be provided at the next meeting, including detail on alternatives and possibility of connecting to city water.

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to continue this item to the next public meeting on 9/23/2021

3. Request for Certificate of Compliance – Order of Conditions (DEP 186-0283)

Applicant: Holyoke BESS

Location: Water Street (MBP 049-01-008, 009 and 010)

Steve Bern from Holyoke BESS informed the commission he had submitted all the necessary paperwork to close out the project, and had a site visit earlier in the week with Director Glogower and Commissioner Arnold. Director Glogower reviewed the project and showed pictures of the completed facility from the site visit. He recommended that the project had been completed satisfactorily in compliance with the Order of Conditions.

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to approve the Certificate of Compliance for this project.

4. Formal Vote – Approve minutes from 6/24/2021

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to approve the minutes from 6/24/2021.

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

Director Glogower shared that NHESP had granted a Conservation Management Permit for the new Holyoke Water Works Project water tower on Apremont Highway, as approved by the Conservation Commission. He explained that this final authorization would allow the project to proceed, and that he would set up a site visit if any commissioners wanted to do one prior to the beginning of work.

Commissioner Moriarty shared an update on the Scott Tower project from the Community Preservation Committee.

6. Adjourn

The Commission voted unanimously with one absent to adjourn the Meeting at 8:06 PM.