

Holyoke Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes 2/10/2022 (Remote via Zoom)

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

Conservation Commission Members Absent: Chelsea Gazillo and Rosemary Arnold

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

Members of the Public Present: None

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bowler called the public meeting to order. She stated that there were no members of the public present for the meeting.

2. Item No. 1 - Draft Budget for Fiscal 2023 (beginning July 1)

Director Glogower explained that, after meeting with each of the department heads and discussing their budget proposals, the Mayor would draft his own budget. Then that budget would be sent to the City Council Finance Committee for review, and a vote would be taken. Department heads were told to include a 3% cost of living adjustment. Director Glogower pointed out that this would give the Conservation Commission a chance to review expenses before submitting their proposal, which is due on February 18. He also mentioned that the Commission should try to hire their own clerical assistance. Chairperson Bowler stated that she and Glogower met with Aaron Vega of the Planning Department, and he supported the idea and suggested that they propose it to the Mayor.

Vice Chair Horan asked Director Glogower why the FICA and other components of his salary are not made viewable to the Commission. Director Glogower stated that all of the salaries in the city are shown as a single line item. He then explained the automobile allowance, which is a stipend he receives for driving his own car for work-related activities. Commissioner Dodge explained that all of the benefits for city employees comes out of one central account and has never been a part of the broader budget.

Director Glogower defined the "conservation restriction costs" as costs associated with the required monitoring of conservation restriction properties or with anything that may be needed to enforce the restriction, such as motion-sensor cameras to monitor ATV trespassing. Commissioner Moriarty asked if those costs would be paid by the Commission. Director Glogower explained that, if working with a land trust, the land trust would incur those fees; otherwise, the city would be responsible for their own restrictions.

Commissioner Moriarty asked if the amount shown for the Channel Marker Program reflected the true amount or the amount they would be willing to pay. Director Glogower explained that the \$3,500 was the true amount, and the \$2,500 was the amount they would actually pay. Commissioner Moriarty asked Director Glogower to elaborate on what would happen due to this decrease in funding. Director Glogower said that, if there came a point where they could not fund all of the markers on their stretch of the river, they would abandon the ones on the Northampton side first. Vice Chair Horan asked if they would be requesting TreeKeeper software, and Director Glogower said that they would. Chairperson Bowler asked what the new dues and subscription figure would be with the TreeKeeper software included. Director Glogower stated that the TreeKeeper software would cost \$6,250, bringing the total to \$8,450. Chairperson Bowler then asked if they should include the three-year figure in the budget or stick to one year. That way, the following year, they could show how money could

be saved by purchasing the three-year subscription. Commissioners agreed. Director Glogower stated that, if there were excess funds, they would try to cover the cost of three years. Chairperson Bowler settled on the idea of adding \$2,500. Commissioner Perdrizet asked about the "in-state travel" in the budget, and Director Glogower stated that it would be for mileage reimbursement if they needed to take a larger trip.

3. Item No. 2 - Roll Call Vote - To Approve Amended Budget

Commissioner Dodge made a motion to approve the budget as amended. Vice Chair Horan asked if the motion could give Director Glogower flexibility to negotiate with the Mayor, if needed. Commissioners voted unanimously to amend the motion and approve it.

4. Item No. 3 - Draft Minutes from InfraWare

Commissioners discussed the possibility of requesting either meeting summaries or verbatim transcripts only to lower costs. Commissioners agreed to have Director Glogower negotiate with InfraWare.

5. Item No. 4 - Additions to 2019-2025 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Director Glogower presented a letter that was received from the Department of Conservation Services after submitting the current Open Space and Recreation Plan, which covers 2019 to 2025. In 2018, the Department of Conservation Services sent a letter saying that the plan had been conditionally approved, which authorized the Commission to apply for Land and Water Conservation Fund and park grants. However, no grant payments would be made until the plans were finalized. Director Glogower stated that the challenge was that the ADA section was missing, and the Department of Conservation Services requires a self-assessment of every park property in the city.

Director Glogower shared what the assessment would entail. He said that they could soon make the land transaction for Anniversary Hill Park, which was a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant. However, as that grant is reimbursement based, the city would not be reimbursed its \$150,000 until the Department of Conservation Services requirements are met. Chairperson Bowler pointed out that, if they have older assessments, they could copy/paste some of that information to speed up the process. Commissioner Dodge suggested making the checklist more user-friendly with Google Sheets. They set a completion goal of June 30.

Commissioners discussed how to determine how many parks will need to be assessed. Commissioner Perdrizet suggested reaching out to individuals at the Senior Center to find volunteers. Commissioner Moriarty agreed and added that Holyoke Community College may have students interested in volunteering for the Commission.

6. Item No. 5 - Upcoming Items

Director Glogower pointed out that there are at least two Notices of Intent in progress. Chairperson Bowler proposed that she, Director Glogower, and Vice Chair Horan decide in one week whether another meeting is necessary and email the Commissioners. Commissioner Moriarty reminded the Commissioners to fill out their CPAC questionnaires.

7. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned the meeting.