

Holyoke Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes 05/12/2022 (Remote via Zoom)

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

Conservation Commission Members Absent: Rosemary Arnold

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

Members of the public present: Justin Mosca (VHB, Inc.), John Goodhue (MGHPCC), George Durante (MassDevelopment)

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bowler called the public meeting to order. She explained that the nature of a Zoom meeting required all votes to be done as a roll call vote. She asked those present not part of the Commission to use the chat box to indicate their name and either an address or business affiliation for attendance purposes.

2. Item No. 1 - Public Hearing – Notice of Intent WE 186-0294 (Continued from 4/28/2022 Meeting)

Applicant: Delorean Power

Representative: BL Companies

Location: 361 Whitney Avenue (MBP 176-00-036)

Description: Construction of a battery energy storage system within the buffer zone of bordering vegetated wetlands.

Chairperson Bowler announced that another continuation for this project had been requested. She said that the next step is to have a site visit before the next meeting, which previously had to be cancelled, and that it may be planned in the range of May 23 to May 25. She asked Director Glogower and the Commissioners about their availability. They agreed on 2:00 p.m. on Monday, May 24.

3. Roll Call Vote - Approve Continuance until 5/12/22

Chairperson Bowler requested a motion to continue the public hearing of Delorean Power until the next meeting on May 26. Commissioner Moriarty made a motion, and Commissioner Dodge seconded the motion. Commissioners then voted unanimously to approve the continuance.

4. Item No. 2 - Request for Determination of Applicability – Filed 4/27/2022

Applicant: Massachusetts Green High Performance computing Center, Inc.

Representative: VHB, Inc.

Location: 100 Bigelow Street (MBP 020-01-004, -01-005, -02-001, -2-003, -02-004)

Description: hydroponic container installation within the buffer zone of Banks of the second Canal

Chairperson Bowler announced that she, Commissioner Moriarty and Chairperson Glogower had already conducted a site visit. Then, Mr. Mosca gave a presentation. He shared a diagram of the project area. He explained that the project entails a small area of installation for some hydroponic farms, essentially a vertical farming structure inside 40' by 8' shipping containers. At the time of the meeting, the containers were located on Race Street. Access to their current parcel is being lost, so MGHPCC offered to allow them to be installed on their property. The project would create a crushed stone yard about 50' by 30' and set those containers in it. In addition, there would be a small concrete pad with an electrical cabinet. He used the diagram to explain the outline of the project area. At Commissioner Moriarty's request, Mr. Goodhue explained how this plan came to

fruition. Commissioner Moriarty asked about history, and Mr. Mosca explained that the site was cleaned up and why meadow mix was used. Vice Chair Horan provided a bit more history and said that the entire site required remediation. Director Glogower gave further information from historical records.

Chairperson Bowler brought up the variance request and asked that someone go through the four requirements. Mr. Mosca began by explaining the impact of the project on the 50-foot buffer zone, pointing out a particular manhole. He mentioned that there was not really an alternative design. Regarding limitations to the existing lot, he stated that the limitation was the pre-existing manhole. For proposed mitigation, he said the project was just temporary disturbance and that the area would be restored. Commissioner Perdrizet asked more about the manhole, and Mr. Mosca gave more details about the situation and why the proposed plans are necessary.

5. Roll Call Vote - Approve Variance

Chairperson Dodge requested a motion to approve the variance for the project at 100 Bigelow Street. Commissioner Dodge made a motion, and Commissioner Perdrizet seconded. Commissioners then voted unanimously to approve the variance.

6. Roll Call Vote - Approve Request for Determination of Applicability

Chairperson Dodge asked to discuss conditions. Mr. Mosca pulled up a letter that clarified the project will be Positive 2B and Negative #3, that the conditions will be to inform the Commission when computing pods are being de-commissioned and that erosion control materials consist of native non-invasive materials. Chairperson Dodge asked about replanting plans and Mr. Mosca answered with the intent to replace whatever is affected. The Commission discussed what would happen when the pods are no longer useful, and Director Glogower read a document that clarified that , they shall be de-commissioned and the site restored to pre-project conditions in such case. Vice Chair Horan brought up the two red maple trees, and the Commission stated a desired condition to assure their survival or at least a guarantee of their replacement. Vice Chair Horan then made a motion to approve the RDA with a Negative #3 and the discussed conditions, and Commissioner Moriarty seconded the motion. Commissioners then voted unanimously to approve the RDA.

7. Item No. 3 - Discussion – Standards for variance requests and permit filings under the Holyoke Wetlands Protection Ordinance

Chairperson Dodge discussed that the information on the website to be filled out by applicants for variances is not extensive enough, and that they should consider making changes so more information is gathered at the initial application process for the same of efficiency with regards to communication and consistently. The Commission discussed, and agreed that Yoni would work on a new worksheet for would-be applicants, which would then be reviewed by other commissioners. Commissioner Perdrizet brought up the matter of alternative plans, and the Commission agreed that the new application process should improve the process of gathering that type of information as well.

8. Item No. 4 - Discussion – Upcoming Items for 5/26/22 Meeting

Director Glogower informed of a newly-filed RDA asking to verify wetland boundaries at the Holyoke Soldier's Home, and the Commission agreed that a site visit before the next meeting would be appropriate.

Chairperson Bowler asked the commissioners if anyone would be missing the next meeting, and nobody responded affirmatively.

Director Glogower informed that he had just received the mayor's proposed budget, and that it appears the Commission will not receive the clerk position they asked for. Chairperson Bowler requested that Director Glogower make a spreadsheet with the current budget along with past and future budget requests.

9. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned the meeting.