

Holyoke Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes 06/23/2022 (Remote via Zoom)

Conservation Commission Members Present: Michael Dodge (Acting Chairperson), Mary Moriarty, John Perdrizet, Rosemary Arnold

Conservation Commission Members Absent: Bernice Bowler, Chelsea Gazillo

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

Members of the public present: Sarah LaRose (Holyoke Gas & Electric), Aliko Fournier (Connecticut River Conservancy)

1. Call to Order

Acting Chairperson Dodge called the meeting to order and confirmed that everybody knew the meeting was being recorded. He indicated that the meeting was being held remotely in accordance with temporary changes to the open meeting law in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Anyone not part of the Commission or Commission staff were asked to use the chat to sign in. Chairperson indicated that any votes will need to be a voice or roll call vote.

2. Item No. 1 - Public Hearing (continued from 6/9/22 meeting) – Notice of Intent WE 186-0294

Applicant: Delorean Power

Representative: BL Companies

Location: 361 Whitney Ave (parcel number identified on the agenda)

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

Acting Chairperson Dodge announced that a continuance was requested that morning and asked if there was a motion to continue the matter until the next meeting on Thursday, July 14th.

3. Roll Call Vote - Approve Continuance until 7/14/22

Commissioner Moriarty moved to continue the Delorean Power application until the July 14th meeting. Commissioner Perdrizet seconded the motion. Commissioners then voted unanimously to approve the continuance.

4. Item No. 2 - Public Hearing (continued from 6/9/22 meeting) - Notice of Intent WE 186-0295

Applicant: Holyoke Gas & Electric

Representative: Sarah LaRose

Location: Parcels identified on the agenda

Description: Control of nuisance aquatic vegetation in Log Pond Cove, including riverfront and land under waterways and water bodies.

Acting Chairperson Dodge confirmed that all Commissioners were present for the 6/9/22 meeting and then allowed the representative to share any updates based on questions and concerns that were raised at the last meeting.

Ms. LaRose indicated the following: Since the last meeting they have received a determination of no-take from Natural Heritage; they have provided additional/more updated information on Clearcast; the resource area has been changed to be land under water as opposed to riverfront area; they submitted a request for certificate of compliance for the previous order of conditions to make sure that was closed out accordingly.

Ms. LaRose then asked if there were any other outstanding questions, to which Acting Chairperson Dodge asked if there were any other updates from Director Glogower. Director Glogower did not any further updates.

Commissioner Moriarty stated that she is not thrilled with any of the poisons that are used, but now knows that everyone has at least read about Clearcast and those applying for it have a better idea of how tricky it could be. She then indicated that going into this she was sick of seeing the use of poisons on anything, but Director Glogower reminded her of why this has to be done. She then stated that she has to go with it and asked Director Glogower to explain to everyone what he had told her about it. Director Glogower deferred to Ms. LaRose as he did not know the details.

Ms. LaRose indicated that they are required to conduct an annual invasive survey, so they contracted a biologist to conduct a survey of invasives along the banks of the river every year. They found that invasives were increasing every year along the river. Ultimately, it was agreed that they would decrease the frequency of the invasive survey to once every five years and instead provide additional funds towards water chestnut control at Log Pond Cove. Oil, gas and electric had provided about \$10,000 per year for treatment at Log Pond Cove, but due to the size of the infestation, they were having trouble getting it well under control. This ultimately led to the partnership with Connecticut River Conservancy and US Fish and Wildlife as a more effective means of controlling water chestnut in the river. This year, they intend to contribute about \$20,000 to funding control efforts as they move away from surveying and towards control measures. Approval was then requested from FERC to change the survey protocol and take more of a control approach.

Commissioner Moriarty then inquired about the last permit and Ms. LaRose confirmed that it was for five years with a one-year extension. Ms. LaRose indicated that the last five-year report was 2018 and that one is due in 2023. Commissioner Moriarty expressed her wishes that there was some other way to do this and stated that someone should be looking further into the long-term effects that Imazamox has on the animals in that area. Commissioner Arnold asked if that suggestion could be made, to which the chairperson indicated that that could be a separate conversation that Director Glogower could have independently.

Commissioner Perdrizet stated that he was shocked by what is contained in Sections 11 and 12 and that he understands the need for it, but he also thinks a broader conversation at a later time may be indicated. Commissioner Moriarty agreed.

Acting Chairperson Dodge confirmed that there were no further questions and stated that he believes Director Glogower has drafted a draft order of conditions. He then explained the options of closing the public hearing and asked if anyone had an opinion either way, to which Commissioner Moriarty requested to complete this and then close the public hearing afterwards. Acting Chairperson Dodge agreed and asked Director Glogower to share what he has drafted.

5. Item No. 3 - Order of Conditions

Director Glogower briefly described the draft and Commissioner Moriarty asked if it is appropriate to include that a progress report come back once a year and if so, where that would be put. It was discussed that a reporting requirement was applicable after the work. Commissioner asked why they have never gotten what Director Glogower was showing. Ms. LaRose responded, explaining that they had been sending in end-of-year reports and apologized that her and Andrew left Holyoke Gas & Electric around the same time and then COVID hit, but assured that they've got end-of-year reports for all treatment years, which she could send. Director Glogower then finished going through the draft and confirmed that there was nothing anyone wanted to go back and look at. Acting Chairperson Dodge then confirmed that there were no additional questions and that they were prepared to close the public hearing.

6. Roll Call Vote - Close the Public Meeting

Commissioner Moriarty made a motion to close the public hearing and Commissioner Arnold seconded the motion. Commissioners then voted unanimously to close the meeting.

7. Roll Call Vote - Approve Order of Conditions

Director Glogower explained that everyone was voting to approve the order of conditions as revised and discussed. Commissioner Arnold made a motion to approve the order of conditions and Commissioner Perdrizet seconded the motion. Commissioners then voted unanimously to approve the order of conditions.

Commissioner Moriarty asked if they permitted the Notice of Intent, to which Acting Chairperson Dodge confirmed that by passing the conditions, yes, the project was permitted. Director Glogower confirmed that was correct. Commissioner Moriarty then asked Ms. Fornier if she went out to Log Pond already with the Connecticut River volunteers, and Ms. Fornier responded that she had not yet, but they are hoping to start on Monday and that she would send the schedule to Director Glogower to pass on to commissioners. Commissioner Moriarty was satisfied with that.

8. Item No. 4 - Formal Vote on Minutes

Commissioner Moriarty asked to table these until the next time and Acting Chairperson Dodge asked commissioners to send edits or recommendations to Director Glogower in advance of the next meeting so that he can make the changes.

9. Item No. 5 - Discussion - Upcoming Items for 7/14/22 Meeting

Acting Chairperson Dodge indicated that only Item No. 2 was continued to the next meeting, as well as the formal vote on the meeting minutes, but nothing else has come in yet and applicants have until 6/29/22 to submit items. It was then discussed that there is typically one meeting in July and one meeting in August.

Director Glogower stated that they have received two new notices of intent; one for the boat ramp at Jones Ferry and one for utility line work by the Connecticut River. He then informed everyone that the protocols for remote meetings are set to expire on 7/15/22, unless they are extended.

10. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned the meeting.