

Holyoke Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes 07/28/2022 (Remote via Zoom)

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

Conservation Commission Members Absent: Rosemary Arnold

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

Members of the public present: Andrew Fisk (Connecticut River Conservancy), Mickey Marcus (SWCA Environmental Consultants), Katy Wilkins (Tighe & Bond), David Askew (Eversource), Chelsea Christenson (Nitsch Engineering), Annie Cornell (Nitsch Engineering), Mike McNulty (DCAMM), Susan Blomquist (Payette), Bryant Watson (Payette), Nate Russell (GZA GeoEnvironmental), Dan Nitzsche (GZA GeoEnvironmental), Amy LINSMEYER (Ground)

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bowler called the public meeting to order and explained the protocols of remote meetings.

2. Public Hearing – Notice of Intent WE 186-0294 (Continued from 7/14/22 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 a request for continuance to August 11, 2022 was received. Commissioner Moriarty made a motion to continue to August 11, 2022 and Commissioner Dodge seconded. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the continuance.

3. Public Hearing - Notice of Intent WE 186-0296 (Continued from 7/14/22 Meeting)

Applicant: Holyoke Rows

Representative: SWCA Environmental Consultants

Location: 8 Oscar Street (MBP 117-00-144)

Description: Improvements of existing boat ramp, dock addition, and other site improvements within Riverfront Area, Banks, Land under Waterbodies and Waterways, and Bordering Land Subject to Flooding

Chairperson Bowler announced that a site visit was conducted on July 25, 2022, which Andrew Fisk joined in on and explained the changes that are happening.

Mickey Marcus indicated that they have heard back from Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, and they did not ask for any plan changes, but did request additional information prior to

construction, including a search for mussels in the vicinity of the new dock pilings. Natural Heritage has requested that there be a condition associated with the search for mussels, which has already been added. Mr. Marcus then asked that the Commission consider un-expiring conditions that would allow for repairs and maintenance of the docks, public boat ramp, invasive species control and observation deck.

Andrew Fisk explained that during the site visit, the following subjects were discussed: ARPA funding; project purpose, which is to allow more people to share and safely use the facility; ramp extension, which is designed to allow more access to the river at lower water conditions, including Holyoke Fire Department as they have had challenges getting their rescue boat in; removal of old cement pilings and metal stairs; expanded viewing platform with an ADA accessible path; new docks, which are capable of being configured and moved around; signage, including easily understood rules and no wake buoys. Mr. Fisk mentioned an issue that SWCA helped with, which was deploying the dock in such a way that it doesn't end up being a trap for downstream debris. He explained that the upstream dock will be tethered to a piling and a boom would be present in an effort to deflect larger debris.

Vice Chairperson Horan stated that the conditioning related to maintenance of the dock is a good idea, as well as the seasonal removal and redeployment of the docks. He also stated that guidance should be provided as to which trees are appropriate to remove in the viewing area.

Chairperson Bowler asked if the NOI has been changed to reflect that only parts of the boat ramp, instead of the entire boat ramp, are being replaced. Mr. Marcus indicated that the plans show the lower end of the ramp being extended and repaired.

Director Glogower asked Mr. Marcus to talk about the deployment of the turbidity curtain with regard to the ramp improvements. Mr. Marcus then explained that the only in-water work is the repair of the ramp, and that a turbidity curtain, which is basically a floating silt fence, is proposed to be deployed just outside the work area as a temporary device to hold gravel and stone close to the shore.

Director Glogower asked if the Commission feels that they can allow some of the ongoing conditions in the ONM plan, and mentioned that the removal of invasive species may be more jurisdictional than routine repairs. Vice Chairperson Horan mentioned that the last Notice of Intent filed by Holyoke Rows had no provision to maintain the vegetation, and that they just want to the opportunity to maintain what's already there. He also mentioned the possibility of a condition to notify the Commission if any repairs take place, which would eliminate the need for Holyoke Rows to make filings just to repair what they have. Chairperson Bowler mentioned reviewing the draft order before closing the public hearing, including discussing specific items to be conditioned with or without a time limit.

Commissioner Dodge questioned whether there is a time limit or if this is an in perpetuity or evergreen condition, to which Mr. Marcus responded that all of the work proposed in the Notice of Intent is going to take place within the next three years. He then mentioned that following the construction project, it would be useful to have certain conditions continue, specifically repair and maintenance of the dock, the ramp, the existing structures. Commissioner Dodge then asked what the scope of repair and maintenance would be. Mr. Marcus indicated that the docks are seasonal, but there are pilings in place. If the pilings, end of the boat ramp or wooden structured observation deck need to be replaced or repaired in years to come, they would like the ability to do so. As far as invasive species removal, including poison ivy, they'd like the ability to continue to manage invasives if and when they show up.

Mr. Fisk stated that they could put forward a multi-year plan regarding the invasives plan as it will be an ongoing effort. Commissioner Dodge stated that he is in favor of an ONM plan that allows for those activities, with the exception of the piling replacement and the turbidity curtain, which he feels is worth discussing. Chairperson Bowler again suggested reviewing the wording in the specific conditions and then deciding at that point.

Director Glogower mentioned that there is a brief ONM plan referenced at the end of the NOI that the Order of Conditions could reference. He also pointed out that the Natural Heritage determination was approval contingent upon seven conditions, one of which is an invasive species removal plan, and another which was finite to within five years.

Chairperson Bowler asked if there were any questions or comments from the public, to which there were none. At Chairperson Bowler's request, Director Glogower then pulled up the Order of Conditions in order to go through the draft and make decisions, which included special conditions related to the Holyoke Wetlands Protection Ordinance and special conditions under the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act.

With regards to possible shifting of the viewing platform, there was a question of whether that should be brought before the Commission as it's own special condition, or whether it's already covered and they should just inform the Commission in writing of those changes and the Commission will determine how to proceed. Vice Chairperson Horan indicated that he believes that works as it is not a major issue. Commissioner Moriarty indicated that the wording is sufficient in stating that the Commission be informed in writing and can address accordingly. Chairperson Bowler indicated that it should be mentioned that if the viewing platform is moved, something should be sent to Director Glogower for the file and confirm that it is a minor change.

With regards to written progress reports, Commissioner Moriarty requested that condition remain included.

Commissioner Moriarty pointed out that although there isn't a planting plan yet, something should be added regarding the area where plantings are going to occur, to which Director Glogower stated that all of the conditions from Natural Heritage have been added.

Commissioner Dodge mentioned the lack of definition for "minor" repairs. He then questioned if the ownership of the dock was to change, the permit would go along with the ownership change, which was confirmed. Director Glogower stated he doesn't feel the Commission needs to define "minor," but rather indicate what would require another filing as far as wetlands permitting is concerned, to which Commissioner Dodge agreed. Vice Chairperson Horan recommended starting with no new construction, impervious surface, additional pilings -- those kinds of structural projects. It was agreed that there are certain things that they should be able to replace without an additional filing, such as decking. Vice Chairperson Horan reiterated that something should be mentioned about the seasonal removal and redeployment of the docks. Director Glogower continued to go through and revise the conditions as agreed upon by the Commission. Chairperson Bowler expressed her desire to receive a one-time report at some point before they decide to allow conditions in perpetuity, to which Commissioners Moriarty and Perdrizet agreed. Mr. Marcus suggested a report to the Commission

following the construction that's outlined in the Notice of Intent, and then along with Request for Certificate of Compliance, a summary report of what has been done to date, which was agreed upon.

Vice Chairperson Horan made a motion to close the public hearing. Commissioner Dodge seconded the motion. The Commissioners then voted unanimously to close the public hearing, noting that Commissioner Perdrizet was no longer in the meeting and therefore not voting.

Vice Chairperson Horan made a motion to approve the Order of Conditions as amended. Commissioner Moriarty seconded the motion. The Commissioners then voted unanimously to approve the Order of Conditions as amended, noting that Commissioner Perdrizet was no longer in the meeting and therefore not voting.

4. Public Hearing - Notice of Intent WE 186-0297 (Continued from 7/14/22 Meeting)

Applicant: Eversource Energy Service Company

Representative: Tighe & Bond, Inc.

Location: Transmission Lines 1428-1447 ROW

Description: Replacement of utility lattice structure with associated three trimming and tree removal within the Riverfront Area and Bordering Land subject to Flooding

Chairperson Bowler indicated that she and Commissioner Arnold conducted a site visit on 7/26/22, and requested to start with an update of the site visit and any questions and/or additional information that were mentioned at a prior meeting. Ms. Wilkins, who was not at the site visit, explained that there were 25 trees that they had previously proposed needed to be cleared, that no longer need cleared, but rather may need limited trimming along the tree line. Access to the site, matting within the right-of-way and replacement of the lattice structure with two steel towers is proposed.

Chairperson Bowler mentioned that they had previously requested from Melissa Coady, additional information regarding plans for revegetation in the area that is being disturbed. Mr. Askew indicated that the concrete piers at the lattice structure, which is being removed, will be taken down one foot and the area will be topped with two to four inches of topsoil and upland grass seed mix. Chairperson Bowler was satisfied with that. Mr. Askew added that the NOI and impact numbers were updated and sent to Director Glogower, which he confirmed receipt of and previously shared with the Commission.

The Commission proceeded to review the draft Order of Conditions as Director Glogower explained it. With regards to condition No. 9, Mr. Askew stated that they do intend to stockpile (probably) contaminated soil on the mats close to the structures, as it will need disposed of at a waste facility, and they don't want to be moving the soils up and down the right-of-way. There will be a double layer of geotextile; one under the mat and one on top of the mat. The soil will be temporarily stockpiled there while it dries out and it will then be moved by an excavator into a dump truck on the matting. In response to Vice Chairperson Horan's question, Mr. Askew stated that previously they had about a 15 day wait period before the soils were sufficiently dry, so they will make every effort to remove the soil within 30 days. They will also cover the soils at all times with geotextile so that no precipitation will get on the stockpile. Director Glogower confirmed that the Commission was in agreement with striking that condition.

Ms. Wilkins and Mr. Askew pointed out that the BMP Manual date should be April '22.

Director Glogower continued with the review of the draft Order of Conditions, and asked if pictures of the pre-site work condition was needed. It was decided to keep that condition.

Mr. Askew indicated that they will be ready to start construction as soon as they get the Order of Conditions, get it recorded and meet all of the requirements.

Commissioner Moriarty motioned to close the public hearing. Commissioner Gazillo seconded the motion, and the Commissioners voted unanimously to close the public hearing.

Vice Chairperson Horan motioned to approve Notice of Intent WE 186-0297 and Order of Conditions as amended. Commissioner Moriarty seconded the motions, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the motions.

5. Public Hearing - Notice of Intent DEP 186-0298 (Continued from 7/14/22 Meeting)

Applicant: Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance

Representative: Nitsch Engineering, Inc.

Location: 110 Cherry Street (MBP 150-00-010)

Description: Demolition of existing building and construction of new building, parking areas, and landscaping partially within Bordering Vegetated Wetlands.

Chairperson Bowler indicated that a site visit was conducted on 7/26/22, which several members of the Commission were able to attend.

Chelsea Christenson, project manager from Nitsch Engineering, introduced herself, as well as the following representatives: Annie Cornell, project engineer that was present at the site visit; Mike McNulty, owner of DCAMM; Susan Blomquist and Bryant Watson from Payette; Nate Russell and Dan Nitzsche from GZA GeoEnvironmental, geotechnical engineers who did the evaluation and designed the mechanically stabilized earth wall; Amy Linsmeyer, landscape architect from Ground. Ms. Christenson proceeded to share her screen to show the plan, which remained the same since the last meeting. She pointed out: The wetland line; the buffers; existing road; new access road; existing building to be demolished; new building location; location of proposed mechanically stabilized earth wall, which impacts the wetlands in a couple areas.

Mr. Russell began to explain the mechanically stabilized wall. A memo was prepared and submitted to the Commission describing the general components of a mechanically stabilized earth (MSE) system, as well as photos. Mr. Russell proceeded to explain how mechanically stabilized earths or walls are constructed by placing and compacting soil in lifts to create new grading. In this type of system, they use layers of geogrid horizontally to provide global stability. He explained that they are proposing a wrapped-face soil slope on the lower portion of the slope, which will hold the soil in place until vegetation is fully established.

Mr. Russell shared his screen containing photos of MSE slopes and explained how they've been constructed, pointing out the appearance of the MSE slopes both during construction and fully vegetated.

Ms. Linsmeyer shared her screen and described the proposal of plantings, including 70 trees and 210 shrub plants. She showed the Commission the plant list that intend to pull from, which is largely based on the oak hickory forests. Showing a diagram, Ms. Linsmeyer explained that they intend to use largely native herbaceous seed mix bases with select woody species. In the wetland replication area, they intend to use the northeast native wetland seed mix. In the sloped area, they intend to use a more upland appropriate herbaceous seed mix. Ms. Linsmeyer showed the Commission examples of the plantings.

Mr. Watson shared his screen and presented images of the existing campus, pointing out two areas of concern: Rough scope of work area for the MSE berm, outlined in orange, and the area of the service road work area that the MSE berm slope is intended to support, outlined in blue. He then explained that the first quarter of the first year of construction will establish site fencing and erosion control, and start the site clearing work for the service road, as well as the MSE stabilized slope. The second quarter of construction will be demolishing existing structures and starting grading work, site clearing, and installation of the MSE sloped element. The third quarter of construction will consists of grading in the service road, partial demolition of the existing site utilities, temporary support of excavation (SOE), and installation of the stabilized slope. Mr. Watson indicated that by the end of the first year of construction they intend to have completed the work for the MSE stabilized slope and will then move into the site for the new building.

Vice Chairperson Horan voiced concerns brought up while on-site regarding the project taking longer than the three-year permit period, and indicated that it could be extended as needed. Mr. Watson indicated that the new building itself should take roughly four years and then about another year and a half to two years for completion of the remaining site work.

Chairperson Bowler questioned how long it would be before the service road is paved, which Mr. Watson indicated would not be done until about the middle of year four, prior to the occupancy date. In response to Chairperson Bowler's request, Mr. Watson explained that prior to pavement, during the construction work, the service road will be compacted soil, and could possible have some sort of gravel top for durability purposes. Due to the heavy use of the service road, there will be a temporary road cover during construction. Chairperson Bowler expressed her concern of anything running off if the surface is compacted soil instead of a more stable surface. Mr. Watson assured Chairperson Bowler that that concern can be conveyed to the contractor and they may end up putting down a more durable, impervious surface during construction. Vice Chairperson Horan pointed out that there needs to be a sediment erosion control plan, to which Chairperson Bowler requested options for temporary covering that would help stabilize the road. Mr. Watson explained that typically, on a job where there will be a delay in paving/final surfacing, gravel or something similar would be placed over filter fabric as a temporary surface. He also mentioned that there is expected to be erosion control installed, maintained and replaced as necessary. Mr. Russell noted that they have plans and specifications that give the contractor guidance on erosion and sediment control. Ms. Christenson stated that although they are not filing a formal stormwater permit, they are complying with the permit requirements.

Director Glogower questioned when the above and below ground stormwater detention systems will be going in, which Mr. Russell indicated should be going in within the first year, around the same time as the level zero foundations. Director Glogower questioned if a stormwater analysis had been done to see how peak flows may be different during the six-year construction, to which Ms. Christenson indicated that a separate consultant has been hired by the construction manager with regard to the stormwater during construction. While the plan is not completed, they are aware that they are required to manage stormwater during the construction. Once completed, the plan will be provided to the Commission for review, at Director Glogower's request.

At Vice Chairperson Horan's request, Mr. Russell shared his screen and explained the high quality material used in building the MSE. He also pointed out an 18-inch spacing between geogrid reinforcement and confirmed that each one goes back 25 feet. Topsoil will be stripped and saved in the process of benching the slope. The upper portion of the slope will be fill from the excavation done on-site, which is predominantly glacial till. Since mechanically stabilized slopes are more tolerant of settlement and deformation, they are assuming that any of the soil that is excavated on-site can be used as backfill for construction, although that will be partially up to the contractors. Mr. Russell confirmed that any of the soil used from on-site will be compacted.

Vice Chairperson Horan questioned the distance of the slope, which Mr. Russell indicated is 20 feet, although the wall does have a steepest point.

Commissioner Moriarty questioned what information is being used to anticipate issues with stormwater runoff during construction, before it's stabilized, and in years to come. Mr. Russell explained how each lift of soil is contained and protected and then seeded. The upper slope will have enhanced erosion protection before vegetation has a chance to establish. Mr. Nitzsche added that turf reinforcement mats are used on steeper slopes because they can handle the erosive capacity of water flowing over the slope. He also stated that there will be quick growing seed mix as well as long-term seed mix, which will help stabilize the surface, along with the turf reinforcement mats that have proven to be very effective. Ms. Christenson noted that there will be a curb that will prevent runoff from the road.

Commissioner Moriarty asked what sort of imported soils would be used, which Mr. Russell indicated would be a sand and gravel mix, high quality structural fill, in order to get the strength needed. Above the reinforced zone, they can begin reusing the on-site soils. Any imported soil is required to be cleaned and chemically tested before brought on-site.

Chairperson Bowler questioned where the excavated soil will be stored, which Mr. Russell indicated would likely be kept in the fill area where it will be used, as there really isn't room to stockpile soil. Some soil will likely need to be exported, but they won't know how much exactly until the work is started. The contractor will be responsible to ensure appropriate erosion and sediment controls are in place around soil stockpiles, which Ms. Christenson noted is written in the erosion control specifications that she will forward to the Commission for review.

Commissioner Perdrizet questioned the wrap material that will be used. Mr. Russell shared his screen and explained that each lift will be wrapped with a secondary geogrid layer, which has a TRM, considered to be permanent, inside of it. The geogrid is believed to have a lifespan of decades, although it is only needed for temporary stabilization until vegetation takes over. Vegetation will be

fully established by the time the geogrid begins to degrade, and they'll no longer be relying on the wrapped-face to stabilize the slope. The roots of vegetation will eventually provide long-term integrity once grown into the soil. Mr. Russell stated that erosion is unlikely if there is not much water coming down the slope, other than what directly falls from rain.

Director Glogower questioned if there are any considerations for temporary diversions to break up the flow of water and direct it northwards while the vegetation is getting established. Ms. Christenson reiterated that there will be a curb that will redirect a lot of water to the pavement, although that will not be present during construction. She explained that due to the granular soils in the MSE slope, water will run straight down instead of running down the slope. Mr. Russell indicated that they explored options for having intermediate drainage benches on the slope; however, that would require taller, steeper slopes, which would be more impact into the wetland and buffer. He explained that wattles or compost logs on the slope could be considered to reduce the potential channelization over time, and that the proposed slope has a smaller area of drainage to the wetlands.

Vice Chairperson Horan stated that he feels it will be hard to keep invasives out without a canopy, since the plan only includes 48 canopy trees. Ms. Linsmeyer did not disagree, and added that a comprehensive invasives management plan will be really important.

Commissioner Moriarty mentioned that since the roots are supposed to be the stabilization, planting more trees would get the stabilization in place more rapidly. She questioned if they could ask for more trees, to which Mr. Russell stated that it is not large tree root systems that provide the stabilization, but rather the smaller vegetation which provides SURFICIAL erosion protection. Commissioner Moriarty pointed out that a bad storm could damage the surface. Mr. Nitzsche responded that it can withstand high flows and not erode, as it's protected by the vegetation and the geogrid. Mr. Russell added that wrapped-face systems are armored with vegetation instead of a graded stone filter. In the MSE portion of the slope, they do not plant trees.

Mr. Nitzsche suggested extending the area along the bottom of the slop and filling in gaps with trees, as Vice Chairperson Horan expressed his desire to see the forest replaced, unless it is impactful to the structure. Chairperson Bowler requested additional information as to whether more trees are or aren't feasible. Ms. Blomquist noted that where feasible, they can explore the possibility of adding more larger, mature trees.

Chairperson Bowler asked for a recap of what is to occur in the replication area, as she was not at the site visit. Mr. Nitzsche explained the location, the shape, surface grade and plan to plant woody vegetation. Chairperson Bowler expressed her desire to see what the end result is. Director Glogower questioned if any soil translocation or amendments are anticipated, to which Mr. Nitzsche explained that he typically takes topsoil from an area without invasives and mixes it 50/50 with a partial digested compost material, which usually works well.

Chairperson Bowler welcomed questions from the public, but there were none. Chairperson Bowler requested that any additional information they intend to provide, be provided a day or two prior to the meeting to allow the Commission time to review it. Chairperson Bowler asked if they have received, in writing, all of the details concerning the replication area, which Ms. Christenson stated that she, Mr. Nitzsche and Ms. Linsmeyer would put together and provide to the Commission. Ms. Christenson also

indicated that she would send the Commission the erosion control spec after the meeting. Chairperson Bowler reiterated that she'd like more specifics about the temporary covering of the service road, as well as the trees. Director Glogower asked if the phase stormwater management plan during construction would be ready by the 11th, which Mr. Watson agreed to check into and request some sort of interm document.

Commissioner Moriarty questioned if a written variance is required for doing work in the 50-foot buffer son. Ms. Christenson stated that she will defer to the lawyers to confirm, but she understand that as a state agency, they are technically exempt from local by-laws. Regardless, Ms. Christenson stated that they are complying with the state stormwater act, federal stormwater regulations, and local by-law. It was agreed that supportive information would be provided on the state's exemption.

Vice Chairperson Horan motioned to continue the public hearing. Commissioner Moriarty seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to continue the public hearing, noting that Commissioner Gazillo was no longer present.

6. Approve Meeting Minutes from 5/26, 6/9, 6/23, and 7/14

Commissioner Moriarty made a motion to approve the Minutes from 5/26 through 7/14. Vice Chairperson Horan seconded the motion, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Minutes.

7. Upcoming Items

Director Glogower indicated that he received a two-year review memo regarding the enforcement order at 475 North Hampton Street, which detailed the progress of the restoration and recommended lifting the enforcement order. The was agreed that the Commission would look at the memo, which contains photos, at the next meeting, and then make a decision.

With regard to Baystate, Director Glogower stated that he will reach out and obtain the status and may recommend an extended continuance next time.

8. Adjourn

The Commission adjourned the meeting.