

**Plainfield Conservation Commission
Minutes of Meeting Held August 30, 2017**

Meeting was held in Town Hall.

Commissioners present: Erik Burcroff, Jack Nelson, Alice Schertle, Judy Williams (Chair)

Also present:

Mark Stinson, Wetlands Circuit Rider, DEP Western Region, present for preliminary discussion of RDA procedures

Melissa Coady, Project Environmental Scientist, Tighe & Bond

Tom Degnan, Clearing and Construction Manager, Eversource Energy

Polly Ryan, abutter

Rosemary Wessel, Cummington resident

Call to Order, Judy Williams, 7:00 PM

Minutes

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of August 8, 2017 be approved as read.

Forest Cutting Plan

Judy gave Erik a Forest Cutting Plan from James Page for property on Central St. The forester is Glen Diamond Systems.

Enforcement Order, Bow St.

The four Commissioners met with Mert Taylor, Jr. on 8-17-17 at the Bow St. site where fill has been introduced into wetland. Mert was given an Enforcement Order requiring restoration of the wetland. Some of the new shoulder will remain for road stabilization and safety. Commissioners expressed their appreciation of Mert's willingness to comply with WPA requirements.

Mark Stinson said he has consulted with Mert and with Selectman Winton Pitcoff and has offered his assistance in the restoration project and in future projects impacting jurisdictional areas. Wetland restoration/replication required regarding the Bow St. work can be done this year or next.

Site Visit

Judy and Alice made a site visit on 8-17-17 to 86 Grant Street where the property owner plans to build a garage. There are no wetland issues. Judy signed off on the project.

Waryjasz Property

Judy reported that Winton Pitcoff has recently walked the Waryjasz property with a representative of the Department of Agriculture. They found indications of plowing on the property. They contacted a lawyer for the Waryjasz family and were told that an offer has been made on the property, which is under an agricultural restriction in perpetuity.

Eversource Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA)

The RDA presentation was conducted by Melissa Coady of Tighe & Bond Engineering assisted by Tom Degan of Eversource Energy. Tighe and Bond has submitted an RDA on behalf of applicant Eversource Energy for work on line 312 Transmission Right-of-Way (ROW) through Plainfield. The cleared area of the utility corridor does not currently extend to the full width of the ROW. Eversource proposes to widen the cleared area by approximately 100 feet to the full extent of the ROW. This will involve work in 5.23 acres of Buffer Zone.

The DEP has stated that the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) exempts work in the existing cleared area of the utility ROW, but work outside the currently cleared area is not exempt.

Eversource plans the clear cutting of the previously uncleared area of the ROW, in order to prevent potential damage to power lines from falling trees. The plan calls for removal of all trees; some shrub and grass cover will remain as in the currently cleared area. Tom said Eversource may work with some property owners in specific instances for selective targeting but that in general all trees which are tall-growing or potentially tall-growing will be removed along the full ROW.

Forestry equipment to be used was described. Most is mechanical; some hand work will be done.

No new access roads will be constructed. Some new access "routes" will be created but will not be permanent. There will be no grubbing out of the stumps.

No herbicides will be used in the clearing process, but herbicides will be used in maintenance of the cleared areas.

Erik spoke as one authorized to inform the applicant that the Narragansett Tribe must be consulted on this project. This issue is outside the purview of the Conservation Commission.

Melissa distributed updated versions of the maps that were included with the RDA. Various maps were examined and specific features explained or questioned. Erik pointed out that two streams were not shown on a map that should have included them. Commissioners have walked the utility corridor and are familiar with the area. Melissa located the streams on a topo map and agreed that the applicant would do an on-site examination of the area to clarify.

Abutter Polly Ryan expressed concerns relative to work on her property. Judy said the applicant should be aware that many property owners can be expected to have objections to the project. Tom stated that efforts will be made to contact landowners and to answer questions.

Jack felt we had insufficient information and requested that we see a biomap overlay on the maps. Melissa agreed to provide them.

Judy stated that she felt the scope of the project and impact on protected areas was such that she could not responsibly support a Negative Determination. The other commissioners concurred. Judy moved and Jack seconded that the Conservation Commission issue a Positive Determination under B 4 on WPA Form 2, Determination of Applicability, indicating that the work is within Buffer Zone and will alter an area subject to protection under the WPA requiring the filing of a Notice of Intent. A vote was taken passing the motion unanimously. The Positive Determination was signed by all four members of the Commission.

Melissa informed the Commission that, in view of the Positive Determination, the project as planned was “very unlikely to happen.” No NOI would be filed and the project would be amended to eliminate all work in Buffer Zone in Plainfield. Tom concurred.

The Commission thanked Melissa and Tom for their presentation.

Wetlands Compliance Sheet

Commissioners confirmed their approval of Jack’s revision of the Wetlands Compliance Information Sheet for property owners and thanked Jack for an excellent and very thorough job. Jack will get 100 copies made and provide them to the Building Inspector and the Town Offices.

Jack read a portion of an article in American Scientist, by John Anderson, ecology professor at College of the Atlantic, in which Anderson decried the lack of field work being done now and asked where we would get the new members of town Conservation Commissions.

The next meeting of the Conservation Commission will be Wednesday, September 27, at 7:00 PM in Town Hall.

Adjourned, 8:50 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Schertle