

Draft minutes pending approval

**Plainfield Conservation Commission
Minutes of Meeting Held August 30, 2023**

Meeting was held in Town Hall. Commissioners present: Erik Burcroff, Judy Ferber, Jack Nelson, Alice Schertle, Judith Williams (chair).

Also present: Walter Jennings, Highway Superintendent; Mark Stinson, DEP Circuit Rider; Ed Stockman; Emily Stockman

Call to Order, Judith Williams, 6:30 p.m.

Minutes of 6-28-23 were approved prior to adjournment

116 Culvert and Road Repair, Walter Jennings Report

Highway Superintendent Walter Jennings described the work done due to flooding and closure of 116 on July 4th weekend. The Conservation Commission issued an Emergency Permit. An existing culvert, clogged with accumulated silt augmented by beaver activity, was found to be much deeper than anticipated. The culvert was cleared, and flow of water through it restored, reducing the level of the pond to the culvert level. Walter said the road, engineered and modified in 1989 and 1991, with an 18-inch culvert to accommodate a stream, was never constructed to withstand the pressure from the large pond that developed over the years as culvert drainage was restricted. He said the water level should remain as originally intended and that raising it would return significant pressure and danger of road failure. Walter said he spoke recently with several DOT representatives who confirmed that the road is not engineered to withstand such pressure. Ed Stockman said the massive change in hydrology over the years has created significant wildlife habitat. He said the water level should be raised to protect wildlife including some that will soon need the pond for winter brumation. Ed recommended installation of a stand pipe to raise the water level at least four feet and restore vital habitat.

Walter said installation of a stand pipe would be extremely expensive and even the costs of engineering would be large. In addition to prohibitive cost, he felt such a project should not be undertaken because the increased water pressure would jeopardize the road.

Emily Stockman said Audubon owns the property and is her client as a professional wetland consultant. She will report to them with information from the meeting and let the Conservation Commission know if Audubon has a response.

Mark Stinson pointed out that the Conservation Commission does not have enforcement authority unless there has been a violation of the Emergency Permit.

Walter Jennings, Ed Stockam, Mark Stinson and Emily Stockman left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

BioMap Presentation

Sarah Wasserman, BioMap Outreach Specialist with the Mass Division of Fisheries and Wildlife made a Zoom presentation of the use of the new BioMap. She described the goals of the program including the preservation of habitat and protection of biodiversity in Massachusetts. The commonwealth includes millions of acres of Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape,

including significant areas in Plainfield. BioMap is non-regulatory, but is intended as a tool useful to land trusts, agencies, municipalities and individuals in restoring and managing habitats for biodiversity and climate resilience. Sarah demonstrated the use of various layers and overlays including some particular to Plainfield. She invited those with interests or questions to contact her at Sarah.Wasserman@mass.gov. BioMap can be accessed at Mass.gov/BioMap.

Bow St. Update

Erik and Judith attended the second court hearing, at which the Bow Street residents were ordered to permit inspection of the property within 30 days. Jack and Judith, with Board of Health chair Ellen DuPont and Building Commissioner Charlene Baiardi visited the Bow Street property for a second time, as ordered by the Court. Mr. Miller, the owner, referred them to a paper posted on the door accusing any who entered of trespassing. He did not grant permission for the town representatives to enter. The owner/residents are therefore in contempt of court and further action is in the hands of the court.

Discussion of pond/road work on 116

Commissioners discussed the work on 116. The emergency permit allowed the clearing of the culvert, which was necessary to address the flooding causing road closure. Restored water flow through the culvert inevitably reduced the pond to the level of the culvert, a drastic lowering of the pond level. Installation of a stand pipe could be investigated but lack of funding precludes installation at this time. No further action was taken

Jack shared a booklet, Wildlands in New England,

The next meeting of the Conservation Commission will take place in Town Hall on September 27, 2023 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjourned, 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alice Schertle

