

Town of Becket Conservation Commission
13 December, 2016
Minutes

Commission Members in Attendance: Alison Dixon, Cindy Delpapa, Karen Karlberg, Rebecca Perry, Richard Pryor, Agent Mallory Larcom
Barbara Brand not in attendance.

Public in attendance: Mercedes Gallagher, Kate Wilkins and Anthony Johnson

Chair Dixon called meeting to order at 6:36 PM, read meeting guidelines and introduced commissioners.

1. *Approval of Minutes from 15 November, 2016 meeting.* Motion made to approve minutes with typographical errors corrected, (Karlberg/Perry). MSV.
2. *Public input and comment for items not on the agenda.* None offered.
3. *Request for a minor change in plan for Camp Becket YMCA (DEP #102-0415)*
Images were sent to Agent Larcom showing the roadside which will be seeded in the spring instead of riprapped. While the Commission voted to allow this minor modification, the project was not listed officially on the agenda thus requiring the vote be redone. Motion made to allow a minor change to the plan for the well access road at Camp Becket YMCA (DEP #102-0415) to allow the seeding of the edge of the access road instead of using rip rap, (Dixon/Pryor). MSV.
4. *Request for Determination of Applicability from CSX Transportation* for the work of herbicide treatments in the railroad right-of-way as it occurs within the boundaries of and throughout the Town of Becket.
Applicant requested a continuance until April. M Gallagher spoke on this matter as a representative of the Westfield Wild & Scenic Committee. The Wild & Scenic Committee sent a letter to the MA Pesticide Bureau requesting a change to recognize the designated Wild & Scenic river segments as a sensitive resource area. If the designated river reaches are deemed a sensitive area, any chemical spraying must be 100 feet away from the waterway. They are requesting 400-500 feet set back from Wild and Scenic waters. Ms. Gallagher is asking the Commission to require more care in proximity to the Wild & Scenic River. Ms. Gallagher, as a Becket resident, also wished to relate an investigation done many years ago reviewing the marking of the no spray zone. The investigator found the no-spray areas appropriately. She remembers a CSX representative wishing to assess the amount of herbicides being used in the right-of-way and Ms. Gallagher was hoping this information might be in the Commission files. Ms. Larcom will look for this information. Ms. Karlberg wish to make it known she serves as Becket's alternate representative on the W&S Committee.
5. *Discussion: MACC – Collective Conservation Commission Pipeline letter to the Governor Baker.* Motion made to sign on to the MACC pipeline letter to be sent to Governor Baker, (Karlberg/Perry). MSV with one abstention (Delpapa as a state employee).
6. *Continuance: Request for Determination of Applicability from Eversource Energy* for the reclamation of the utility right-of-way and removal of woody vegetation within upland buffer

zone of several wetlands with intermittent stream crossings. Project begins off Jacob's Ladder Road to the north continuing to the Otis town line off Johnson Road. Site visit was conducted to view two of the proposed stream crossings. Kate Wilkins of Tighe & Bond was present to represent the proponent. Tony Johnson of Eversource was also present. Ms. Wilkins confirmed the streams were all intermittent having rechecked Stream Stats and USGS topographic maps. This project's largest stream crossing will bridge the small ravine without impacting the stream or wildlife access to the stream. Commission wants assurance the proposed work will not introduce invasive plants to the area where there is currently a paucity of invasives in the area. The second crossing viewed by the Commission is a braided channel with hummocks and a treed knob separating the channels. Commission was concerned about the impact to this waterway if all the trees were cut. Discussion ensued around clearing hazard trees only, (those trees with the potential to reach a height to pose a risk of hitting the wires). Work is likely not to start until February. Mr. Johnson would like to walk the right-of-way with a forester to mark the trees to be left in place. Commissioners were interested in having a Commission representative either attend this walk through or, alternatively, view the trees marked to remain before work begins. Agent Larcom reported she discussed possible mitigation projects with Town Manager. Option one was to revegetate a town property in North Becket destined to become a riverside park, (timeline is about three years). A second possibility is related to a town-owned house in a wetland where there are concerns about pollution to Shaw Pond where mitigation would involve the removal of the septic system. Commissioners suggested understory plantings (native shrubs such as blueberry, juniper, etc.) in some of the significantly undercut bank areas or measures to discourage ATV use on this expanded right-of-way. Motion made to issue a negative determination of applicability #3, with Becket Standard Conditions, for the utility right-of-way reclamation starting from Jacob's Ladder Road to the Otis town line. Work in the buffer zone within 25 feet of a resource area will be limited to hazard trees, (hazard trees are those trees tall enough to hit the power lines with characteristics that make it a greater risk of failing), Eversource will mark the hazard trees that will be removed in the 25 foot buffer areas and will contact the Commission once the trees are marked, bank stabilization using native species will be completed within a year, equipment maintenance will be done outside of the buffer zone, shrub- vegetation or soils disturbed by equipment or construction activities will be returned to their original condition within one year, stream crossings and bank resource areas shall be restored to original condition upon completion of work in the area, (Pryor/Karlberg). MSV.

Brief recess called by Chair Dixon at 8:33. Meeting called back in order at 8:38 by Chair Dixon.

7. *Continuance: Discussion of Conservation Budget for FY18.*
Agent Larcom has spoken with town administrator about the Conservation budget. The budget may be submitted after the January meeting. Agent Larcom's has provided documentation of the increase in filings this year. Chair Dixon provided a draft budget showing current year's budget and the budget numbers proposed for next year. Agent Larcom recommended next year's budget reflect funding for agent's salary of 19.5 hours per weekly over the current 12 hours. This would increase the budget line item from \$11,000 to \$18, 658 representing a 59% increase, (this is based on the current hourly rate of 18.04 with 2% increase to \$18.40/hour). Chair Dixon will work on getting more information about costs incurred so far this year. She will also try to determine is commissioners attending trainings/conferences can be reimbursed for mileage. Chair Dixon will disseminate an updated budget before the January meeting.
8. *Continuance: Request for a Certificate of Compliance from Jacob's Hollow Road Association,*

(DEP #102-0413)

The Jacob's Hollow Road Association has yet to file the paperwork needed for a Certificate of Compliance request. Agent Larcom recommended this item be dropped from the agenda until such time as the Association contacts the Commission and files the paperwork.

9. *Continuance from 14 June 2016 meeting*: Request from the Chair to discuss a potential public hearing for a fee increase for RDA fees for fiscal year 2017. This item will be continued until the Conservation budget is submitted to the town for the next fiscal year.

Review of pertinent correspondence received and upcoming items:

The two 'new' general stores in North Becket are working on opening/reopening but both have had some septic system issues. The Board of Health (BOH) has entered into an agreement with the new operators of the 30 Washington Street location as their system is in failure. The current system's leach field will be capped and the system pumped as needed. With this work done, a food establishment can be opened but plans for a new septic system must be submitted by April. The 3235 Main Street septic system was inspected by BOH Agent who found the leach field to be in groundwater. The Title 5 inspection before the property was purchased passed the system so the BOH has agreed to let the store open. The BOH has also waived the need for a grease trap for the new restaurant kitchen. Commission expressed concern about potential impacts to Yokum Brook given the leach field is entirely within the river front area, is upstream of the elementary school and tributary to the Westfield River Wild & Scenic segment.

Agent provided a written report to commissioners.

Motion to adjourn the meeting, (Pryor/Karlberg). MSV. Chair Dixon adjourned the meeting at 9:28

Action Items:

1. Agent Larcom to research the CSX file to determine if there was an effort to reduce the volume of herbicides used to control right-of-way vegetation.
2. Notify MACC of Becket Conservation Commissions vote to sign on to the Pipeline letter to Governor Baker.
3. Check marked trees in buffer area to be left in Eversource right-of-way reclamation project.
4. Chair Dixon will work on budget numbers including costs incurred so far this year and disseminate an updated budget before January meeting.
5. Ask town administrator if commissioners attending trainings/conferences can be reimbursed for mileage.