

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 13th, 2021 MEETING

Access via phone (646) 558 8656 or via web at www.zoom.us with Meeting ID 825 0632 0903 / Password 808347

A meeting of the Longmeadow Conservation Commission was called to order at 7:05 P.M. on October 13th, 2021 and was again conducted remotely, this time consistent with Governor Baker's Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 extending certain provisions that were previously held during the state of emergency.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Al Laakso, Patrick Carnahan, Andrea Chasen, Christopher Nolan.

Absent: David Dumais, Kiernan Mulcahy, John Bresnahan.

OTHERS PRESENT: Dave Marinelli, Brandy Magdalino, Kimberly Barton.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING: Chair Al Laakso made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Carnahan, to accept the minutes of September 8th, 2021 as presented. Roll call vote - Mr. Laakso, yes; Mr. Carnahan: yes; Ms. Chasen: yes; Mr. Nolan: abstained. Motion passed 3-0 with one abstention.

TREASURER'S REPORT: No report was presented this evening.

RDA – TREE REMOVAL AT 17 GLENWOOD CIRCLE: Ms. Magdalino, whose property is near Cooley Brook and one of its overflow areas, explained that upon consultation with a tree contractor, she is requesting permission to remove four (4) trees from her backyard that fall within the 200-foot riverfront area due to their excessive height, age and close proximity to the dwelling unit; large limbs have already fallen in recent months with the passing of storms. During a site visit, Chair Al Laakso pointed to a utility pole on the tree belt from which a guy wire extends and is anchored on one of the trees; the wire must be removed prior to tree removal, if approved by the commission.

While Cooley Brook has been the subject of ongoing discussions in town, its watershed will not be adversely impacted by this activity (so long as tree slash is not deposited near the stream) as the trees are far enough; the key to improve the water quality of the stream must be addressed upstream at the watershed, which is fed by outfalls. Commissioner Nolan strongly encouraged that straw wattles be in place during the stump removing activity to stabilize the terrain and the trees be replaced with native trees.

Chair Al Laakso made a motion, and was seconded by Ms. Chasen, to issue a Negative Determination #2 and #6 with the special conditions that (a) straw wattles be in place during stump grinding work and (b) the trees to be removed be replaced with slow-growing ornamental trees. Roll call vote - Mr. Laakso, yes; Mr. Carnahan: yes; Mr. Nolan: yes; Ms. Chasen: yes. All in favor 4-0, motion passed.

Documents presented: RDA application with photographs

VOTE – GASEK FARMS MANAGEMENT PLAN: An email miscommunication prevented the commissioners from receiving in a timely manner a letter sent by DCR Representative Sasha Auer that was issued by the MA's Division of Fisheries and Wildlife regarding the Gasek Farm species that are part of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Chair Al Laakso recommends that this letter be part of the plan, therefore voting on the plan's final draft will be deferred to a subsequent meeting to allow time for the other commissioners to look into the letter. Additionally, Mr. Carnahan mentioned the ongoing issue of unauthorized motor vehicle activity in the area and pondered if adding additional locked gates that can be accessed with a master key, an idea that Mr. Laakso suggested be brainstormed during a separate session where the creation of an implementation action plan can occur and at which time a closer look at all parties requiring access to the site (Amtrak, TGP, others) be considered.

DISCUSSION – PROPOSAL FROM THE NATURE CONSERVANCY FOR CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION: Earlier this year The Nature Conservancy approached the Conservation Commission with ideas on potentially entering into an agreement where some of the town-owned conservation land directly abutting the conservation federal land in the floodplain be purchased within the next two years to allow such terrain to be eligible for federal grant opportunities available for conservation land improvements, such as expanding the floodplain forest restoration project; the agency maintains a commitment to partnering with the Conservation Commission even after transfer of land ownership. Such proposal was rejected by some commissioners due to the town's loss of control over the land while others, while sharing the same concern over loss of control, acknowledged that such agencies do have more resources than the commission and it would be wise to look into said resources before passing on potentially beneficial opportunities. Due to a lack of clarity on the specific details of the proposal and expectations of stakeholder roles within this partnership, commissioners agreed to invite representatives of The Nature Conservancy to a subsequent meeting to better understand the implications of this potential land ownership transfer.

DISCUSSION – BYLAW DIGITIZATION REQUEST: Town Manager Lyn Simmons has engaged a contractor to review the Town's General and Zoning Bylaws in order to reformat the documents. During the revisions, twelve edits were highlighted by the contractor on various Wetlands Bylaw articles along with the suggested language to use. After an extensive review, Chair Al Laakso made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Carnahan, to accept the suggested revisions. Roll call vote - Mr. Laakso, yes; Mr. Carnahan: yes; Mr. Nolan: yes; Ms. Chasen: yes. All in favor 4-0, motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS – The following items were discussed:

1. Courtesy reminder letters were sent to the property owners of 1255 Williams Street, 45 Twin Hills Drive and 32 Lincoln Road requesting updates on the restoration plan execution for their respective properties after the issuance of Enforcement Orders last year. Two of the three property owners responded indicating that such plans remain ongoing.
2. Work on the Pondsides Road repaving project from Bark Haul Road to Birnie Road will begin in the coming weeks.
3. Ms. Chasen presented some images taken during her recent seasonal walks, which display issues of algae on the Turner Park pond, signs, standing water and trash; she is sharing the images in the event they can help with action plan ideas. She also wishes to reach out to the new Assistant Town Manager to request guidance on who to approach within the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for guidance on how to develop a map trail for the floodplain area.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bianca Damiano