

Montague Conservation Commission

One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376

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MEETING MINUTES

Thursday November 18, 2021- 6:30pm

Town Hall Annex Meeting Room

One Avenue A Turners Falls, MA 01376

Commissioners Present: Mark Fairbrother, Anthony Reiber, Sean Werle (ZOOM), Donna Francis, Margaux Reckard, Toby Carter (ZOOM).

Staff: Walter Ramsey.

Guests: Kim Draghi, Melissa Kaplan, Al Avril

6:30PM: Welcome new member Margaux Reckard

MOTION by D. Francis to accept the minutes of October 14, 2021. Seconded by A. Reiber. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE) MOTION PASSES.

6:31 PM: Public Hearing Notice of Intent #2021-01 North Leverett Road Replacement Project filed by BSC Group, Inc. for Eversource Energy. The work will occur in the N. Leverett Rd. right-of-way between Federal Street and the Leverett Town line. Work involves tree removal in the riverfront area of the Sawmill River in support of pole replacement.

Melissa Kaplan from the BSC Group presented the filing. All poles on this stretch will be replaced. A new heavier conductor in Montague will require several new mid-span poles to prevent sag. Additionally, trees will need to be removed to prevent possible damage to the line. Most of the proposed work is exempt, however trees removed in preparation for new poles are not exempt. Tree clearing will mostly be completed from the road and the paved path adjacent to the road.

Agent reviewed two file comments from MASS DEP 1.) Natural Heritage has provided a no-take determination and 2.) DEP advises to Protection of the Sawmill River as a cold water stream which is a critical habitat. The Conservation Agent met Melissa and Kim at the site to look at the jurisdictional poles that are proposed, as well as the trees proposed for removal. The Agent believes that the plan for tree removal is not excessive, and that the plan presented by BSC is accurate to the work site. The 24 trees to be removed should not have detrimental effect on the cold water stream habitat.

Al Avril asks if the paved road is wide enough to accommodate equipment without disturbing the ground. Melissa Kaplan and the Conservation Agent agree that the road width + condition is adequate. Agent suggests that removal of this roadway road might also be a good candidate for a future restoration project..

A. Reiber asks for the total number of trees being removed. Kaplan responds 24 trees jurisdictional trees and all others not jurisdictional. The total impact area is 44 feet with impact in the front area.

MOTION by S. Werle to issue an Order of Condition filed by BSC Group for Eversource for NOI #2021-01 for work that will occur in the N. Leverett Rd. right-of-way between Federal Street and the Leverett Town line. Seconded by D. Francis. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Donna Francis (AYE), T. Carter (AYE), M. Reckard (AYE). MOTION PASSES 6:52PM.

7:00 PM: Agent Report

Minor tree maintenance at Cabot Woods and Poplar Street River Access by Firstlight Power.

Conservation Agent shows images of dead/damaged trees in these two areas, which were confirmed as hazardous by the Fire Chief. Firstlight intends to keep the Commission informed of its tree maintenance activity.

Update on Burn Dump Capping aka Sandy Lane Solar (NOI 2018-05)

The Conservation Agent shows drone images of the cap and storm water basin. The engineer is currently monitoring several ground water break out sites under the guidance of DEP. They may need to come before the Commission to amend their plans and address break outs. Agent shows recent images of the basin. The Conservation Agent discusses the arrangement between the solar company and the Town to cap the burn dump.

Waidlich Conservation Fund FY23 Budget Request

The Conservation Agent has filed a \$10K budget request to supplement the fund. The fund currently holds \$13,000. Mark F. advised of a strategy to build-up incrementally to \$50,000 by requesting annual investments from Town Meeting. The fund has been used to protect over 500 acres of prime farm land. Agent noted that private donations and bequests can be made to the Conservation Fund.

Set site visit time to view potential 2/3 acre Lake Pleasant Conservation Land off Montague Avenue (Map 36 Lots 138,143,139,142, Map 37 Lots 1 and 3) Agent invites members of the Commission to an in-person site visit. Folks in Lake Pleasant will be invited, as well. A time will be proposed via email.

MOTION to Adjourn by D. Francis Seconded by M. Reckard. MOTION PASSES 7:12PM.