

**REGULAR MEETING  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**1 JUNKINS AVENUE  
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
CONFERENCE ROOM "A"**

**3:30 P.M.**

**August 8, 2007**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Steve Miller; Vice Chairman James Horrigan; Members, Allison Tanner, Brian Wazlaw, Barbara McMillan, Eva Powers; and Alternate Mary Ann Blanchard

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Skye Maher, Alternate Richard Adams

**ALSO PRESENT:** Peter Britz, Environmental Planner

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**I. Report on herbicide and pesticide spraying in Portsmouth – Mike Morrison,  
Municipal Pest Control Manager**

Mr. Mike Morrison, Municipal Pest Control Manager for the City of Portsmouth was present to give a report to the Commission concerning weed and pest control policies and practices. He said that their main concern was to control mosquito larvae that are found in stagnant and shallow water. To control it, they use two types of bacterium called BTI and BS. He indicated that they were effective and eco-friendly. These are applied to the wetlands but not to running or deep water. He said that the catch basins in Portsmouth are a prime habitat for the mosquitoes that are directly associated with West Nile virus. There are approximately 3,000 catch basins in the City. There is also a new mosquito presently located up and down the East Coast that is associated with the EEE virus. Mr. Morrison said that they apply the BTI to the catch basins once a month.

Mr. Morrison said that the City was registered for eight different insecticides that are in use in Portsmouth. He said that street spraying is done in Rye, Portsmouth, and Newington. This supplements the larvae spraying. He pointed out that residents can call and request that spraying not happen at their house. They only spray when the wind speeds are between 2-10 miles per hour. Mr. Morrison said that the insecticide that they spray is called Anvil.

He also explained that they do a lot of monitoring and surveillance. They set traps and collect mosquitoes. The mosquitoes are sent to Concord for testing. Steve Parkinson, Public Works Director and Kim McNamara, Health Officer are emailed each week with the results. If any positives results are found, John Bohenko, Steve Parkinson, and Kim McNamara are notified. The media is then notified a day later.

Mr. Morrison said that their weed control program has been in place since 1979. He stated that they only use Roundup Pro. They change the rates according to the severity of the weeds. He said that they can spray the city in about 2 or 3 days.

Vice Chairman Horrigan said that he had concern about the spraying on the sidewalks. He was concerned about the heavy foot traffic that happens right after a spraying. He wondered why they could not pull the weeds by hand. Mr. Morrison replied that pulling them by hand only pulls the top growth and so the weeds grow back. He pointed out that they do not spray the entire sidewalk, just the weeds.

Vice Chairman Horrigan continued to say that he has observed young men spraying without wearing masks. Mr. Morrison said that only a long sleeve shirt and medical gloves are required.

Chairman Miller asked the spraying schedule. Mr. Morrison replied that weeds start to appear the end of May. In June they start the first application, then again in July but after that it is very sporadic.

Chairman Miller asked how the applicators are trained. Mr. Morrison said that the workers have to take a test in Concord. They have to be licensed in the herbicide category and also in mosquito control.

Chairman Miller asked how the weather factors into the spraying. Mr. Morrison replied that in the morning they evaluate the weather via a weather website. He said that nothing is sprayed when it is raining.

Vice Chairman Horrigan asked about the spraying on Leary Field. Mr. Morrison said that they do some spraying at that location. Vice Chairman Horrigan said that he has seen others spraying there as well. He wondered if the spraying was being overdone by well intended volunteers. Mr. Morrison said that they do turf management there but he would check into the additional spraying.

Ms. Tanner stated that she had a concern with the decrease in amphibians in the City of Portsmouth. She said that she knows that if Roundup gets into the water it can do damage to amphibians. She pointed out that there was another product called Rodeo that can be used in place of Roundup. Mr. Morrison said that he uses a lot of Rodeo. He explained that Rodeo was an aquatic herbicide and when applied to water, it will not accumulate. He said he could not contribute the decrease in amphibians to any one thing.

Ms. Powers asked what effect does the spraying have on earthworms. Mr. Morrison replied that herbicides were only applied to paved surfaces as a rule so he did not think it would have any effect. Because they did not have applications that go into the soil, he thought it would be hard to kill earthworms.

Mr. Morrison indicated that they were using fertilizers on the athletic fields. Ms. McMillan asked if they were using anything else. Mr. Morrison said that they were doing broadleaf weed

control about every two years or as needed. Sometimes they will do crabgrass control in the spring.

Ms. McMillan asked if he knew who was spraying around the library. Mr. Morrison replied no, that was not one of his facilities.

Ms. Powers wondered if they were doing all of the spraying within two to three days to give the impression that they were not spraying frequently. Mr. Morrison said no, they have been spraying this way since 1979. He said that they try to do it on a day when fewer people are around, such as on a Monday. He did think the less visible they were the better but he felt doing it this way was better than doing it piece meal. Ms. Powers replied that doing it since 1979 did not make it safe. Mr. Morrison agreed although he felt he was very experienced with it. Ms. Powers said she was not questioning his experience, she was wondering if anything else could be done. Mr. Morrison explained that the weed control that they do was not just cosmetic. He said that weeds decrease the life of the sidewalk. Also, the weeds can cause the sidewalks to be slippery after a rain. Ms. Powers said that that all made sense but it was a growth inhibitor and she would like to do some research on it. Mr. Morrison told her that there were some good university websites and he would be happy to assist her in her research.

Mr. Wazlaw asked if the City did anything about rodent control. Mr. Morrison said not through him. He said that he does handle a wasp nests.

Ms. McMillan stated that Exeter has adopted Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in their city and as a result Cooperative Extension was getting on board with many of their recommendations. She asked Mr. Morrison if he was up to date on the latest advances. Mr. Morrison replied that Portsmouth's mosquito program was IPM. He added that he and his workers go to conventions every winter so they are up to date on any new products or procedures.

Ms. Powers asked who to call if you did not want your property to be sprayed. Chairman Miller said that there was a letter in the paper from Steve Parkinson indicating that he was the one to call if you did not spraying to take place on your property. He added that you would need to put your request in writing.

Chairman Miller asked Mr. Morrison about educating the public about the importance of eliminating standing water on their properties. Mr. Morrison replied that the City website has information about it. He said that most people are good about it but if it became necessary, the City could get involved with residents who need a reminder.

Ms. Blanchard stated that she felt the street spraying was not very effective. Mr. Morrison explained that street spraying was supplemental to their other methods.

Chairman Miller asked if there was any data to show the effectiveness of the street spraying. Mr. Morrison replied that when their light traps are low after a spraying, they are fairly confident that the spraying is the reason. He explained that the light traps are located in areas where there is no street spraying.

Chairman Miller thanked Mr. Morrison for coming in and taking the time to talk with the Commission about this topic.

**II. Discussion of possible changes to Article VI of the Zoning Ordinance**

Chairman Miller stated that the City was currently working on some structural changes to the City's Zoning Ordinance. What currently was Article VI will be Article VIII. Chairman Miller suggested that the Commission start from the beginning of the draft of Article VIII and make notations of changes or suggestions that the Commission would like to see in the revised zoning ordinance.

Chairman Miller reiterated the Commission's desire to have vernal pool protection included in the revised document as well as storm water management guidelines.

At this point in the meeting, the Commission discussed specific additions, deletions, and suggestions to Article VIII, the first two pages, pages 113 and 114.

In the interest of time, the Commission decided to continue the discussion at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

**III. Other business**

There was no other business to come before the Commission.

**IV. Approval of minutes**

June 27, 2007

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes as presented.

July 11, 2007

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes as presented.

**V. Adjournment**

At 5:10 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Good  
Conservation Commission Secretary

These minutes were approved at the September 12, 2007 Conservation Commission meeting.