

**MINUTES
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**1 JUNKINS AVENUE
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
EILEEN DONDERO FOLEY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

3:30 P.M.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Steve Miller; Vice Chairman Mary Ann Blanchard;
Members Allison Tanner, Barbara McMillan; Elissa Hill Stone,
Peter Vandermark, Alternates Kimberly Meuse, Matthew Cardin

MEMBERS ABSENT: Shelley Saunders

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Britz, Environmental Planner

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I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. July 8, 2014
2. July 9, 2014

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (6-0) to approve the minutes as presented.

II. STATE WETLANDS BUREAU PERMIT APPLICATIONS

- A. Standard Dredge and Fill Application
Leslie Drive
City of Portsmouth, owner
Assessor Map 209, Lot 48

Mr. Dave Desfosses, Engineering Technician for the City and Mr. Rene LaBranche, of Stantec were present to speak to the application. Mr. Desfosses stated that this was a two pronged project. He said that Leslie Drive was constructed prior to the sanitary sewers and were added later. He explained that currently the pipes cannot handle the stormwater flow so Stantec has been contracted to design the upgrades. It would involve 3,100 square feet of temporary disturbance and 100 feet of permanent disturbance. Once the pipe was installed, the City would reconstruct Leslie Drive. This would be phase one. He added that this would not only help with drainage but would also be an anti-erosion project as well.

Ms. Stone arrived at this point in the meeting.

Mr. LaBranche explained in detail the process of replacing the pipe with a new 12 inch pipe. He said the process would take about a week. They would also be putting in a catch basin right at the pump line.

Chairman Miller stated that this would be a great improvement for the neighborhood. He was wondering how they would improve water quality and treatment and thought that maybe that would be phase two. Mr. Defosses said that they were committed to improving water quality as well.

Mr. Cardin arrived at this point in the meeting.

Ms. McMillan asked about the rip rap apron and wondered if there was any opportunity to move the outlet of the pipe up. Mr. Defosses said the current location was the best location as they did not want to discharge on top of the salt marsh. They wanted it to discharge into the water.

Ms. McMillan asked if there had been consideration given to infiltrating some of the water up above on Leslie Drive with rain gardens or box filters. Mr. Defosses pointed out that Leslie Drive was not designed yet so they could give it some thought.

Hearing no other questions, Chairman Miller asked for a motion. Vice Chairman Blanchard made a motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tanner. Chairman Miller asked for discussion.

Ms. McMillan recommended that infiltration practices be incorporated on Leslie Drive in the future.

Hearing no other discussion, Chairman Miller called for the vote. The motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau as presented by a unanimous (7-0) vote.

III. WORK SESSION

1. PSNH Switch Yard and L117 Transmission Line – Borthwick Avenue

Mr. Greg Halsey and Devleena Ghosh-Brower of Tighe and Bond and Laura Games, Matt Morrow, and Gary Accoula and several other Public Service of New Hampshire employees were present.

Mr. Halsey explained that this project involved a new switch gear and transmission line for the new sub station. He said that there would be temporary and permanent wetland buffer impacts from the project. He pointed out that the existing transmission line would remain until all was in place, then it would be removed.

Mr. Halsey talked about the forested wetland and said that a path would have to be cleared. He said that they would prepare a wetlands and habitat functions assessment prior to coming with their final proposal. Ms. Tanner asked why they were not going over the road instead of going through the wetland. Mr. Halsey said it was because PSNH did not own the land.

Ms. Ghosh-Brower presented a habitat assessment and gave a detailed account of the characteristics of each wetland.

Vice Chairman Blanchard asked about the maintenance of the new access because there would be maintenance cutting. She pointed out that these corridors have been known to provide linear pathways for species to move down and through. She asked what happens with drainage when that much cutting is done. Ms. Ghosh-Brower said that the root systems would not be disrupted and that the soil will stay intact.

Ms. Tanner stressed the importance of doing all that they could to prevent invasive species from spreading. Ms. Ghosh-Brower said they would be matting a lot of the area and the equipment used would be very cautious. Ms. Tanner asked if there could be selective removal of invasives. Ms. Ghosh-Brower said that they would use best management practices. Mr. Cardin said that invasive species was a major concern of his also. He suggested ongoing monitoring for post construction. Possibly a minimum of a year of monthly monitoring, then occasionally after that.

Ms. McMillan asked if there was an opportunity for anything to go underground. Mr. Halsey said no, not in this area.

Mr. Gary Accoula, project manager, confirmed that a certain segment of the line would be underground but that they always try to choose the lowest cost alternative. Ms. McMillan thought there was a cost benefit but Mr. Accoula said that it was seven times more costly to put it underground. Chairman Miller added that he thought the long term maintenance cost would be cut. He wondered if there was any data to show that analysis. He thought Ms. McMillan had a legitimate point.

Mr. Vandermark asked how much higher and wider would the new lines be. Mr. Morrow stated that there would be 10 feet spacing but there would be differing heights due to the terrain.

Ms. Stone asked if they were proposing any mitigation. Mr. Halsey said yes, they were proposing access to an upland area. Mr. Britz also added that a bike path was being proposed and was part of a shared use agreement in conjunction with the Bike/Pedestrian Plan. He also pointed out that maybe a boardwalk could be built to Pine Island for pedestrians and cyclists.

Chairman Miller asked why this was a good idea with regard to long term plans and goals. Mr. Accoula explained that the Seacoast is the largest consumer of power and as a result, they had a lot of reliability projects in the works.

Mr. Accoula stated that they will address any public health ramifications as well as impact to abutters at the next meeting. He stated that they have had some discussion with the abutters regarding the project.

Chairman Miller reiterated that the Commission's concern is environmental and water quality. He added that when they come back, he would want more specifics about the invasive species.

Mr. Cardin asked if they anticipated crossing the stream on the site. Ms. Ghosh-Brower said they would not need to span the stream. Ms. McMillan thought the stream drained to Hodgson Brook. Ms. Ghosh-Brower said they would not be impacting it.

Ms. Ghosh-Brower stated that the site had some dumping areas. Ms. Tanner asked if they would be cleaning up the dump sites. Ms. Ghosh-Brower replied yes.

For the next meeting, Mr. Cardin said that he would like to see the invasive species called out on a plan. Mr. Britz added that any strategy on how they plan to control phragmites would be helpful. There was detailed discussion about invasives species control and a monitoring plan.

Ms. Laura Games of PSNH pointed out that they cannot control what is happening on adjacent properties. Mr. Vandermark added that he thought the bigger picture for PSNH was being a good steward and being responsible.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Miller stated that the deadline for the moose plate grant was September 26. Ms. McMillan made a motion to authorize David Viale to move forward on applying for the grant on the City's behalf. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cardin. The motion passed unanimously.

There was discussion about a dead tree at 121 Mechanic Street that was not in the jurisdictional area. They discussed changing the ordinance to allow a dead tree to be cut down as long as they had a letter from a certified arborist.

A work session was scheduled for September 24, 2014 at 3:30 p.m.

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 5:15 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Good
Conservation Commission Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Conservation Commission meeting on Nov. 12, 2014.