

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

**3:30 P.M.**

**October 8, 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. August 13, 2014

The minutes were postponed to the November 2014 meeting.

**II. STATE WETLANDS BUREAU PERMIT APPLICATIONS**

A. Standard Dredge and Fill Application  
Borthwick Avenue  
Public Service of New Hampshire, owner  
Assessor Map 234, Lots 1,2,3,7-3,7-4A, 7-7

Presenters for this application were: Mr. Greg Halsey, Ms. Devleena Ghosh-Brower, and Mr. Patrick Crimmins of Tighe and Bond, Ms. Lora Games, Adam, Matt Morrow, and Kathleen Lewis, and Mr. Patrick Crimmins of Tighe & Bond

Mr. Greg Halsey of Public Service of New Hampshire stated that the electrical demand in the Portsmouth area is growing and will continue to grow. He explained that Phase 1 of the project was the substation that has already been approved. Phase 2 was the proposing of transmission lines. The switch yard will be on a gravel pad. The retaining wall is being proposed to keep impacts from the wetland. Mr. Halsey pointed out that the site has a jurisdictional wetland so they are trying to reduce impacts. He said there would be 10 square feet of permanent impacts and 700 square feet of temporary impacts. The grading would be restored once the project was completed. The permanent impacts involve the gravel pads. There would be no impacts from run off. Mr. Halsey explained that some of the project runs across hospital land and Unutil land. He said that they will need to do some clearing but it was PSNH land. He added that they

needed 7,000 square feet for safe clearing around the power lines. Timber swamp matting will be used and the work will be done during the winter months.

Mr. Halsey stated that at the work session last month, he was asked about putting the lines underground. He explained that the impacts from excavating would be extensive, would take a long time, and significantly increase the chance of opening it up to invasive species. They would have to do extensive digging for maintenance. He closed by saying that he believed they have met the criteria for the permit and opened it up to questions from the Commission.

Vice Chair Blanchard asked Mr. Crimmins about his presentation to the Commission back in June about another PSNH project in the same area and wondered why he did not allude to this upcoming project. Mr. Crimmins explained that they are dealing with two different departments at PSNH, Transmission and Distribution. The project in June was the distribution portion of the project. The engineering for transmission had not yet been engaged. Vice Chair Blanchard commented that a project with 77,000 square feet of vegetative impact in an area that was fragile was a concern. She added that the maintenance division of PSNH is not always careful when they come in to do maintenance under power lines. She said that gave her an extra pause as she looked at the proposal.

Ms. Ghosh-Brower stated that a wildlife habitat assessment was done for the entire corridor. She proceeded to give a detailed report that focused on invasive species, urban bird species, and wildlife habitats.

Ms. Tanner asked about the 77,412 square feet of plant life that was currently absorbing carbon that won't be once the vegetation was cut down. Ms. Ghosh-Brower explained that they were using the Corp methodology and carbon was not one of the factors listed. Ms. Tanner asked if anyone looked at it. Ms. Ghosh-Brower said that it was a quantitative research that would have to be done for a period of time before results would be able to be calculated.

Vice-Chair Blanchard asked if there were any herbicides used in the management of the vegetative corridor. Ms. Ghosh-Brower replied no.

Vice Chair Blanchard commented that the Commission has not had anyone from the PSNH management division who could help them understand the continuing impact of the maintenance of the line.

Ms. Ghosh-Brower acknowledged the Commission's concern regarding the management of invasive species. She referred the Commission to a chart in the submission packet that categorized each invasive present in the corridor by their relative dominance. She then proceeded to explain in great detail the invasive species management plan that would be in place during construction. She also explained that there would be post construction monitoring of the entire area for one year from when the line is up and running. They would also create an invasive species map. Ms. Ghosh-Brower added that if there was not an invasive species prominence, they could set up a long term maintenance plan that would then be turned over to PSNH.

Chairman Miller asked if the term “maintain” meant “control”. Ms. Ghosh-Brower replied yes, it meant control.

Ms. Stone asked if the control would mean the same abundance present before the project started or eradicate it or maintain it at the current abundance. Ms. Games replied that they would not make it worse.

Vice-Chair Blanchard asked if there were best management practices for managing invasives with either State or national standards. Ms. Ghosh-Brower pointed out that the NH Department of Resources and Economic Development website as well as the DES website had a document entitled Best Management Practices for Utility Construction and Maintenance Operations that included a chapter on invasive species. Vice Chair Blanchard asked if what they were presenting was consistent with that. Ms. Ghosh-Brower replied yes and added that the species were very common in Massachusetts and New Hampshire as well.

Ms. Tanner expressed concern as to whether the disturbed area will be maintained so that it is without invasive species.

Ms. Ghosh-Brower stated that they could not eliminate the source but they would try their best to eliminate invasive species. In terms of long term elimination, 100% is a very difficult guarantee to make. Vice-Chair Blanchard stated that they don't want the invasive species coming into the new area of construction.

Ms. Ghosh-Brower stated that the vegetation management plan would be on a three to five year schedule but they would do annual invasive species monitoring from the in service date.

Vice-Chair Blanchard asked if there was any provision to notify the City when work is scheduled to be conducted in the right-of-way. Ms. Games stated that they always notify the City Manager when work will be done. Vice-Chair Blanchard asked if the City Manager and the Environmental Planner could be notified when work is going to be happening. Mr. Britz stated that he has been informed in the past by PSNH and that they are easy to work with.

Ms. McMillan wondered if an outside entity could do the monitoring. Ms. Ghosh-Brower stated that it could be done. Mr. Britz added that it could be a stipulation of the approval.

Mr. Cardin asked how the trees would be cleared and more specifically, was it selective cutting. Ms. Ghosh-Brower said that the right of way clearing was largely forested so selective cutting was not possible. Ms. Games added that they are selective wherever it's possible. She said most likely a low growing shrub would get cut. The method of cutting is meant to encourage the low growing shrubs. She added that nothing is stumped. Mr. Cardin thought it would help certain species to remain and stay rooted instead of clear cutting and going in there with skidders.

Ms. McMillan asked if this project involved Hodgdon Brook at all. Mr. Britz said one outfall was involved. Mr. Crimmins state that he has spoken with Candace Dolan but has not started anything since it was very preliminary.

Ms. McMillan asked if an option would be to go along the road. Mr. Halsey said they had no ability to do that and it was the City's right of way.

Vice-Chair Blanchard stated that she liked the idea of a third party independent review for invasive species management. Mr. Britz mentioned that a recommendation could be made to the Planning Board but it would be important to be clear about the goals of the monitoring report and what it is you want it to show. He pointed out that one year might not be enough time for invasives to grow back.

Chairman Miller asked the Commission if they were ready to make a motion. Mr. Cardin stated that he would be recusing himself from the vote. Ms. Meuse would be voting.

Ms. Tanner stated that she wanted to clarify the three stipulations they had come up with:

- 1) That the monitoring report submitted after one year shall be validated by an independent consultant chosen by the City;
- 2) That a second monitoring, at the point just prior to the first scheduled maintenance of the new corridor, will be conducted by PSNH. If this monitoring finds that invasive species have expanded beyond the existing conditions, they will develop and implement additional invasive species control that will reduce the invasive species on site to the level of invasive species documented on the Invasive Species Composition Maps in the Wetland Invasive Species Control Plan.
- 3) That PSNH will communicate with the City Manager and the Environmental Planner prior to each monitoring event.

Ms. Stone seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. Chairman Miller called for the vote. The motion to recommend approval of the application to the Planning Board with the three stipulations passed by a vote of 6-1 with Ms. McMillan voting in opposition.

### **III. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPLICATIONS**

1. Borthwick Avenue  
Public Service of New Hampshire, owner  
Assessor Map 234, Lots 1,2,3,7-3,7-4A, 7-7

Ms. Tanner made a motion to recommend approval of the application with the following stipulations:

- 1) That the monitoring report submitted after one year shall be validated by an independent consultant chosen by the City;
- 2) That a second monitoring, at the point just prior to the first scheduled maintenance of the new corridor, will be conducted by PSNH. If this monitoring finds that invasive species have expanded beyond the existing conditions, they will develop and implement additional invasive species control that will reduce the invasive species on site to the

level of invasive species documented on the Invasive Species Composition Maps in the Wetland Invasive Species Control Plan.

- 3) That PSNH will communicate with the City Manager and the Environmental Planner prior to each monitoring event.

Ms. Stone seconded the motion. There was no additional discussion. Chairman Miller called for the vote. The motion to recommend approval of the application to the Planning Board with the three stipulations passed by a vote of 6-1 with Ms. McMillan voting in opposition.

2. 74 Wentworth House Road  
Jessica Paskalis, Owner  
Assessor Map 201, Lot 20

Mr. Alex Ross of Ross Engineering and Ms. Jessica Paskalis, owner of the property were present to speak to the application. Mr. Ross passed out an additional sheet of information to the Commission.

Mr. Ross explained that they would like to remove the old septic system that was currently in the buffer and replace it with a new system that would be out of the buffer. The owner would like to increase the size of the existing two bedroom house to a three bedroom house. They would have to put in a foundation on one portion of the house but it would be in an area that was previously disturbed. He added that the new septic design has been submitted to the State for their review and approval and that the applicant would also have to Board of Adjustment approval.

Chairman Miller asked if the old system would be pumped out, disconnected and remain in place. Mr. Ross said that he conferred with Marc Jacobs who recommended leaving it in place. He felt that any disturbance could affect the wetlands. It has been there for 50 years.

Vice-Chair Blanchard asked if there would be gutters on the new addition. Ms. Paskalis said that there are only gutters currently on the back of the screened porch but she would like to put some on. She added that she wanted rain barrels for her garden.

Mr. Vandermark stated that it was a very clear presentation.

Hearing no other questions, Chairman Miller asked for a motion.

Ms. Stone made a motion to recommend approval of the application to the Planning Board as presented with the following stipulations:

- 1) That gutters are installed and connected to rain barrels at the back of the house.
- 2) That the existing septic system is pumped out before it is disconnected.

The motion was seconded by Ms. Tanner. There was no discussion.

The motion to recommend approval of the application to the Planning Board as presented with the following stipulations passed by a unanimous (7-0) vote:

- 1) That gutters are installed and connected to rain barrels at the back of the house.
- 2) That the existing septic system is pumped out before it is disconnected.

#### **IV. OTHER BUSINESS**

##### **A. Update on PULA monitoring**

The next work session to discuss PULA monitoring was scheduled for October 27, 2014 at 3:30 p.m. at City Hall.

#### **V. ADJOURNMENT**

At 5:10 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 March 11, 2015.