

**SOUTH HADLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 3, 2023**

Present: Neva Tolopko, Chair; April Doroski, Vice-Chair; Bill DeLuca, Member, Garth Schwellenbach, Member; Tom Dennis, Member; Louise Croll, Associate Member; Rebekah Cornell, Conservation Administrator; and Colleen Canning, Planning/Conservation Coordinator

Chair Tolopko called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM and reviewed the virtual meeting protocols.

Agenda Item #1 --- Open Public Forum

No members of the public spoke during the open forum.

Agenda Item #3 --- Minutes

Draft minutes of the April 19, 2023 meeting were sent to the Commission for review.

Motion: Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to approve the April 19, 2023 meeting minutes. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #4 --- Enforcement Order – 21 North Sycamore Knolls

Administrator Cornell explained that a Determination of Applicability was issued for work associated with an addition at 21 North Sycamore Knolls in 2020. At that time, the Commission found the wetland delineation was unaffirmed and required the applicant to seek additional review and permitting if the scope of work expanded. Such expansion work did occur without Commission approval resulting in vegetation removal within the 50' Conservation Zone. Administrator Cornell held a site visit earlier in the day with the property owner's attorney and landscaper. At the site visit, she issued an Enforcement Order which required the filing of an NOI (Notice of Intent) to bring the project back into compliance.

Commissioner DeLuca asked why the violations happened. If the reason was known, it could help the commission prevent similar violations in the future. Administrator Cornell responded that she was still working with the applicant's consultants to figure out the reasons for the violations.

Commissioner DeLuca asked how many trees and shrubs had been removed. Administrator Cornell responded that she did not have the exact number yet. However, the number would be quantified upon filing an NOI.

Motion: Commissioner DeLuca moved to ratify the Enforcement Order issued to the owner of 21 North Sycamore Knolls for unpermitted work in jurisdictional areas and violating special conditions as defined in a Determination of Applicability issued to the property. Commissioner

Schwellenbach seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #5 --- Public Meeting to consider a Request for Determination filed by Sean Cleary for removal of two existing accessory structures, removal of a diseased tree, and construction of a new 12'x16' shed at 112 River Road (Map 22 Parcel 2)

The applicant and property owner, Sean Cleary, was present at the meeting. He was seeking to replace and relocate an existing shed on site. To remove the existing shed, removal of a diseased tree would also be necessary. He was proposing to relocate the shed further away from the River and closer to the street. Separately, he also wanted to remove an existing 'pavilion' structure as it was an eyesore.

Chair Tolopko asked if the existing stairs on site would remain. Sean Cleary replied that he did not have plans at this time to remove the stairs.

Vice-Chair Doroski observed that the location of the proposed shed was in flood zone. She asked if the shed's foundation would be at existing grade so as to not constitute fill. Sean Cleary responded that the new shed would be built at grade. Vice-Chair Doroski added that removal of the pavilion would help with net reduction.

Vice-Chair Doroski observed that the site was within the jurisdiction of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). She asked if the proposal had been sent to the program for comment. The application had not been sent to NHESP as it was not a joint filing like that of a Notice of Intent. However, the applicant was amenable to submitting the project to NHESP for review.

Commissioner DeLuca observed that the site's developed footprint would be reduced under proposed conditions. He recommended that native plants be used during revegetation. Chair Tolopko supported the use of native plants and recommended that part of the existing lawn area be reverted back to a more naturalistic landscape.

Associate Member Croll expressed concern for the presence of Emerald Ash Borer and advocated that the tree be removed as soon as possible. Sean Cleary explained that it would be easier and more cost effective to remove the tree following removal of the shed. In response to Associate Member Croll's inquiry, Administrator Cornell responded that the South Hadley did not have an Emerald Ash Borer action plan and did not feel the Commission had jurisdiction to require tree removal prior to removal of the shed.

Administrator Cornell reviewed special conditioning associated with the Commission's issuance of a Negative Determination as follows: 1) written approval for the work from the landowner, Holyoke Gas & Electric, would be needed; 2) a portion of the backyard would be reverted back to a naturalistic landscape; 3) the application must be sent to NHESP for approval; if a 'take' was determined, the applicant would need to come back to the Commission for approval; 4) the dumpster associated with site work must be placed in the driveway and no stockpiling of materials would be allowed; 5) the applicant would manage invasive species in site; 6) no

additional activities were to take place within 50 feet of the shore line; and 7) no fill or grading was permitted.

Motion: Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to issue a Negative Determination # 3 for removal of existing structures, removal of a diseased tree and construction of a new shed with special conditions as defined during the meeting. Commissioner Dennis seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #6 --- Public Meeting to consider a Request for Determination filed by Lori Raymundo for tree removal within Riverfront Area at 514 River Road (Map 43 Parcel 19)

The applicant and property owner, Lori Raymundo, was present at the meeting.

Administrator Cornell explained that the homeowner of 514 River Road was seeking to remove trees flagged as a concern by her home insurance agency. As identified, tree #1 was a larger tree hanging over the homes's deck and tree #2 was smaller and showed signs of woodpecker activity. Due to the site's grade, mitigation would be challenging so Administrator Cornell advised that smaller trees were permissible for mitigation.

Lori Raymundo clarified that she was only seeking to remove one tree; the tree identified as #2 in the Commission's background meeting notes. She requested to plant Black Cherry trees to satisfy the Commission's mitigation requirement.

Motion: Commissioner DeLuca moved to issue a Negative Determination for a removal of a tree at 514 River Road with special conditions as discussed during the meeting. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #7 --- Public Hearing (continued) to consider a Notice of Intent filed by Val Shvetz to secure an Order of Conditions permitting the applicant to install an elevated walkway extending to a floating dock on a cove of the CT River at 80 River Road (Parcel 22 Map 5)

The applicant, Val Shvetz, and his project consultant, Mike Mocko, were present at the hearing.

Administrator Cornell recommended that the Commission continue the hearing to the next meeting. Even though the applicant was present and revised materials were available for discussion, a quorum of voting members for this item was not present. The hearing had been continued a number of times and only members present during discussion were eligible to vote.

Motion: Vice-Chair Doroski moved to continue the hearing to May 17, 2023 at 6:05 PM. Commissioner DeLuca seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present votes in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #7 --- Public Meeting to consider a Request for Determination filed by the South Hadley School Department to install footing drains and repair existing drainage along the east side of the school within buffer zone at 153 Newton St (Map 17 Parcel 15)

The applicant's consultant, Jeff Squire of Berkshire Design, was present at the meeting. He explained that South Hadley High School was seeking to install footing drains along the back of the high school to remedy moisture issues within the building. The newly installed footing drains would connect to an existing outlet.

Chair Tolopko asked if the paved areas at the back of the building would remain paved. Jeff Squire responded that the area would remain paved.

It was recommended that special conditions should require removal of old silt fences from previous projects if found during site work.

Chair Tolopko asked if existing outfall pipes would be flushed during site work. Jeff Squire responded that the outlets would be flushed. In doing so, replacement of the outlet may be required. All flushing would be done away from the river and a barrier would be installed to collect debris during flushing.

Motion: Vice-Chair Doroski moved to issue a Negative Determination #2 for installation of footing drains at South Hadley High School located at 153 Newton Street with special conditions as defined during the meeting. Commissioner Schwelmbach seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

Agenda Item #8 --- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The Commission had long been interested in developing initiatives to increase diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at Town Conservation Areas. Administrator Cornell compiled thoughts and recommendations submitted by commissioners and included initiatives implemented through the Planning and Conservation Department.

Commissioner Davis, who was not present at the meeting, corresponded with the Hampshire Bird Club who found successes with implementing a 'Birding for Everyone' program.

Administrator Cornell shared the following staff-lead initiatives: 1) outreach efforts could be held at a Veteran's Picnic on October 7; 2) the public lands brochure and trail maps could be translated into Spanish; 3) a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant could be applied for to outreach to South Hadley's Environmental Justice (EJ) population; and 4) staff would attend and share information regarding DEI-related webinars and information sessions.

Vice Chair Doroski shared information found on the interactive EJ mapper showing the areas of South Hadley's EJ population. A percentage of local households were Spanish-speaking so Spanish translation of conservation-related materials could help in DEI efforts. She also recommended sharing resources at the senior center, local schools and Mount Holyoke College as those organizations all reached different age groups.

Chair Tolopko shared her recommendations which included the following: 1) information sessions could be held sharing the history of land use in South Hadley; 2) the Commission could join efforts of other groups in bringing cultural events to Town; and 3) the youth population could be engaged with through work with local schools and Mount Holyoke College.

Commissioners discussed forming a subcommittee to further investigate and implement DEI initiatives. Discussion would continue at a future meeting.

Agenda Item #9 --- Administrator’s Report

Administrator Cornell detailed the following items:

- *Growing Wild South Hadley* – The subcommittee held a meeting earlier in the week. A lecture was scheduled for the evening of May 11. All attendees would receive a small gift with a chance to win door prizes.
- *Scout Projects* – A local Girl Scout volunteer would begin a project to re-blaze the trails at Black Stevens Conservation Area. Boy Scouts were also interested in helping repair stairs at Warner Conservation Area and helping remove impaired boardwalks at Canal Park.
- *Conservation Newsletter* – April and May newsletters would be posted in the near future.
- *Community Events* – A number of successful community events were held as follows: 1) a trek of Bynan Conservation Area was hosted by the Bike/Walk Committee; 2) a trash pickup event was hosted by the South Hadley Falls Neighborhood Association; and 3) an Arbor Day celebration at the Hahn-Warner Arboretum was hosted by the Tree Committee.
- *Upcoming projects* – The Commission could anticipate reviewing applications for the following: 1) parking lot and drainage improvements at River-to-Range Trail; 2) improvements to the Robert Frost trail; and 3) tree removal along Eversource’s right-of-way.

Agenda Item #10 ---Other New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Adjournment

Motion: Commissioner Dennis moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Five (5) out of five (5) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 7:59 PM.

Appendix

Document	Document Location
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Enforcement Order - 21 North Sycamore Knolls	Conservation Files
Request for Determination of Applicability - 112 River Road	Conservation Files
Request for Determination of Applicability - 514 River Road	Conservation Files
Request for Determination of Applicability - South Hadley High School, 153 Newton St	Conservation Files