

**SOUTH HADLEY CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES  
JULY 19, 2023**

**Present:** Neva Tolopko, Chair; April Doroski, Vice-Chair; Garth Schwellenbach, Member, Kathleen Davis, Member; Tom Dennis, Member; Jessica Schoendorf, Member; Louise Croll, Associate Member; Terry Rosenfeld, 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 #2 --- Minutes**

Draft minutes of the June 21 and July 5 meeting were sent to the Commission for review.

**Motion:** Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to approve the June 21 meeting minutes. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Four (4) out of six (6) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call. Chair Tolopko and Commissioner Dennis abstained from the vote as they were not in attendance at the meeting.

**Motion:** Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to approve the July 5 meeting minutes. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. Four (4) out of six (6) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call. Vice-Chair Doroski and Commissioner Schoendorf abstained from the vote as they were not in attendance at the meeting.

**Agenda Item #3 --- Guest Presenter: Mark Stinson, Western Regional Circuit Rider  
MassDEP**

Mark Stinson, MassDEP, attended the meeting to answer any of the Commission's questions on the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). A slideshow (attached) was presented which detailed the purpose and powers of the WPA.

Following the slideshow presentation, commissioners were invited to ask questions.

Vice-Chair Doroski asked for clarity on how a 'degraded area' was classified relative to redevelopment standards. Mark Stinson replied that it was at the discretion of the Commission.

Vice-Chair Doroski asked for clarity on the requirement for DEP issuance of a file number within 21 days of filing a Notice of Intent. Mark Stinson replied that a file number needed to be issued following receipt of a completed application. For example, if an applicant paid the incorrect filing fee, the application was not considered complete.

Vice-Chair Doroski asked if there were requirements for filing with the *Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program* (NHESP) for RDAs. Mark Stinson replied that the *Wetlands Protection Act* only required a filing with NHESP for NOIs. However, such a filing would be required under the *Massachusetts Endangered Species Act*.

**Agenda Item #4 --- 6:30 Public Meeting (continued) to consider a Request for Determination filed by Don & Virginia Lonczak for slope stabilization and related work within buffer zone at 14 Stonegate Dr (Map 42 Parcel 75)**

The applicant, Virginia Lonczak, was present at the meeting along with project consultant, Dan Nitzsche of GZA.

Dan Nitzsche described the proposed project. The property owners were seeking to stabilize an existing slope uphill from a Resource Area. The lower slope was seeded the previous month and vegetation was beginning to sprout. Erosion control blankets had also been installed. Dan Nitzsche recommended that the slope should be left herbaceous as woody debris could lead to slope destabilization.

Chair Tolopko asked if the house's gutter was pitched toward the slope. Dan Nitzsche responded that the downspout was subsurface.

Commissioners considered the proposed planting plan. Vice-Chair Doroski asked how the vegetation on the slope would be managed. Dan Nitzsche responded that vegetation should be kept around six inches and woody growth would be removed as he did not recommend trees grow on the slope. Commissioner Schoendorf asked what type of seed mix was used. Dan Nitzsche responded that the seed mix could be provided to the Commission. Administrator Connell supported the planting plan and recommended that a special condition be applied to guarantee watering. Chair Tolopko recommended the following conditions for the planting plan: invasive plant management; removal of woody debris with hand tools only; and requiring two year planting survival.

Associate Member Croll left the meeting at 6:55 PM.

**Motion:** Commissioner Schwellenbach moved to issue a negative determination # 3 for slope stabilization at 14 Stonegate Drive with special conditions as discussed during the meeting. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

**Agenda Item #5 --- Land Donation – 654 New Ludlow Road**

The Town had been approached by the owner of 654 New Ludlow Road to accept the property as a donation for land conservation. The property abutted Bynan Conservation Area and could be utilized for hiker parking as no parking was currently offered. The existing property included a commercial building and associated site features. If the donation were to go through, the property bounds would be reconfigured to exclude the building from the donation. Administrator Cornell

provided documentation that showed how the property satisfied the Town's criteria for land acquisition. The property satisfied 8 of 16 necessary criteria for acquisition of which only 1 was needed. If the Commission wished to further its interest in accepting the donation, authorization would be needed to expend funds to perform a title search.

Chair Tolopko asked if the Commission had adequate funds for a title search given the Commission's financial commitment to the Lauizer Farm Agricultural Preservation Restriction. Administrator Cornell confirmed the Commission had adequate funds.

The Commission discussed the feasibility of a parking lot at the property location and considered how it could be connected to the existing trail system within Bynan. If the Commission ultimately accepted the donation, parking could be further considered.

**Motion:** Commissioner Davis moved to expend funds from the Conservation Land Management account to perform a title for the property located at 654 New Ludlow Road. Commissioner Dennis seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) members present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

#### **Agenda Item #6 --- General Bylaw §179-4 Property maintenance**

Discussions regarding the Town's property maintenance bylaw had been ongoing. It was recommended that the Commission met jointly with the Board of Health to further discuss the bylaw. Such a meeting could not be held until September. The Growing Wild Subcommittee had also discussed the bylaw and considered delaying action on repealing the bylaw to allow the Growing Wild initiative to gain traction throughout future growing seasons.

#### **Agenda Item #7 --- Farm Field Management**

At a previous meeting, the annual mowing license agreement between local farms and the Town was discussed. After approval was received from the Commission, the license was formally approved by the Selectboard. Administrator Connell met with the farmers to discuss the mowing agreement and reiterate the number and timing of allowable cuts.

#### **Agenda Item #8 --- Administrator's Report**

Administrator Cornell detailed the following items:

- **Adopt-an-Island Program** – As part of outreach efforts for the Growing Wild initiative, the subcommittee was considering 'adopting an island'. Commissioners were supportive of adopting an island in South Hadley Falls.
- **Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DEI)** – The subcommittee was organizing events in conjunction with the Hampshire Bird Club. Virtual and in-person events were scheduled for September 2023.
- **Regional Flooding** – Administrator Cornell shared photos of flooding and related damages from recent storm events along the Connecticut River. The Commission could anticipate ratifying an Emergency Order for cleanup in Riverfront Area for 'The Boathouse' located at 1 Alvord Street.

**Agenda Item #9 --- Other New Business**

Vice-Chair Doroski shared that the *Society of Wetland Scientists – New England Chapter* would host a conference in October. Those interested were welcome to attend.

**Adjournment**

**Motion:** Commissioner Davis moved to adjourn the meeting. Vice-Chair Doroski seconded the motion. Six (6) out of six (6) commissioners present voted in favor of the motion through roll call.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Colleen Canning, Planning/Conservation Coordinator

**Appendix**

<b>Document</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Mark Stinson Slideshow – July 19, 2023	Attached
14 Stonegate Drive - RDA	Planning Files
14 Stonegate – RDA- Buffer Zone Restoration Plan – July 19, 2023	Planning Files
654 New Ludlow Road – Memo – July 14, 2023	Planning Files