



CITY OF WATERTOWN

Conservation Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Leo Martin, Chairperson
Maria P. Rose, Vice Chair
Charles C. Bering, Member
Patrick W. Fairbairn, Member
Jamie O'Connell, Member
Darya Mattes, Member
Rachel Danford, Member

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MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, October 12, 2022, 7:00 PM, Remote Meeting on Zoom

Conservation Commission Members Present: Leo Martin, Maria Rose, Charles C. Bering, Jamie O'Connell, Rachel Danford

Absent: Darya Mattes

Also Present: N/A

Staff Present: Laurel Schwab, Conservation Agent, Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

Martin chaired the meeting.

- 1. Public Hearing-** A. (Continuance was requested to November meeting)- Notice of Intent- O Arlington St. (Williams Pond Parcel)- to construct a 2-story commercial building and parking lot on property known as the Williams Pond parcel: Max Hatziliades, Applicant/Owner, Mickey Marcus, Representative
- 2. Public Hearing-** A. (Continuance was requested to November meeting)- Request for Determination of Applicability- for the proposed parking lot improvements and utility upgrades located at 10-30 Manley Way, Watertown, Massachusetts. PPF Industrial 20 Seylon, LLC, Owner, Christopher M. Lucas, Representative/Applicant
- 3. Discussion-** Discussion on sending a letter to City Council to communicate the Commission's current position on the potential removal of the Watertown Dam.

Schwab explained the City Council would soon be having an informational meeting with the CRWA, who has been conducting outreach and advocacy to remove the Watertown Dam as a long-term goal. She reminded them that CRWA gave a presentation at the April Conservation Commission meeting. Schwab explained Council President Sideris asked if the Conservation Commission members would be willing to share their thoughts and their current position with them on the removal of the dam in the form of a letter. The letter would need to be written and accepted by the Conservation Commission before their November meeting, to support the City Council in time.

Martin commented that he understands the benefits of the fish run, but there are other issues to explore around the flood plain, which was lacking from the presentation at the last meeting. O'Connell reported she took the time to watch the video of a public presentation, which included more of the actual data that came from the feasibility study on removal of the dam. Details in the video included the tagging of fish indicating where they are getting stuck, as well as information about the species that are unable to pass through the ladder. She summarized she saw a good argument for removal. O'Connell clarified that the one thing lacking in the video presentation is what the area might look like after the removal. She also stated she was concerned about invasive species management.

Rose said that recently a lot of money has become available for infrastructure and that funding could be used for dam removal. She mentioned a dam on the Mill River in Taunton was removed recently and they would benefit knowing more about it. Rose explained that the historical data shows that fish have difficulty navigating the Watertown Dam despite the fish ladder, and that removal would be a great benefit to aquatic life. Since a dam was removed on the Neponset River, they have experienced deep improvements and report trout is now present. Rose clarified that City Council is asking in general if we would support removal, which was an ecological mistake to begin with. She said that the habitat destruction causes incisions, riverbank damage and erosion of sediment. She said she was in favor of a healthy continuous water supply and thought maybe they could be overthinking invasives. Rose said CRWA is trying to build a coalition and they should not delay while the federal money is currently available for such projects.

Danford said she reviewed all the material and was in favor of all the comments being made and in favor of removing the dam. Bering said he brought up flood control during the informational meeting a few years ago, and he did not feel it was being appropriately addressed given the patterns in the weather indicating high flow events that need consideration. Martin mentioned the downstream pump by the Museum of Science and said if the pumps are working, there should be no problem with floods. Rose said the dam

in Watertown was never designed to control flooding. Martin reported that in Chicago and Connecticut, they now have chambers underground to hold flood water that is let out slowly. Bering said the process of removal needs to address potential flooding problems. Schwab said CWRA is very aware of this topic given their work on forecasting watershed-wide flooding under different climate scenarios. She said she could confer with them to make sure this is being addressed.

Martin concluded that together they see the benefits of removal, but they also have questions they are working to get answers on.

4. Agent Report

CPC Update- Jamie O'Connell- O'Connell reported that the members of the CPC spent the last meeting reviewing eligibility of incoming applications. CPC has been working with four housing applications and one recreation application. At the last meeting, they determined what else was needed by the applicants, and staff member Lanae Handy will be sending out letters notifying applicants what else they need to move forward. O'Connell reported that the next CPC meeting will be focused on housing. Martin informed members that the City is in the process of purchasing some land around Walker Pond for green space. O'Connell said she wanted to know if the city was applying for CPC funds for Phase B of the Arsenal Park renovations. Schwab did not have an answer.

Climate and Energy Plan- Schwab reported she is working on getting the climate and energy projects moving forward before she goes on family leave.

Whitney Hill - Members of the CC attended a site visit to assess the best areas to focus on for the proposed project by the Student Conservation Association (SCA). The SCA would send a crew of 5-6 people. The students will need housing, and Rose and Martin said they could potentially put someone up for lodging. Magoon had told them that they would probably not be able to use the Wetlands Funds to pay for the cost of this project. They will need ten days of lodging and meals also.

Ongoing Orders of Conditions- Schwab reported that the illuminated sign proposed for Arsenal Yards that had been informally discussed at the September Conservation Commission meeting has been withdrawn for the time being.

Pollinators- Schwab reported that a pollinator garden had been planted on the delta of upper Lexington and Belmont St. on September 18, 2022. All pollinator plantings were paid for by the DPW.

Faire on the Square recap- Martin and Rose reported they had a good turnout at the Faire. Rose said it was the best and most relaxed time she had manning the table. There were 8 people who won the contest. Rose brought along candies to share with anyone visiting their table.

5. **Review and Acceptance of 2023 Calendar-** Members of the CC agreed to switch the April meeting to April 12th and the September meeting from the 12th to September 6th.
6. **Review and Acceptance of Minutes- Review and Acceptance of Minutes from July 13 and September 14, 2022, Conservation Commission meetings**

Members discussed the minutes but were unable to vote for lack of quorum present among those who attended those meetings.