



City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

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Public Meeting – Monday, September 18, 2023, at 7:00 PM Zoom MEETING MINUTES

The following meeting minutes were taken by Tracy Dwyer and are respectfully submitted.

Present Commission Members: Purvi Patel (Chair); David Lyons (Vice Chair); Jennifer Letourneau (Director); Kathryn Hess; Elysse Magnotto-Cleary; Michelle Lane

Absent Commission Members: Erum Sattar

Attendees: Susan McArthur, Jacobs Engineering; Anthony Richarson, Jacobs Engineering; Anthony Christakis, MassDOT; Erica Larner, MassDOT; Kara Falise, DPW; Lena Frappier, DPW; Tracy Dwyer, DPW

Purvi Patel opened the meeting.

7:00 – Request for Determination of Applicability Massachusetts Department of Transportation Eliot Bridge

Susan McArthur from Jacobs was present at the meeting with her colleague Anthony Richardson. Susan also introduced Erica Larner and Anthony Christakis from Mass DOT. Susan stated that Jacobs has filed this request for Determination of Applicability on behalf of MassDOT for maintenance work on the Eliot Bridge located over the Charles River in Cambridge and Boston. Susan stated that back in 2016 MassDOT did file a Determination of Applicability and the commission issue a negative determination. Susan stated at that time there were no funds available for the project. Susan stated two weeks ago that they went before the Boston Conservation Commission and was issued a negative determination under two and three. Susan stated that the Eliot Bridge is a seven span steel concrete incased truss bridge built in the 1950's. The land use immediately adjacent to the bridge includes developed open space, open water, wooded areas, and grass. She stated that there are no bordering vegetating wetlands, and this is a four-lane bridge with a sidewalk on each side. She stated that over a decade ago the scuffers were sealed and the stormwater flows over the roadway and off on each end. Susan stated that the proposed work includes brick work on the entire façade of the bridge where old bricks will be removed and replaced with some repairs and mortaring. She stated that the brick façade works as well as some work on the underneath of the bridge will be done via a barge. The

barge will have spud feet which will provide stability to the barge while work is performed. The barge will enter the water via a boat ramp, which will be selected by the contractor. The work zone size is about 38,800 square feet, so since the river is half in Boston and half in Cambridge, they are estimating that about 19,400 square feet would be for Cambridge. Susan said they overestimated to allow the contractor to move around the bridge, but she said the work zone will probably be much smaller. She said the spud feet for the barge would be the equivalent of dropping anchor off a boat. Susan stated that any façade work that was land facing would be done via ladders which would be sitting on grassy or impervious material. Additional work being proposed for the bridge would be repairs to the sidewalk, widening as well as making it have a more uniform look. There would be bridge joint patching of the east and west abutments and none will be below the mean high-water mark. The other proposed work would be reconstruction of the median with a concrete barrier, replacement of the navigational lights on the bridge, bridge drainage cleaning and restoration. Susan stated there will be no changes to the stormwater and that all stormwaters will run off the bridge as it already does. She said the last proposed work would be the milling and paving of the bridge. Susan stated that all the work proposed is maintenance work and not in the jurisdiction of the commission. She did say that the only temporary item was the spud feet for the barge which is in the jurisdiction of the commission these would be land under water. Susan went through pictures of the current conditions of the bridge with the commission.

Jennifer Letourneau asked if they were replacing the cap stone on the bridge or resetting it.

Anthony Richardson stated that the capstones are considered historic and will be cleaned and reset. He stated that three sections are false concrete, and they have asked the contractor to replace those with a like granite material, so it matches.

Jennifer asked since they are matching new granite with the old and in past bridge projects Mass Historical has been involved with this process who would involve Charlie Sullivan at Cambridge Historical.

Anthony stated that they had been in contact with Charlie, they provided him with a mockup of granite and also the bricks.

Jennifer asked if this was back in 2016 or was this more recent?

Anthony said the document was from 2016 but he has recently reviewed it.

Anthony Christakis from MassDOT stated that they talked with Charlie Sullivan over the summer, and he agreed with the contractor removing the brick from the parapet walls and using it for the exterior so all the brick matches and then they would use new brick for the walls but will try and make it match as best they can. Anthony Christakis from MassDOT stated that there was supposed to be a slide submitted but it didn't make it. He stated that MassDOT has completed a lot of bridge projects over the years such as the Anderson Memorial, Longfellow Bridge, Harvard Bridge, BU Bridge and the Craigie Dam Bridge and the North Washington Bridge and stated that DOT has extensive experience working in the Charles River Basin on all the bridges. Jennifer stated that everyone of MassDOT references had orders of conditions.

Kara Falise from DPW went through the review of the project. Kara stated that she believes that this project is consistent with road and bridge maintenance. She stated that she sees the only impact would be the footings for the barge which would be land under water. Kara's suggestion would be to have some information about erosion and sediment controls and spill kits be part of the plan set so that the expectations are clear to the contractor that the City of Cambridge will be looking for these measures.

Purvi Patel asked if Kara had any concerns or was just looking for additional information. She asked if she was comfortable with a negative determination or would like an order of condition.

Kara said she would just like to see the measures added into the plan set so the contractor knows what the city will be expecting. She said she was comfortable with a negative determination.

Anthony Christakis stated that they went before the Boston Conservation Commission and were issued a negative determination with special conditions. He stated that MassDOT put together a robust special provision for this project. He said that there will be a required containment system for the brick work and, they don't specify the means and methods on the project, but they do have to be submitted and reviewed by the engineer. Anthony stated there will be another review once the contractor is selected.

Purvi asked Jennifer will all the comments that they received could they include all of this information in conjunction with a negative determination.

Jennifer stated that is something that can be done. She stated Kara was correct and it does in theory meet protection of all resource areas its just not demonstrated and depicted on the plan set.

Jennifer stated that the commission can ask for copies of the plan set, they can ask to be present at the kickoff meeting and they can also ask to have the right of entry to inspect this site during the construction activities.

Purvi stated that she thought Jennifer had the right to enter a project to inspect with an RDA or Notice of Intent and is this something that needs to be specified.

Jennifer stated that it is specified in the special conditions. Jennifer said we can add some of those into the special conditions of a negative determination.

Purvi asked if they are already in the RDA condition.

Jennifer stated they are not. She stated the commission is just being asked will this project have impacts beyond the construction phase in the wetland resource area. Jennifer said based on the information there will be no permanent impact. Jennifer said based on the information that they have been given there are no impacts on the wetland resource area, it is construction access only.

Purvi wanted clarification from Susan. She asked if it was 38,800 square feet to land under water for both Boston and Cambridge, so half of that would be for Cambridge.

Susan agreed.

Kathryn Hess is curious about what the conditions are that Boston made with their negative determination.

Susan said there were eight special conditions.

Anthony Christakis said he has no issue with full transparency and asked Susan to email Boston's special conditions to the commission.

Purvi asked what the special conditions were for the previous negative determination review.

Susan stated that it is noted that if there is any deviation once the project is in construction then the contract will need to come back to the commission. Susan stated that these are in the special provisions.

Purvi noted that we should note Boston's special conditions that we should not have less or more stringent requirements.

Kathryn agreed but said if we have a condition, they have not thought of we should note that.

Jennifer read through the special conditions which talked about no discharge or spillage of fuel, oil or other pollutants into the wetland resource area or within the 100-foot buffer zone.

The contractor should have materials onsite to deal with spillage.

The contractor shall clean the work area at the end of each workday.

All project related materials shall be contained from migration into the resource area and all precautions should be used during water-based construction work.

Erosion and sediment barriers must be in place prior to the start of construction and must be in place along work zone and wetland resource area.

Prior to the end of construction, the applicant must submit a debris control plan for approval.

Prior to the start of any construction the contractor will need to notify the commission and may arrange for a site visit and should get a 48-hour notice of the commencement of construction activities.

The commission has the right to amend this decision at any time upon evidence of alteration of wetland resource area.

Purvi stated that the conditions are very standard from Boston.

Kara stated that the conditions address everything we had spoken about in the memo and takes away MassDOT's concern about means and methods. She said this information can come from the contractor and not the consultant and then they could review and comment.

Kathryn had nothing to add to the special conditions.

David Lyons stated he has nothing to add but would like to see Boston's special conditions added and also noted to send over an updated plan set. David also added that he has got a few emails regarding this project from state representatives and there is a public meeting on Thursday about the project. David was curious if there would be changes in the project because of the meeting or is this meeting just a notice.

Anthony Christakis stated that they are at 100% design and that it is a preservation project/maintenance project, and this does not require a design public hearing. Anthony stated that the meeting is a public information meeting where they will review the design and what the

work will be that they are proposing. Anthony stated that during their legislative meeting earlier in the day they were happy with all the work they are accomplishing under a maintenance project. Anthony stated that this project will go out to bid and will have a NTP for the spring of 2024.

David asked how long they expect the project to take.

Anthony stated that it is expected to take 2 years so through the end of 2026. Anthony stated he the reason for it taking two years is because they are working in sections and will leave other areas open and accessible.

Jennifer stated this is bridge and river work, she asked if they have coordinated with Marine Fisheries and the Coast Guard.

Erica Lerner stated that they have been coordinating Marine Fisheries, CCM and the Coast Guard.

Jennifer asked for her to send over any communications from those parties, so the commission knows that they have reviewed the project because there is usually some time of year restrictions when working in the river.

Jennifer stated that she had one last question from internal staff, which is Bill Deignan from Community Development, which was are they sure that this project has been fully funded and will be happening. Jennifer also asked if they have any information about the Western Avenue and River Street bridges regarding future construction projects.

Anthony Christakis stated that he does not have any information about the Western Avenue and River Street bridges, he stated he knows they were paused because of the Allston via duct work. He stated they were able to get federal maintenance dollars to get this work completed.

7:41 – Public Comment Closed

5- Favor, 1 – Absent, 1 – Vacancy

7:42 – Negative Determination of Applicability was approved with referencing the special conditions of Boston’s Conservation Commission, without really the specificity of number 5. Also adding in a more fulsome plan set as Kara indicated.

5- Favor, 1 – Absent, 1 – Vacancy

7:43 – Administrative Topics

David Lyons completed his first year on the Community Preservation Act Committee.

Kathryn Hess will be attending the Fresh Pond Advisory Board meetings.

Jennifer said the next meeting is October 16 and she already has at least one submittal.

7:50 – Meeting Minutes from the June 12, 2023 meeting were approved.

5- Favor, 1 – Absent, 1 – Vacancy

7:52 – Meeting Adjourned

5- Favor, 1 – Absent, 1 – Vacancy