



City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

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Public Meeting – Monday, April 11, 2022 at 7:00 PM Zoom MEETING MINUTES

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

Present Commission Members: Jennifer Letourneau (Director), David Lyons (Vice Chair), Elyse Magnotto-Cleary, Kathryn Hess, Michelle Lane, Kaki Martin, Erum Sattar

Absent Commission Members: Purvi Patel (Chair)

Attendees: Tracy Dwyer, DPW; Jim Wilcox, DPW; Mark Verkennis, Harvard University; Jason Forney, Bruner/Cott Architects; Danielle Spicer, Green International; John Gwozdz, Shadley Associates; Charlie Roberts, Childs Engineering Corp.; EJ Winslow, Boston University; Paul Rinaldi, Boston University; Jim Curley, Boston University; Jamie Fay, Fort Point Associates; Lily Sylvester, Fort Point Associates; Todd Turcotte, Coastal Engineering; Charlie Argo, Coastal Engineering; Ale Echandi, Department of Recreation & Conservation; Don Monroe, Boston University; Danielle Mellett, Department of Recreation & Conservation; Barry Belcastro, ACK Marine Contracting; Peter Kochansky, Goulston & Storrs; Stephanie Krueel, VHB; Galen Peracca, Kleinfelder; Naomi Valentine, SWCA Environmental Consultants; Ruth Helfeld, Department of Recreation & Conservation; Colleen McGinty

David Lyons opened the meeting.

7:02 - Notice of Intent

DEP File # 123-314

Harvard Weld Boathouse Maintenance & Upgrades

Charles River

Continued from March 28, 2022

Commission member Michelle Lane was recused from this hearing.

Mark Verkennis stated they did not have a formal presentation but want to make sure that the commission was in receipt of the submission with answers to all of DPW's review comments. Charlie Roberts from Child's Engineering wanted to go through the comments with the commission and to see if they had any questions.

David Lyons said the commission received the submission on Friday and thought it would be good to check with Jim Wilcox and Jennifer Letourneau had any questions or comments.

Jim Wilcox stated that he reviewed the list of responses and the plan sheets, and the applicant has addressed all his comments.

Jennifer Letourneau stated that she did not have any questions but stated that Charlie checked in with Chapter 91 as well as Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) and said no additional permits were going to be required. Charlie confirmed that was correct and he attached the email from Tay of Division of Marine Fisheries to the submittal.

Erum Sattar asked about the decision by Division of Marine Fisheries she wanted to know if it was because the fishing or breeding season was not applicable when you changed the time of work.

Charlie stated it was because of the number of piles and that there was no dredging involved, there is only one pile to be put in.

David Lyons asked where they landed on the silt curtain in the water.

Charlie stated they showed it on the plans going around the exterior of the work and the pile will be placed within the work area. He stated that they will manage how far the curtain sticks out into the river.

David asked since now they don't have a time of year restriction, do they know when they will plan on getting the work done.

Charlie stated it all depends on when they get their permits, the goal is to start work sooner rather than later June or July. Also, they will be coordinating with the other boathouse across the river.

David also asked about the compensatory trees in the lease area.

Charlie said they did talk about planting more trees and would be working with the master plan from DCR and don't want to over stack the area and block the views of the waterfront and want to maintain the openness. Harvard has committed to planting more trees but just does not want to over plant the area.

David asked Jennifer if they have enough information to vote to approve this tonight.

Jennifer said everything has been addressed by the applicant, they have a DEP file number, there have been no more additional comments, no technical comments have been added.

7:12- Public Comment Closed

In Favor – 5, Absent – 1, Opposed – 0, Abstained – 1

7:14 – The commission unanimously approves the order of conditions.

In Favor – 5, Absent – 1, Opposed – 0, Abstained – 1

7:15 – Notice of Intent

DEP File # 123-315

BU Boathouse Maintenance & Upgrades

Charles River

Continued from March 28, 2022

Commission Member Michelle Lane joined for this hearing.

Lily Sylvester an Environmental Planner from Fort Point Associates opened their presentation on behalf of Boston University and their boathouse renovation project. Lily stated that they have a presentation for the commission in response to the DPW review and commissions questions. Lily stated that in their observation of sediment cores there was no odor. If they do encounter odor, they will use a tarp to cover the stockpile and have lime on hand for odor treatment. Lily stated in response to the removal of material and delivery of new material. They would use the barge to deliver materials and offload onto a fixed dock. The barge will be equipped with a dumpster for waste materials and to transport waste material for disposal at the marine industrial facility. The staircase will only be used for workers and delivery of hand tools. In response to wetland flags they have updated their plans and the flags are still present onsite.

Lily stated in response to some of the commissioners' questions they have adjusted the timeline from mid-June to late July to late July to late August to avoid the time of year restriction, so they will not need a time of year waiver from Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF). Lily stated that they have confirmed with the marine contractor that the shortened timeline is feasible and will not need six (6) weeks. Lily stated that in response to whether the expiring lease with DCR and timing of Chapter 91 process would prevent the issuance of an Order of Conditions.

Lily stated that Boston University is currently coordinating with DCAMM and DCR on a lease renewal. Lily stated that the proposed work is within the terms of the lease agreement and DCR has been involved in the design and permitting process since November of 2021 and DCR signed off on the Notice of Intent.

Lily stated regarding the Chapter 91 license DEP waterways has been involved in the design and permitting since December 2021. Lily stated that the recommendation is for a Chapter 91 permit of the dredging and a Chapter 91 license for the floating dock. She stated that soon they would be able to apply for a Chapter 91 license for the existing facility and floating dock. Lily stated that there is a Chapter 92 license for the facility now and at the time a Chapter 91 license was not needed for the reconstruction of the boathouse. Lily stated DEP would need an approved order of conditions before a Chapter 91 permit or license can be approved.

Lily stated that in response to whether the limited of work is adequate. Lily stated that they have confirmed with the marine contractor that the limit of work is adequate. Lily stated that they have created new exhibits to show the commission the sequencing.

Todd from Coastal Engineering went through the construction sequency. Todd said they are showing on the plans the barge with the dumpsters to show how and the means for transporting debris and materials. Todd stated that with further discussion with ACK and the two silt curtains they decided to separate them and provide an inner and outer, so the barge is always outside to disturb less sediment. Todd said in response to whether there will be enough room for footprint. He said the existing floats can be relocated to the east side of the limit of work and all the dredging can occur in this area and the excavator will stay fixed on the barge. Todd said that once the dredging is done and the dewatering has been completed the outer silt curtain will be opened and the barge can leave, and the material will be disposed off site and as well the dumpster material. Todd stated since they need a Chapter 91 license, they will not be able to

install the one pile that is needed at the time of the dredging. He said they will wait till they have the Chapter 91 license and come back put the silt curtain back up and drive the pile in but will work with DEP and DMF. He said there will be two mobilizations needed.

David Lyons asked since they have two phases of work now and planning the dredging this summer July to August. Do they know when they will come back for the pile and extension work? Todd stated that if they needed, they would get a time of year waiver from DMF but once they received the Chapter 91 license they would proceed.

Jim Wilcox had no additional comments and he stated he reviewed the responses and plans and has no additional questions.

Jennifer Letourneau stated that they have no additional DEP technical comments, and a DEP file number has been issued. The commission can close public comment and vote.

7:27 – Public Comment Closed

In Favor – 6, Absent – 1, Opposed – 0, Abstained – 0

7:29 – The commission unanimously agrees to approve the Order of Conditions.

In Favor – 6, Absent – 1, Opposed – 0, Abstained – 0

7:30 – Notice of Intent

DEP File #TBD

Department of Conservation & Recreation

Charles River Lower Basin Vegetation Management Plan

David Lyons explained there was a brief discussion on how to proceed with this hearing. He said that the commission would listen to the presentation and ask questions but that this would be continued to the next Conservation Commission meeting.

Jennifer Letourneau stated that she talked to Ale about tonight's hearing in advance of the meeting that the commission would see the presentation with the expectation that the commission would have further discussion. Also, Jennifer said that the city has hired Kleinfelder for a peer review of the vegetation management plan. Jennifer stated that Kleinfelder has received the documents today and plan on getting the commission a review memo ahead of the April 25, 2022, Conservation Commission meeting.

David Lyons said they will move forward with the presentation any questions from the public or commission and will not plan on voting at tonight's meeting.

Danielle Mellett the project manager from the Department of Recreation and Conservation (DCR) along with Ale Ehandi, Department of Recreation and Conservations Inland Ecologist were present at the meeting. Danielle stated they are here tonight before the commission because they would like to permit the Charles River Vegetation Management Plan (CRVMP), which updates the existing vegetation management practices for the Charles River Lower Basin.

Danielle explained that they are working with SWCA to help them update the plan and permit the CRVMP.

Naomi Valentine, Project Manager from SMCA Environmental Consultants was present to go through the presentation. Naomi stated that as of this morning DEP issued the project a file number which is 123-316. Naomi said that there are three portions of this vegetation management plan, the first is continued general maintenance of DCR properties as needed for recreational space and open space to the public with changes to ecological restoration. She said that they are proposing a maintenance plan to allow more natural restoration and more restoration of the bank and riparian areas with low maintenance vegetation. She stated that there is also maintenance for special events and the three main events that happen in Cambridge are the Head of the Charles Regatta, the Fourth of July celebration and the Dragon Boat Race Festival. Naomi stated that each of these events have been going on for years which consists of vegetation trimming not cutting. She said the last part would be specific invasive species plant management. So SWCA and DCR identified four focus areas and conducted a basic plant management survey of those areas which would be filed under a potential issued order of conditions. Naomi stated that they are filing this as an ecological restoration limited project because of the invasive plant management and the focus of the general maintenance of the reservation to be more resilient and require less maintenance on a regular basis. Naomi read through some of the project goals, ensuring that routine maintenance is performed so that there is no potential damage to the environment, resource areas or any wildlife that use those areas. Their goal is to restore the natural capacity of the existing wetland resource areas, develop strategies that protect the properties, ecological, recreational, cultural significance will limit impact as possible, provide public access to outstanding opportunities for passive and active recreation, general stewardship of the park that reflect the one hundred year history of the Charles River Reservation and engage in a cooperative park network, park land and stakeholders to provide a framework to guide future capital restoration projects. Naomi stated that this is a very large project and therefore there is impact to bank, bordering vegetated wetland, riverfront area and the bordering land subject to flooding the focus of the CRVMP is for the riparian zone around the Charles River which is where the reservation is situated. She stated that there is general maintenance which is broken down into type and are identified as lawn areas, meadows, upland meadows, wetland meadows, rivers edge which predominantly includes the trimming of vegetation for special events, woodland areas where there are mature trees, wetland areas which do not get landscaped but identified as such in the plans, green infrastructure, landscaped areas such as vistas, community gardens and structures (i.e buildings and gates). Naomi mentioned that there was a question about how much linear feet was trimmed for the Dragon Boat Race Festival and she said they had further discussions and found out the there were only five (5) areas of ten (10) feet that were trimmed, they had originally estimated one hundred and seventy (170) linear feet. Naomi said there are four focused areas for the invasive plant management with a full assortment of invasive plants present and there will be a full range of invasive plant management techniques used as needed. There will be a combination of hand pulling, cutting where appropriate, herbicide application as necessary for certain species, also some new methods for managing Japanese Knotweed which can be difficult to manage. Naomi said this plan includes the whole portion of the Charles River up to the Museum of Science in Cambridge.

Ale from the DCR wanted to add on to what Naomi presented and said one of the goals of the CRVMP was to allow them so flexibility with doing some additional restoration within the next five years. Ale stated they are requesting a five-year order of conditions so that they can implement some of these changes in the landscape, that is why they accounted for every single impact they could think of for that resource area and buffer zones. They would like to submit a letter to commission with any additional restoration efforts that will happen in a particular area

for their review, questions, and approval to help expediate these processes without having to file a Notice of Intent (NOI) every time they want to do something positive in the reservation. Ale said therefore some of these impact numbers they submitted are large.

Kaki Martin stated that she is curious about the process and how these typologies have changed since the last time. She is curious to know what they used to be doing and were doing and what have you acknowledged needs to be changed. Kaki stated that the commission has never seen a DCR Ecologist in front of them and it's wonderful. Kaki said it would be helpful for the commission and for the hearing to learn about what their process is now. Kaki said it would be helpful to zoom into an area or two for reference to review.

Ale said that the landscape types that you see now on the maps provided have transformed from the landscape types that the commission has seen three to four years ago when the CRVMP was initiated. Ale said this time they tried to simplify the designations on the needs of operational staff and volunteers who maybe implementing some of the improvements along the Charles River. Ale explained these are based on existing conditions and not proposing to change any of the existing conditions at this time, except for the invasive management and then in the long-run trying to minimize that bank cutting for those special events by trying to switch some of the vegetation to more low-growing native grass like vegetation and wildflowers which have been included in the CRVMP amendment as part of the restoration plan. Ale stated they are still learning from the test spots and although Cambridge did not have a test spot, they were trying to do one as part of the CRVMP at Magazine Beach and it's the stormwater feature that is managed by the City of Cambridge. Ale said they have six (6) test spots and all of them are in Boston, and they have been learning about what kinds of vegetation work with very little maintenance and management. Ale said that all the plants are native plants they are working with and are located near vista access areas to the waters perspective so plants that will stabilize the bank and provide people with the view of the river. Ale stated that once they know that these types of plants work in two to three years, they would implement these in areas that do not have a rocky bank or a steep bank. Ale said the invasive management is more long term but as they have learned with Hell's Half Acre where they are on year three with the invasive management. Ale said there are no proposed changes as of now except for the invasive management, but in the future, they would be looking into the grassy areas that are unused and convert those to meadows and maybe one of the first goals. Ale said she did a site visit with Jennifer Letourneau this morning and that was the site of the Dragon Boat Race Festival, and they are going to restore that area post-race which is the area east of the Weld Boathouse between that and the retaining wall. Ale said they would work on a temporary planting this summer and start implementing plants in the fall and this location would be one of the first test sites for the CRVMP. Ale wanted to add that the CRVMP is being shared with others who lease land from the DCR like the Weld Boathouse and the BU Boathouse if they were to do any restorative plantings, they would have the CRVMP to reference.

Elysse Magnotto-Cleary asked what the project scope was going to be, she asked if this goes as far as Watertown.

Ale stated it goes past Watertown, so it would be Watertown, Newton, Cambridge, and Boston. Those four (4) conservations commissions will see a similar Notice of Intent (NOI). Ale sated however Cambridge's planting list will be a little bit different because they are using the county vegetation check list and Cambridge is in Middlesex County.

Jennifer asked about on-going funding from the DCR for this project. Jennifer said that typically the commission has seen this as routine maintenance, cutting, and tree pruning throughout the year, but now this plan includes invasives management and restoration and is there an expectation that there will be funds set aside for this annually.

Danielle stated yes, now that there is a formalized vegetation management plan, we should have funding moving forward on a fiscal year basis. Danielle said she can't say how much from year to year, but it will be prioritized.

Jennifer asked if the goal is to have this staffed 100% internally or will there be annual contracts or multi-year contracts to make sure this work is accomplished.

Danielle said currently it will be done by a landscape contract that they have and will be used for invasives and planting work. Danielle said as Ale mentioned they will be working with any partnerships on projects and collaborations with other groups to get as much help as they can. She said that the DCR is understaffed so they will be working with their landscape maintenance contract to initiate the work.

David Lyons wanted clarification for the record when was there an approved VMP for the Charles and how long has one been in place.

Ale stated she did not think a VMP has ever been approved that there has been administrative review requests or informal review requests for the special events. She thought that there may have been one approved back in the 2000's.

Jennifer stated that they had approved vegetation management plan in 2003, 2006, 2009 through to 2015 and then it expired.

Ale asked if that was primarily for special events.

Jennifer said yes it was for annual cutting that was provided by Rick Corsi from the DCR that showed time of year and cutting location of mobilization and vistas.

Kaki said that the Charles River Basin Master Plan gave the commission leverage for plant choice when different projects were being reviewed. The commission used this mechanism to relay on for various projects on the Charles River which happened frequently from the schools' boathouses for a recommended plant list.

Danielle stated she didn't think she fully answered Jennifer's question and wanted to add that the DCR's operation staff will continue to do mowing that won't change, they won't have their landscape maintenance crews doing mowing, but bank work will be through a contractor.

Jennifer asked if there is a plan to educate the staff.

Danielle said yes that is the intent of the CRVMP not only to hand it to them but to explain to them about the intent of the plan. The maps will help with their maintenance, like for mowing. Ale said the CRVMP will also have a best management practices section, how to mow correctly, how not to run over the roots of the trees and how to maintain the base of a tree. Ale said they were trying to make the CRVMP easy to understand with maps, visuals, and guidance. They will include how to identify an invasive species.

Danielle said they will also be including how to cut the meadows, when to cut and how high to cut.

Jennifer wanted to recognize Galen Peracca from Kleinfelder who was present at the meeting and will be providing the peer review.

David Lyons stated he knows that there is no in water work with this project but wanted to ask how the project they permitted last summer for the invasives management in the river is going and if there is a connect between the projects.

Ale stated that the in-water project is going through a green docket tomorrow for approval for the lakes district. She stated that they will start implementing in the lakes district and then move to the lower basin since that is where the invasives are going. She believes that they are starting in the fall but not sure. Ale stated that the plans are connected.

Erum Sattar asked when they are planning on being in front of the commission for the hearing, for the larger project.

David said they will continue this to the next meeting in two weeks.

Kathryn Hess asked if they could have a site visit on some stretch of the river, she said it might be informative for the commission.

Jennifer said she can work with Ale on a location and setting up a time and will let the commission know.

Galen from Kleinfelder asked if the VMP is available online to the public and if there is an anticipated release publication date?

Jennifer stated she sent a link to the VMP in an email earlier today.

Galen asked if the VMP will be made publicly available.

Jennifer said that the document that she sent is publicly available.

Noami wanted to clarify that the submission to the Conservation Commission for the project includes the bulk of the information for the CRVMP, the full CRVMP has not been published at this point, but the commission received the same plans and figures.

No Public Comment

8:09 – The commission unanimously agrees to continue the hearing to the April 25, 2022, meeting.

In Favor – 6, Absent – 1, Opposed – 0, Abstained – 0

8:10 – Administrative Topics

Meeting Minutes from March 28, 2022 – approved

In Favor – 6, Absent – 1, Opposed – 0, Abstained – 0

8:21 – Meeting Adjourned

In Favor – 6, Absent – 1, Opposed – 0, Abstained – 0