



City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

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Public Meeting – Monday, February 28, 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), Purvi Patel (Chair), David Lyons (Vice Chair), Kathryn Hess, Michelle Lane, Elysse Magnotto-Cleary,

Absent Commission Members: Kaki Martin, Erum Sattar

Attendees: Tracy Dwyer, DPW; Jim Wilcox, DPW; Howard Moshier, VHB; Chuck Eck, Eversource; Chris Newhall, Eversource; Bryan Walsh, VHB; Megan Kearns, Epsilon; Kelan Koncewicz, VHB; James Rafferty, Adams & Rafferty Attorneys at Law; Elisa Arriaga, VHB; Ricardo Austrich, BSC Group; Gretchen McGill, The Davis Companies; Chris Chandor, The Davis Companies; Kevin Beuttell, DPW; Rez Ali

Purvi Patel opened the meeting.

7:00 - Meet Kevin Beuttell – Supervising Landscape Architect

The commission met Kevin who is a new employee at the Department of Public Works.

7:12 – Request for Determination of Applicability

Eversource Electric
Charles River and Memorial Drive
Exploratory Borings and Test Pits

Megan Kearns from Epsilon introduced the team that was present at the meeting, Chuck Eck from Eversource and Chris Newhall from Eversource. The applicant is proposing to investigate the subsurface conditions in the project area by conducting geotechnical borings and test pits. The area where there will be conducted is Memorial Drive between Ames Street and River Street, Charles River and Magazine Beach. This data collected will be used to help with the design and engineering of a proposed underground electric transmission lines associated with the applicants Greater Cambridge Energy Program. Megan stated that this Request for Determination of Applicability will only be for the geotechnical borings and test pits and once the design and engineering is complete a separate Notice of Intent will be filed with the commission for approval for the underground transmission line work. The applicant will do two

geotechnical borings identified as B-12 and B-13 and one utility window identified as TH-66 these will be done on Magazine Beach and all of these are located in Bordering Land Subject to Flooding (BLSF). In addition, one of the geotechnical borings (B-12) is also located in the 100-foot buffer zone to land bank and Bordering Vegetated Wetland (BVW) associated with the Charles River. The geotechnical boring (B-11) is proposed in Land Under Water (LUW) as well as in a fish run. Lastly, Megan stated that there are also forty-one (41) additional borings and test pits being proposed in the 100-foot buffer zone and/or 25-foot riverfront area of the Charles River in paved areas along Memorial Drive from Ames Street to River Street. These borings and test pits qualify for minor exempt activities and not subject to regulation under the Wetland Protection Act. Megan explained that the forty-one (41) borings and test pits will be completed with a truck mounted geotechnical drill rig and support utility pick-up truck. The test pits will be performed by using a conventional excavator or a vacuum excavation technique as well as some hand digging in locations where other utilities have been identified. These locations will be a 3x3 excavation all soil removed will be stock piled and reused for backfilling. Megan stated that the applicant will use all typical environmental construction BMP's for roadway work to help minimize or mitigate any impacts to the resource areas.

Megan was going over the plans and showing the locations of the test pits and utility windows.

David Lyons asked what a utility window is? Chris from Eversource explained that a utility window is when they would need to locate multiple existing subsurface utilities. Chris said if this would not fit in the typical 3x3 window then they would dig a longer trench which might wind up being 8 feet long by 3 feet wide to locate multiple utilities that are located under the road surface.

Megan explained how the two geotechnical borings (B-12 and B-13) and one utility test pit window would be performed on Magazine Beach. These are in Bordering Land Subject to Flooding (BLSF). She said that these would be performed by a track-mounted geotechnical drill rig and support utility pick-up truck. The borings will have a size of approximately 6.25 inches and a depth of 70 feet below ground surface. They will be backfilled and sealed with grout with the final six to twelve inches restored with topsoil. If there is a need for new loam material, it will be obtained and approved by the commission and DCR. These test areas will be restored to the normal condition and will take approximately four days to complete. Megan went on to explain that the utility test pit window on Magazine Beach which is in BLSF will be performed by using traditional open cut excavation methods by an excavator. The excavation will be about eight feet wide and twenty-four feet long and will take about 2-3 days to complete. All excavated soils will be stored onsite and will be used for backfilling. Megan explained the process for the one boring (B-11) that is proposed in Land Under Water in the Charles River. She stated that the boring will be accessed using a 25 foot by 23-foot floating barge from where the drilling rig will be operated. The boring will have 4.5-inch diameter casing extending from the barge through the water column into the mud line. The casing will prevent the discharge of sediment. Megan stated that all equipment and management of fluids will be contained on the barge. This boring will take about 2 days to complete weather dependent. Megan went through the proposed mitigation measures for the boring and test pits. The applicant will notify the commission before the start of any work, a geotechnical engineer will be onsite during the field work, they will used protection on any stormwater catch basins, Eversource's contractor will restore all disturbed vegetation or lawn in accordance with their DCR permit, response kits will be present onsite and inspected and replenished as well as all pedestrian and bike traffic will not be disturbed during construction.

Purvi Patel went through Jim Wilcox's review comments. She read that Jim stated that these borings and test pits are temporary and will have no impact to the resource areas if mitigation is appropriately carried out. Jim also pointed out that they will need a MWRA 8m permit because of the proximity to their infrastructure. He also recommends that the applicant contact Jennifer Letourneau to coordinate schedule of work at Magazine Beach with the Cambridge Recreation Department activities.

Purvi asked Jennifer if the commission had a condition or specification of backfill material. She said Megan noted in her presentation that they would consult the commission for approval of any purchased backfill material. Jennifer Letourneau stated that the commission doesn't especially when it is on DCR property that would be specified by DCR. DPW could provide a specification for road base material.

Jennifer Letourneau stated that the city has permissions to use the fields at Magazine Beach for Little League baseball, so the coordination is important with scheduling this work.

Jennifer also asked if they have talked with Shawn Casey at DCR regarding this work. Chris from Eversource stated that they had talked with Shawn Casey, and he has reviewed the filings, but they would still need to obtain a construction access permit from DCR. Jennifer explained that Memorial Drive was recently paved, and if it was a city owned street the city would require more than just patching, but she will leave that up to the DCR.

Purvi asked if this project was currently going through a MEPA review or has gone through the review. Chris said it was currently going through the MEPA review and March 11th is when the certificate is due.

Elyse Magnotto-Cleary asked since this was going through several reviews with MEPA, MWRA permit, and the Boston Conservation Commission would they be able to talk about the time frame of the project. Chris stated that for clarification the larger underground transmission line and substation project is what is currently going through MEPA review, the test pits and borings don't trigger a MEPA review. The larger project is a few years away and they still need to submit a filing with the Energy Facility Siting Board in one to two months. Then other state and local permits will be submitted the construction will not happen till 2024-2025.

Kathryn Hess said that the track of these borings is essentially where this high transmission line is being proposed to be installed. Chris essentially the borings aren't the exact location but an approximate location. Kathryn asked if the borings will be started as soon as they are approved, or what the time frame is. Chris stated that they are prioritizing the borings and Magazine Beach and within the Charles River to get those done as soon as possible to avoid high time for recreation on the river and park, so they plan to get those done late winter/early spring. Kathryn asked although outside of the commissions, but curious as to what community notifications/coordination to residents which is a lot of MIT campus. Chuck Eck from Eversource said they will have an outreach team on this project, and they will be outreaching to residents in the area within a week or two with notices. Chris said they typically notify residents within a quarter mile of any test pits or borings. Jim Willcox stated that he has been working with Eversource already on test pits that have been done around the MIT and Kendall Square area and they have been notifying residents.

David Lyons had one question about the overall project, the Greater Cambridge Energy Project. He said he was looking at the website and he said it seems that Eversource has not determined yet what route they would be taking under the river from Magazine Beach to Boston and the alternative is over the River Street bridge, but either way they will be laying conduit on under Memorial Drive. Chris from Eversource stated that at this point they are a preferred alternative and a noticed alternative. He said under the requirements of the Energy Facility Siting Board that they have a preferred alignment and a noticed alignment that is constructable. So, for this project they are connecting their substation in Brighton to a new substation that will be constructed in the Kendall Square area to do that they need to connect with two transmission lines to meet their reliability specifications if an incident occurred there was a backup line connecting the substations, they have to have geographic separation between the two transmission lines. So, there are two lines being proposed one will be installed under the Charles River with a horizontal directional drill and then the other over the River Street bridge. David said the map on the website their shows a line going over the Harvard Bridge. Chris said if there is a line going over the Harvard Bridge that was a route they considered, and those maps might need to be updated.

7:42 – Public Comment Open

No comments.

7:43 – Public Comment Closed.

In Favor – 5, Absent – 2, Opposed – 0, Abstained - 0

7:44 – The commission unanimously agrees to approve a Negative Determination of Applicability with the conditions outlined in Jim Wilcox’s memo.

In Favor – 5, Absent – 2, Opposed – 0, Abstained - 0

7:45 – Notice of Intent

VHB

40 Smith Place Redevelopment – Floodplain

Chris Chandor with the Davis Companies introduced the team, Howard Moshier from VHB, Bryan Walsh from VHB, Ricardo Austrich from BSC Group, James Rafferty and Gretchen McGill from Davis Companies. Chris stated that they are here before the commission to talk about 40 Smith Place which is located to the south along Concord Avenue that is in the Fresh Pond, West Cambridge area, near the MBTA red line station and near Cambridgepark Drive. Chris stated the The Davis Companies has been an owner of multiple properties in this neighborhood since about 2012 and several others go back beyond that. Chris said they were before the Conservation Commission about five years ago to talk about 75 Smith Place which is in the flood plain. That building has since been renovated into 36,000 square foot life science building. Chris stated that 10 Wilson Road that is a 75,000 square foot building renovated about three years ago. Currently 101 Smith Place is under construction Chris stated with a building that the Planning Board approved a couple of years ago and 40 Smith Place is the last parcel and probably the largest that they are proposing in the quad. Chris stated that a tiny sliver of this property is in the one-hundred-year flood zone. Chris stated that with this project they are including a very important piece of the envision Cambridge plan by building a portion of the

multi-use path that will hopefully one day connection to the pedestrian bridge from this neighborhood to the Alewife T station.

Brian Walsh from VHB Civil Engineer on the project. Brian stated that the area that in within the one-hundred-year FEMA flood plain is the portion of the property were Wilson Road and Moulton Street intersect. Brian stated that the building that is being proposed to be built is a four-story R and D building an is elevated above the 2070 one-hundred-year flood elevation, but the building itself is not within the flood plain. Brian explained that the flood plain area is in the northwest corner of the site and the open space is being proposed within that area. Brian explained that the loading of this building would be off Smith Place and Smith Place would also have a raised cycle track along the street. He currently stated Smith Place does not even have an existing sidewalk. Brian stated that Wilson Road would also have a raised cycle track as well as a 14-foot multi-use path along the old MBTA parcel. Brian mentioned to the commission that they are proposing street trees along Wilson Road which are not there today. They are working with DPW for a design of the roadway with street trees, city sidewalk and how all this meets with the multi-use path. Brian said that they are also designing to meet the DPW standards which are the 25 to 2 or reducing phosphorus by a minimum of 65% as well as meeting all of Mass DEP guideline. Brian stated that the building itself is proposed to have a stormwater reuse tank within the garage level of building which will be used for cooling tower demand and irrigation purposes. This will overflow to a stormwater detention system within the courtyard area which will then overflow heading towards the flood plain where there is a stormwater swale is being proposed for infiltration which is being separated from the compensatory flood storage area. In the southwest corner outside the flood plain they are proposing a stormwater detention tank and water quality unit to meet DPW design guidelines. Brian explained that there would be some regrading in the right of way for the raised cycle track and multi-use path, so they are providing compensatory flood storage onsite.

Brian then turned the presentation over to Ricardo Austrich from the BSC Group to go over the landscaping. Ricardo said that their goals is to create a landscape that focuses on nature-based solutions, but they are using impervious pavement. They are most excited about is to bring a diverse native faculty to wetland species to the area. He stated they understand to be part of a larger corridor with the Fresh Pond area so they are trying to mimic and recreate a space that would attract species to the area. They will focus on a plant pallet that is native and adapted species. They will also focus on stabilization paths that are outside of the cycle track as well as creating previous surfaces where possible but also link the cycle track to these amenities with the bridge and other features.

Brian stated that they had received Jim Wilcox's review comments and that they understand that they will be required to resubmit and were intending to do so.

Jennifer Letourneau stated that DEP is in receipt of this submittal and has given it a file number which is DEP file # 123-312. It is being reviewed for technical comments, but no technical comments have been made yet. Jennifer clarified for the commission that because the DEP has file number for this project the commission can issue an Order of Conditions without having received the technical comments. Jennifer said that she talked to Brian earlier and it was acknowledged that revisions will be made and submitted. Purvi stated she just wanted to be clear for the commission that we were not voting on whether to approve an Order of Conditions and will continue this.

Purvi has a question for Brian, she asked if the stormwater setup that was being proposed is like the one that was constructed at North Point. Brian stated that was accurate.

Kathryn Hess wanted to follow-up on one of Jim Wilcox's comments about hydrological connection. Brian stated that there is a catch basin and that is hydrologically connected out to the storm drain, there is a manhole and that leads out to the DPW storm drain on Wilson Road. They are proposing to make that same connection but slightly modified, so they are proposing an inlet structure for the stormwater swale. They will make the same connection out to the DPW storm drain within Wilson Road.

Kathryn was wondering about the hydrological connection of the other volumes outlined in dark green on the plan shown. She stated that the catch basin in the southwest would be adding to the flood area. She stated it wouldn't be utilized until it overflows.

Howard Moshier from VHB stated that they are bringing the water more onsite so it would require less overtopping. He stated that the onsite flooding is under five hundred gallons under current conditions so there is not a lot of storage onsite.

Jim Wilcox stated that the documents that were submitted did not include these figures and the figures are at a much larger scale, so they are easier to read than the plans that were submitted. Jim stated that when he made that comment in his review this was exactly what he was looking for was a zoomed in view of the resource area. Jim suggests in the resubmission that they include these figures that were shown in the presentation and a narrative to what Brian and Howard talked about explaining the hydraulic connection.

Purvi wanted to ask if they had any questions or comments on Jim's review. Brian said that this was the one they had a question on but now it is clear what Jim is looking for.

Jennifer also asked if the team could go back through the definitions and make sure they are not substituting isolated land subject to flooding for bordering land subject to flooding. Brian said they would do that.

Purvi asked if they would submit for the next hearing. Brian stated they were planning on resubmitting this week for the next meeting on March 14th.

David Lyons asked for clarity on the landscaped area in the northeast corner looks like a wetland area and was wondering if it would be water there all the time. Brian stated that both areas will be generally dry but during a rain event the larger area will be wet and the smaller swale is intended to be dry and available capacity for the one hundred year flood, but on a day to day basis it will be dry.

8:11 – Public Comment Opened

No public comment. Public comment remains open.

Purvi asked Brian if it was seventy-seven new trees or seventy-seven trees, in addition to the twenty-six that were on the site. Ricardo stated those were all new trees. Purvi stated that generally a significant tree is a six-inch diameter at breast height, and they would be planting four inch and they would have a significant surplus of additional inches. Purvi asked if it was not feasible to maintain any of the significant trees onsite. Ricardo stated it was going to be difficult with construction and the significant trees are Bradford Pear trees which is a non-native tree which has been known to be problematic and invasive and a fragile tree to maintain in the northeast climate.

8:13 – The commission unanimously agreed to continue this to the next hearing on March 14th.
In Favor – 5, Absent – 2, Opposed – 0, Abstained - 0

8:14 – Administrative Topics

Meeting minutes from February 7, 2022 – approved
In Favor – 5, Absent – 2, Opposed – 0, Abstained - 0

8:31 – Meeting Adjourned

In Favor – 5, Absent – 2, Opposed – 0, Abstained - 0