



## City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

147 Hampshire Street  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
Ph. 617.349.4680

*Jennifer Letourneau, Director*

*jletourneau@cambridgema.gov*

---

### Public Meeting – Monday, May 12, 2025, at 7:00 PM Zoom MEETING MINUTES

The following meeting minutes were taken by Lena Frappier and are respectfully submitted.

Present Commission Members: Jennifer Letourneau, Director; David Lyons, Chair; Elysse Magnotto-Cleary, Vice Chair; Kathryn Hess; Erum Sattar; Khyati Saraf; Lorie Graham; Jim Gerstle, Associate

Absent Commission Members: John Leo; Sean Bedingfield, Associate

Attendees: Kara Falise, DPW; Lena Frappier, DPW; Michael Abcunas, DPW; Angela Moulton, CDM Smith; Mike Riccio, CDM Smith; Erica Frazier, Fort Point Associates; John Crompton, Windsor School; Elton Matos, Belmont Hill School; Bob Livermore, Livermore Edwards & Associates

David Lyons opened the meeting.

#### **7:00 – Request for Determination of Applicability**

CAM001: Utility Powered Flowmeter  
City of Cambridge  
Alewife Brook Parkway at Foch Street

Michael Abcunas of DPW gave a wide overview that work will include bringing battery powered SCADA meters CAM007 and CAM001 to regular energized power 24/7 so power and data is never lost.

Angela Moulton of CDM Smith reiterated that this is a power supply upgrade project. She pointed out in the presentation that they plan to bring power from the existing utility pole located on Foch Street to the existing CSO meter by installing a buried electrical duct bank through Foch Street and Alewife Brook Parkway. This is needed as Michael Abcunas currently changes the batteries monthly.

Mike Riccio of CDM Smith stated this is being presented as a limited project under 310 CMR 1053 as construction and reconstruction and maintenance of underground or overhead public

utilities. He went on to describe the map including Alewife Brook, the 25-foot riverfront area, the 100-foot buffer zone and the bordering land subject to flooding. Mike described that all work is effectively temporary and the shaded area on the map is trenching that will be regraded or restored to its pre-existing grade as roadway and turf, curb bank etc. The only permanent impacts would be the three new electrical hand holes, which would be at grade, and then the new pedestal cabinet for accessing the utilities, which would be six inches above grade. Total impacts include 1,250 square feet all within the BLSF and 517 is within the 100-foot buffer zone.

Angela interjected that the permanent impacts are limited to 35 square feet.

Mike concluded that there's no impact to floodway, just generally a temporary impact permit.

Jennifer Letourneau stated this is straight forward construction mitigation and, in the RDA, as submitted they highlighted a number of the erosion sedimentation controls that were on those plans. They've also designated that there will be no refueling during the course of the project and if there is any stockpiling, it will be outside the resource area or if it's anywhere close to the resource area, it will be checked for containment daily.

Michael added that the work would take at most a week to complete between trenching and repaving.

Jennifer stated they submitted all additional permits, which will be copied back to the commission including construction access permit from the DCR and 8M from MWRA.

David questioned how long the existing setup has been there and how long the battery lasts.

Micheal answered that he has been doing it for about 18 years now typically monthly. The batteries can last maybe up to two and a half months, but it is better to play it safely.

Jim Gerstle asked if there will be a battery backup if power is lost during a storm.

Michael responded that if the standard ISCO meter is used, there is a setup to have the battery as a backup.

Khyati Saraf requested to clarify that no trees will be affected by the work.

Angela confirmed there would be no impact on trees.

Erum Sattar asked for further explanation concerning the project's described stabilization and future access.

Mike answered as the RDA is written, stabilization essentially is reseeded the area of turf affected with compost logs in place until the seed establishes itself, so bare soil does not have the opportunity to leach down into the brook.

Erum asked to further clarify how long it is estimated for this.

Jennifer interjected that germination is typically quick.

Angela added that it is a matter of having the grass grow an inch or two.

Erum restated that construction is one period and then there will also be a period of monitoring. She also questioned if the city would do this with more locations going forward.

Jennifer responded that the city is doing all of the CSO's this way and these are the only two within a wetland resource area.

Michael added that there are two near Alewife that have already been hard powered for the last ten years.

Kathryn Hess asked how quickly the work would start.

Angela answered that they are finalizing the design and putting it out to bid. The contractors would have about three weeks to review the bid documents and submit. She stated it may take another month or so to close contracts so the anticipated construction start would be later this fall.

Kathryn confirmed that there would still be time to ensure one inch growth of grass for the area.

Jennifer stated there are no attendees from the public, but two requests were received asking for the RDA for CAM001. After supplying the information, she asked if there were any comments and did not receive any.

**7:14** – The commission unanimously approved to close public comment.

7 – In Favor, 2 – Absent

**7:15** – The commission unanimously approved to issue a negative determination with special conditions specific to construction mitigation.

7 – In Favor, 2 – Absent

**7:16 – Request for Determination of Applicability**

CAM007: Utility Powered Flowmeter

City of Cambridge

Memorial Drive at Hawthorn Street

Angela presented the locus map and said similar to the other site, there is an existing utility manhole that they will pull power from and utilize existing electrical duct bank to cross Memorial Drive. From there they will run an electrical duct bank to the existing meter.

Mike pointed out the bordering land subject to flooding, the riverfront area, and the 100-foot buffer zone. He stated all work would be happening within the 100-foot buffer zone with 218 square feet of temporary impact and 9 square feet of permanent impacts and an additional 100

square feet within the riverfront area containing the compost log between construction and the top of the bank.

David questioned if this work would interfere with the current redesign of Memorial Drive.

Jennifer responded that Memorial Drive Phase III is currently out to bid opening scheduled June 5<sup>th</sup>. This project has been brought into their project and bid documents to be given a window within the construction of Memorial Drive Phase III contractually. She stated the work will be done by the city and the city's contractor, but they will just allow for that portion of work to occur during the project.

Erum asked if this project may be years out as it depends on the timeline of the bigger Memorial Drive project.

Jennifer confirmed that they must be told when the right moment will be, but a negative determination or positive determination tonight is valid for three years.

Angela interjected that they would like to get the city's utility work underground before Memorial Drive is resurfaced. She added that through coordination with Stantech and DCR, they would like to get everything done first before they come through.

Kathryn questioned if it is all hard pavement or if there is anything to be reseeded.

Mike answered that currently a majority of the area is turf, and it would be restored to turf. The only other area is the sidewalk and that would be repaved while the other project may end up relocating the sidewalk.

David asked if there was coordination with Eversource on the utility and pole connection conduit extensions.

Angela responded they did confirm where electricity could be pulled from where some locations may be a utility pole and others a utility manhole.

**7:23** – The commission unanimously approved to close public comment.

7 – In Favor, 2 – Absent

**7:24** – The commission unanimously approved to issue a negative determination with special conditions specific to construction mitigation.

7 – In Favor, 2 – Absent

**7:00 – Notice of Intent**

Belmont Hill Winsor Boathouse  
5 Greenough Boulevard

Erica Frazier of Fort Point Associates stated she is representing both the Belmont Hill School and the Windsor School along with John Crompton from the Windsor School, Elton Matos from

the Belmont Hill School and Bob Livermore from Livermore Edwards & Associates. She stated that the site is located on DCR property south of the Eliot Bridge and east of Paul Dudley White bike path. The Boathouse has three boat bays, a fixed dock, an aluminum ramp that goes down to a floating dock and then on the floating dock there is a finger pier. Eric introduced images and said the weight of the existing ramp on the floating dock is causing it to sink and needs to be replaced. Currently, they do not know the extent of the work as they are looking to inspect the support beam and five piles. Replacing the piles has been included as a possible impact to wetland resource areas. The fixed dock will be replaced, the aluminum ramp will be reused and extended by eight feet to the north the floating dock replaced, and the finger pier replaced to withstand the weight of the ramp. Erica stated that the near-term repairs for safety can be completed during the summer, and depending on inspection the long-term repairs could be executed fall of 2025 at the conclusion of the rowing season. She listed the resource area impacts of 5 linear feet of temporary impacts to the bank for the pile repairs and replacements that are each 12 inches in diameter timber piles, 540 square feet of temporary impacts for bordering land subject to flooding and 620 square feet of temporary impacts to the riverfront area, and 800 square feet of temporary impact to the buffer zone. Erica stated for mitigation measures they will ensure sedimentation controls are in place between all work zones and the Charles River, if a crane is used for the pile replacement it will be set up on mats in that construction lay down area, they will be utilizing a vibratory hammer which minimizes impacts to the resource areas, they will have a spill management plan and then upon completion all the sediment controls will be removed. She added if any in-water sediment disturbing work is required, MassDMF will be notified, and time of year restrictions will be followed. Erica stated that the overall site is about a quarter acre, and the Boathouse was built in 1974 with DEP Order of Conditions in the 90s for similar repairs and replacement work.

Jennifer included that this is a very thorough NOI and is mostly construction mitigation with no additional resource area impacts other than temporary construction. The footprint of the project is not being increased other than the ramp extension for safety similar to the BU Boathouse that Erica was also part of the team for.

David questioned if a construction mitigation boom in water was needed.

Erica responded that the location of the piles is coastal bank rather than underwater so a sediment boom would be more impactful, and an erosion control barrier would be placed between the piles and the river.

Lori asked for further explanation of the exploration work.

Erica stated there will be replacement work under the dock, but they are unable to see what is salvageable. The worst-case scenario is that all five piles need replacement.

Jim asked to clarify that the system has been in use since 1990.

Erica responded that the system has been in use since 1974 and the NOI in 1990 was just for maintenance and repairs.

Jim also asked to clarify the timeline and the need to come before the commission after exploration has been completed.

Eric stated that they included all work to the greatest extent possible for impacts in this NOI.

Erum reiterated the question of the possible need to amend the NOI after exploration.

Erica responded that the only impact areas are the five piles that the beam sits on and that has been accounted for.

Khyati asked if there is concern about additional material coming out and any sort of sediment control.

Erica answered if the piles need replaced, they would do so by a crane placed on mats in the construction lay down area while using a vibratory hammer which is less impactful to resource areas like an impact driver. For sediment mitigation a system like a filter sock will be between the piles and the river.

Elysse questioned if there is a contingency plan for the project or the site if it impacts the crew season.

Elton responded that the contractor hired will be given additional time towards the end, but they will select a contractor that has a good reputation adhering to timelines. They do have relationships with other boathouses if ultimately needed. The worst-case scenario has been estimated, and they don't see any possible need to extend the work.

Jennifer added that other projects that have seen delays have been mostly related to receiving materials and alluded to Magazine Beach with their decking material.

Elton interjected that they have stressed the timeline concern to the floating dock companies and heard back that their standard materials would only have a few weeks lead time.

**7:50** – The commission unanimously approved to close public comment.

7 – In Favor, 2 – Absent

David asked what our typical conditions would be for this project.

Jennifer answered conditions specific to construction mitigation, notification in advance of starting work DEP file signs posted, tree protection, frequent the site during construction and the inspection. There will be a site walk prior to the issuing of certificate of compliance. If seeding is needed there is a growth period before we can issue a certificate of compliance. She added that on the NOI, the DCR signed off with no comments by the DEP.

**7:14** – The commission unanimously approved to issue an order of conditions with special conditions specific to construction mitigation.

7 – In Favor, 2 – Absent

## **7:15 – Administrative Topics**

Jennifer stated FEMA issued new floodplain maps and the city must adopt them by July 8<sup>th</sup> to stay in the flood insurance program. Part of the adoption of those maps is also the flood insurance study as well as an update to our ordinance. The Law Department, Community Development Department, Department of Public Works, as well as Inspectional Services took on the task of doing a multi-month program of editing our city ordinance. That final draft was then sent to the planning board and the ordinance committee that both sent a favorable recommendation to City Council. The first read was adopted and recommended for a second read. The new language in the ordinance of section 20.70. will be advertised for two weeks and then go to a second read. At the second read of City Council, they can adopt the ordinance and then there are still state approvals that must happen. Jennifer said the biggest change is the maps and after that, the Planning Board will no longer have a floodplain special permit. It will now be a review step in both a building permit as well as Conservation Commission permitting which will ask if there is work in the floodplain and if it has been reviewed by the floodplain administrator. The floodplain model bylaw requires that there's not just Conservation Commission review through the wetlands Protection Act because this is a federal model bylaw. It's not just on the state level. Our municipality did not get a new study, but the new maps have better data specific to elevations. There is a change in the Alewife area along Mooney Street that used to be floodplain and now shaded, meaning more periods of time of standing water.

Erum asked to confirm the commission's role and if more assistance in the process is needed.

Jennifer responded that the commission's role is the same, but she would like DCR to do training specifically for us reading floodplain maps. FEMA maps are based on historical data. They are not based on future storm events. Kara oversees a different permit for the city which is climate resiliency and that is looking at trying to mitigate for future events and future projections.

Kara Falise added that the standards for FEMA are associated with changes below the flood elevation providing compensatory storage. The city's flood resiliency standards, which are looking at the projected storm surge sea level rise numbers and the projected precipitation-based flooding are associated with those flood elevations talking about how to make a structure resilient, building it above those elevations, protecting it to those elevations. FEMA is worried about not changing the limits of flooding while the city standards are worried about if we're building something resilient. There was a conversation during the flood resiliency zoning when they had their whole committee evaluating and developing the flood resiliency standards about whether we should be making people provide compensatory storage and the ability for small projects to do that is extremely difficult and would prohibit or eliminate most of the smaller scale projects in the city because there's no way to provide storage at certain elevations.

Jennifer stated she will keep the commission informed about the next round of votes on the FEMA maps and in the meantime work on scheduling a time for training. There is an RDA for vegetation management of Keolis on the agenda for June. She said she will also revisit the edits to the submittal policy.

## **8:09 – Meeting Adjourned**

6 – In Favor, 3 – Absent