



City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

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Public Meeting – Monday, February 23, 2026, 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; Lorie Graham; Jim Gerstle, Associate; Sean Bedingfield, Associate

Absent Commission Members: Khyati Saraf

Attendees: Lena Frappier, DPW; Kara Falise, DPW; Andrea Kendall, LEC; Gerald Autler, DCR; Aleece D’Onofrio, Stantec; Sophia Regazzini

David Lyons, Chair opened the meeting.

7:00 – Notice of Intent (NOI)

Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
Memorial Drive Path Rehabilitation

Gerald Autler of DCR introduced a section of the multi-use path along the Charles River and Memorial Drive that is substandard in terms of condition and width stretching from Magazine Beach to the Anderson Bridge located on JFK street. He stated that they will be permitting one project but complete work in phases due to organization and resource constraints with the highest priority being Magazine Beach to River Street. Gerald added that they are proposing to widen the multi-use path reaching 10 to 14 feet. This width is not uncommon as it is used for commuting and recreational for pedestrians and riders. He stated they have received many complaints concerning condition from users and elected officials. There was a recent project completed from the BU Bridge to Magazine Beach with the same objectives. Western Avenue to River Street is unlikely to be constructed anytime soon as there are seawall issues that need to be addressed and with current inspections to determine next steps. Gerald said the section from Western Avenue to Anderson Bridge will mainly be resurfacing as the path is already widened. He is hoping that they will have a fully designed and permitted project with resources for Magazine Beach to River Street.

Aleece D'Onofrio of Stantec added that this is categorized as maintenance and safety work with the goal to keep this heavily used section of path. They will work to minimize impacts on environmental resources and revegetate all the side slopes. She stated that they will focus on repairing the areas of several foot paths by aerating soil and reseeding. Aleece reiterated that the section from Western Avenue to the Anderson Bridge is mainly just repaving the existing path due to cracks in the surface. She added that in the site visit with Jennifer Letourneau of DPW, they discussed tree protection and phased road closures for construction vehicles to minimize vegetation damage. She stated that the path from Magazine Beach to River Street is currently 6 feet wide and the new design will be 10 feet to help minimize the foot paths on either side. The goal is to keep the footprint as small as possible so no embankment work will be included.

Jennifer reviewed the memo supplied to the commission along with the submittal and stated the project is 1.34 miles located on the riverside only of Memorial Drive. The proposed path rehabilitation will regrade, resurface, and widen the existing path where possible up to 10 feet wide. The project does not include moving or resetting curb, inspecting or rehabilitating catch basins, or inspecting or rehabilitating seawall. The proposed work is proposed within the 25-foot Riverfront and within the 100-foot Buffer Zone to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands in some sections not all. Riverfront Area includes a 3,000-foot section and the Buffer Zone includes 3,900-foot section. A summary of the increase in impervious surface is included in the NOI submittal. Jennifer stated they are asking to confirm this is a limited project and for that they must provide an alternatives analysis, propose mitigation measures, and evaluate any impacts to stormwater runoff. The alternatives include maintaining existing path widths utilizing and upgrading sidewalk on opposite side of Memorial Drive. Neither alternative was recommended. The mitigation measures included were the reseeding discussed with the addition of invasive species management is planned in accordance with DCR's Charles River Basin Management Plan. Jennifer asked if Aleece could discuss the stormwater evaluation.

Aleece stated as the area is foot and bike path with no-motorized access, they are not looking to add any run-off system. The proposed stormwater runoff from the trail will flow to vegetated areas alongside the trail where it is expected to infiltrate into the ground naturally.

Jennifer added as presented in the NOI, the work meets the referenced limited project. The Commission may vote to issue an Order of Conditions. Possible special conditions include limit staging area to outside the wetland resource areas, tree protection and erosion controls to be inspected once installed before work begins, require a spill kit on site, provide a project schedule with proposed invasive species removal and planting time of year to be submitted within 1 month of issuing the Notice to Proceed to the Contractor or awarding the work to an On-Call Contractor, and a Certificate of Compliance can be requested after 3 growing seasons and the planted areas have a minimum of 90% coverage and are weed-free.

Kara Falise of DPW stated that stormwater evaluation is specific to the requirements of the Wetlands Protection Act and questioned if this has been reviewed under the lens of MS4, Charles River TNDL, or DCR's Phosphorous Control Plan for the Charles River Watershed. She asked with the disturbance if this project if they will require coverage under the NPDES Construction General Permit to monitor more erosion and sediment control and with the disturbance being over an acre there will be a permit needed from DPW.

Gerald responded that the project is consistent with DCR's Phosphorous Control Plan as the ground is compacted, they will be aerating and planting the area to combat the increased impervious surface area. The runoff is expected to infiltrate the vegetated areas and the quality of runoff will not change as the use of the path is not changing.

Aleece added they focused on limiting the footprint as much as possible therefore limiting scope to not affect a wider area than needed.

Kara questioned if there is an internal review process within DCR to review the long-term control plan for phosphorous.

Gerald responded that he is not aware of one.

Kara stated that it's curious to have a plan to recommend to others but not review internally.

Gerald added that it may be a process for larger projects like the Memorial Drive phases, but whereas they consider this a maintenance and safety project they did not focus on this aspect.

Jennifer asked if they went through the Green Docket Review process with DCR.

Gerald answered that the NOI did go through the Green Docket.

Aleece added that their projects are typically under one acre, but all the permits will be standard and come into play when finalizing a contractor.

David stated the Charels River Task Force is a newer organization with the purpose to communicate with/for the residents adjacent to the river concerning public access and use of the river. He asked if there has been any engagement with the group concerning this project.

Gerald responded that there has been significant engagement including site meetings. The scope of the project and timing were discussed for possibly the fall of this year.

David asked to clarify that the project is expected to be complete this year.

Gerald answered that the first goal is to get a fully permitted and funded project. The first section of focus, being Magazine Beach to River Street, was initially aimed at being completed before the end of the fiscal year in June but fiscally is not possible now. With the high priority of the project, he sees it being completed in full by the end of calendar year 2026.

Elysse Magnotto-Cleary questioned if there may be any other possible delays to the project and expressed her appreciation for the attention that is long overdue.

Gerald responded that the condition of this area is an embarrassment and the only considerations to delay are based on the permitting process that they will undergo and final approval of the budget as they are expecting this to be around \$1 million of their \$7 million annual budget for trails throughout the entire state. He also mentioned that there is an Eversource project that will approach Magazine Beach, but the timeline for that is multiple years so they not waiting upon

that to be completed even though there will be some disturbance. Eversource will be expected to restore the condition.

Lorie Graham agreed with the needed attention to the area and added that her question about the increased impervious surface related to stormwater was already touched on.

Aleece added that there are possible soil tests to show the compactness of the current conditions is functioning imperviously, but they believe that aerating the remaining area and adding vegetation will help restore natural water infiltration.

Jim Gerstle asked if there were any considerations to using non-impervious surfaces.

Gerald answered that they did not. Previously considering that for other projects the cost is too expensive and the material is difficult to use and not as long lasting under heavy wear.

Kathryn Hess stated that she would hope the state would be leading in best and innovative practices to try more non-impervious surfaces. She asked if there is a control or maintenance plan so all their work with aeration and vegetation isn't completely undone by The Head of The Charles.

Gerald responded that his colleagues are more versed on that topic with the DCR's Charles River Basin Management Plan that governs their planting plans. He stated there are other projects that will be focusing on the landscape of the area and this is primarily for just the shared use path.

Erum Sattar questioned if there were studies about the footpaths created and if they will be reseeded and corded off so the areas are not recompact.

Gerald answered that he is not aware why part of the path was only built 6-foot-wide. He stated that the footpath along the river is likely to see continued use, but that the other footpaths will hopefully not be recreated with the widening and resurfacing of the multi-use path. Gerald also agreed that it would be beneficial to keep the area marked off for a period during regrowth.

Sean Bedingfield asked if railing along the path would be necessary or planned.

Gerald responded that there is an existing chain-link fence along the soccer fields at Magazine Beach with the purpose of keeping balls off Memorial Drive, but it is unsightly and in an unnecessary location so part of the project would be moving that fence back to extend the path away from Memorial Drive. There is also some fencing around the foot bridge that does not serve a purpose that they intend to remove.

Kathryn asked for the timeline of the project as it relates to growing season for the vegetation.

Gerald answered they are still in the fiscal review, but he would like to start in July for the stretch from Magazine Beach to River Street. He stated he did not think of The Head of The Charles considering timeline, but they hope to be done completely within two months but at latest September. They may rethink certain areas as it relates to that event.

Jennifer asked if there were any public comments from the single attendee.

Elysse hearing no comment moved to close public comment.

Kathy seconded the motion.

7:45 – The commission unanimously approved to close public comment.

7 – In Favor, 1 - Absent

David Lyons – Yes

Elysse Magnotto-Cleary – Yes

Kathryn Hess- Yes

Erum Sattar- Yes

Lorie Graham- Yes

Jim Gerstle, Associate- Yes

Sean Bedingfield, Associate- Yes

David and Lorie asked to review the special conditions listed.

Jennifer stated all notices are required before mobilization and the laydown of sediment and erosion controls along with receiving information on all permits related to the project. As far as construction is concerned, the first step is providing the construction bid to prove the order of conditions have been recorded and the proposed schedule shows the planting plans which must be submitted to the director of the commission for final approval. Rolling this into the long-term vegetation management plan will be required to receive a certificate of compliance.

Elysse moved to issue the order of conditions.

Lorie seconded the motion.

7:50 – The commission unanimously approved to issue the order of conditions.

7 – In Favor, 1 - Absent

David Lyons – Yes

Elysse Magnotto-Cleary – Yes

Kathryn Hess- Yes

Erum Sattar- Yes

Lorie Graham- Yes

Jim Gerstle, Associate- Yes

Sean Bedingfield, Associate- Yes

7:51 – Administrative Topics

Kathryn moved to approve December 15, 2025, meeting minutes.

Lorie seconded the motion.

7:53 – Meeting Minutes Approved- December 15, 2025

5 – In Favor, 2- Abstain, 1 - Absent

David Lyons – Yes

Elysse Magnotto-Cleary – Abstain

Kathryn Hess- Yes
Erum Sattar- Yes
Lorie Graham- Yes
Jim Gerstle, Associate- Yes
Sean Bedingfield, Associate- Abstain

Jennifer reviewed the commission vacancies and said that she had submitted a recommendation that was returned. It was requested to hold a formal interview process that is quite lengthy in posting and advertising. Interviews should be completed by the end of the week, and a new recommendation should be drafted and sent. She apologized for any poor communication during the process concerning delays as the city navigates the new position of associate members and policies related to. Jennifer went over the details and instructions for applying to the New CSO Control and Stormwater Management Advisory Committee. She stated next meeting the commission can review board and committee membership which is before the application deadline.

Kara added that the work will be focused on CSO control for the first two years as the city is working on the published plan.

Kathryn stated the Charels River Task Force has a meeting tomorrow. She added concerning the new advisory committee she has a hydrology background and has done work on CSO's. Even though She has enjoyed her time on the Fresh Pond Advisory Board she thinks she could assist with this group.

Jennifer stated there are not items for the March 9th meeting other than a CSO presentation from Lucica Hiller.

Elysse moved to adjourn the meeting.

Kathryn seconded the motion.

8:07 – Meeting Adjourned

7 – In Favor, 1 - Absent
David Lyons – Yes
Elysse Magnotto-Cleary – Yes
Kathryn Hess- Yes
Erum Sattar- Yes
Lorie Graham- Yes
Jim Gerstle, Associate- Yes
Sean Bedingfield, Associate- Yes