



City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

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Public Meeting – Monday, March 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; Khyati Saraf; Jim Gerstle, Associate; Sean Bedingfield, Associate

Attendees: Lena Frappier, DPW; Kara Falise, DPW; Christopher Newhall, Eversource; Simon Hildt, Epsilon Associates

David Lyons, Chair opened the meeting.

7:00 – Informational Presentation

Eversource Greater Energy Project

Magazine Beach: Transmission Lines Under the Charles River

Christopher Newhall (Eversource) and Simon Hildt (Epsilon Associates) presented an overview of Eversource’s forthcoming Notice of Intent (NOI) for the Greater Cambridge Energy Program, specifically the proposed horizontal directional drilling (HDD) crossing under the Charles River between Magazine Beach (Cambridge) and the Allston Multimodal Yard (Boston).

Key points included:

- The project supports a new underground substation within the Boston Properties development in Kendall Square.
- The HDD crossing will install a 42-inch conduit beneath the Charles River at approximately 40 feet below resource areas including buffer zone, riverfront area, land under water, and mapped fish run.
- The Cambridge entry pit will be located between Memorial Drive and an existing soccer field at Magazine Beach.
- No surface alteration of protected resource areas will occur due to the trenchless HDD method.
- Construction is expected to begin December 2026, lasting approximately four months, pending permit approvals.

Eversource is coordinating closely with DCR and the Friends of Magazine Beach regarding park access, timing (winter months), and full restoration. Restoration will include complete renovation of the degraded soccer field.

HDD Methodology Overview

Simon described the HDD process including pilot boring, reaming, bentonite drilling fluid circulation, cuttings management, and conduit pullback. Commission questions addressed:

- Size of the entry pit (approx. 20 ft x 30 ft; ~5 ft depth).
- Conduit structure (42-inch outer pipe with multiple transmission and communication conduits inside).
- Soil conditions (fill, sand, peat, clay; no bedrock encountered).
- Similar HDD projects under major waterways (common over last 20–30 years).
- Surface structures (only flush manhole/vault access at entry and exit).
- Construction noise and potential impacts on the nearby elementary school (moderate construction noise, similar to excavators/trucks).
- Coordination with MWRA and CSO Planning.

Commissioners asked about potential conflicts with the CSO long-term control plan, including the proposed Magazine Beach storage tank.

Staff emphasized the importance of detailed as-built drawings following HDD installation to ensure proper vertical/horizontal offsets for future MWRA infrastructure.

Additional Discussion Topics

- Site visits: Commission agreed on Friday, April 10 at 8:30 AM for an on-site walkthrough at Magazine Beach.
- Anticipated permit filings:
 - Cambridge and Boston Orders of Conditions
 - MassDEP 401 Water Quality Certification
 - Army Corps Section 10 permit
 - MassDEP Chapter 91 License
- Water quality and inadvertent return (IR) risk management:
 - Contractor will prepare a detailed IR Contingency Plan
 - Soil/river patrols, pressure monitoring, and containment protocols will be used
- Dewatering and stormwater management will comply with EPA CGP, DRGP, and Cambridge stormwater permit requirements.

Commissioners asked about:

- Soil reuse vs. disposal during field restoration
- Noise and public access concerns
- Long-term planning for future HDD needs (none planned within next 10–20 years)

Eversource confirmed they would bring turf-field consultants (Activitas) to the NOI hearing to address soil profile and turf restoration details.

David disclosed a professional connection via the Department of Public Utilities and will file the appropriate conflict disclosure but does not anticipate needing to recuse himself.

8:11 – Request to Amend Order of Conditions
DEP File #123-272
Cambridge Water Department
Vegetation Management Plan: Alum Treatment at Little Fresh Pond

Jennifer presented the Water Department’s request to amend the Fresh Pond Reservation Vegetation Management Plan to authorize alum treatment (aluminum sulfate, sodium aluminate, polyaluminum chloride) for phosphorus inactivation in:

- Little Fresh Pond
- Black’s Nook
- North Pond

Background:

- Consultant report (Nov. 2025) identified alum as the preferred near-term treatment to reduce internal phosphorus loading and suppress algal blooms.
- Alum flocculates suspended particles and creates a sediment cap to prevent phosphorus release.
- Fresh Pond Advisory Board, Water Board, and MDAR have reviewed and approved the method.
- Alum treatments are expected every few years, not annually.

Commission discussion focused on:

- Expected water quality improvements and monitoring timelines.
- Climate-related stagnation and reduced storm flushing.
- Soil and nutrient dynamics.
- Long-term maintenance needs.

No public comment was present.

8:22 –Public Comment

Motion: Kathryn moved to close public comment.

Second: Elysse

Vote: 8 – In Favor

David – Yes

Elysse – Yes

Erum – Yes

Kathryn – Yes

Khyati – Yes

Lorie – Yes

Jim (Associate) – Yes

Sean (Associate) – Yes

Public comment closed unanimously.

8:23 – Vote on Amendment to Vegetation Management Plan

Motion: Kathryn moved to approve the amendment adding alum treatment language to the Vegetation Management Plan.

Second: Lorie

Vote: 8 – In Favor

David – Yes

Elysse – Yes

Erum – Yes

Kathryn – Yes

Khyati – Yes

Lorie – Yes

Jim (Associate) – Yes

Sean (Associate) – Yes

Motion approved unanimously.

8:24 – Administrative Topics

Jennifer will:

- Send calendar invite for the April 10 site visit (8:30 AM).
- Prepare the April 13 meeting packet with Eversource’s NOI.
- Follow up with City staff regarding CSO Advisory Committee applications.

Commissioners discussed anticipated public interest at the NOI hearing, including Magazine Beach community groups, rowers, CRC, Mass Audubon, and CSO advocates.

8:29 – Adjournment

Motion: Elysse moved to adjourn

Second: Kathryn

Vote: 7 – In Favor

David – Yes

Elysse – Yes

Erum – Yes

Kathryn – Yes

Khyati – Yes

Lorie – Yes

Jim (Associate) – Yes

Sean (Associate) – Yes

Meeting adjourned.