



City of Cambridge Conservation Commission

147 Hampshire Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
Ph. 617.349.4680

Jennifer Letourneau, Director

jletourneau@cambridgema.gov

Public Meeting – Monday, December 5, 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), Kaki Martin, Erum Sattar

Absent Commission Members: Kathryn Hess, Michelle Lane, Elysse Magnotto-Cleary

Attendees: Tracy Dwyer, DPW; Jim Wilcox, DPW; John Twohig, New England Development; Kathryn Barnicle, Ilex Environmental; Sarah White Tetra Tech; Bob Daylor, Tetra Tech, Sarah Lemke, New England Development; Jessica Caamano, Tetra Tech

Purvi Patel opened the meeting.

7:02 – Request for Determination of Applicability

DCR Path – MBTA Alewife Headhouse and Whittemore Ave

Jennifer Letourneau, Director of the Conservation Commission represented the project for the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) because no one from DCR was in attendance of the meeting. Jennifer showed the commission where the path is located which is from the MBTA headhouse in the neighborhood opposite route 2, the path continues north, comes out on to the sidewalk and then continues north around the IQHQ project. Jennifer stated the reason why this path is critical right now is because pedestrians were using the parcel of the IQHQ project and is no longer accessible because the project is in construction. Jennifer stated that DCR is looking to mill and overlay the section from the sidewalk heading north around the IQHQ project. She stated that the asphalt will be anywhere from three (3) feet to five (5) feet wide. Jennifer stated that the current condition of the path has heaves because it has not been maintained and they need to make it an accessible path. Jennifer stated that you can still use the Linear Path, however residents in the Whittemore Avenue area tend to use the other path that the DCR will need to repair. Jennifer stated that the work will take about two (2) days to complete, the work would entail them milling 2-4 inches of the asphalt and replacing it in kind, the final grade will be consistent with the current path conditions. Jennifer said with the IQHQ project up and running there are already erosion and sediment controls in place, the only one she would recommend is tree protection. Jennifer said they correctly noted the BVW and BLSF as noted

from the IQHQ property. Jennifer said that they noted on the application that this would be a maintenance activity which is allowable under a negative RDA. Jennifer stated there is no increases, no altering, no change, just putting back in kind.

Jim Wilcox said this project is a straightforward project, with just a mill and overlay of an existing path and he stated he does not see any issues with it, and it is an allowable activity for a negative determination.

Kaki Martin stated in the chat, "I'd love to have this be an RDA but shouldn't we request that it become a consistent width? Seems to me that 3' width in certain areas isn't great especially as such an important neighborhood connection to transit".

Purvi asked if the project was 100% in the buffer zone or was only a portion of it the buffer zone. Jennifer stated that the project is 100% in the buffer zone. Jennifer wanted to add that as part of the IQHQ project the multi-modal path system that is proposed and has been vetted by CDD and others will have the width and the accommodations that every path in Cambridge now has and she believes it's twelve (12) feet. Jennifer said it's 12-15 feet with Blue Bike stations, two-way traffic, and clearances. Jennifer stated that there will be two connections to that path from Whittemore Avenue and Harvey Street, connecting to the Linear Path and eventually they will be widening the path that goes around Russell Field.

Kaki stated in the chat "OK that's good so this is temporary so I'm ok with it as a maintenance/repair".

Jim said that Jennifer covered it all on the multi-use path but that the standard width is fourteen (14) feet.

David Lyons stated that he was underwhelmed with the submission and then for them not to be present for the meeting. He said that they called it a request, that there is a local bylaw that applies which is incorrect. David said he understands that this is for local access while the rest of the site is under construction he gets it, but there are a lot of other materials that could be used since it is right through the BVW and bordering land subject to flooding. David wanted to know if the long-term plan is to take out this section.

Jennifer stated she does not believe so that they would remove this section. She said that IQHQ will be working with the DCR to redo the plaza area and that work has not been added to any submittals, she said she thinks negotiations are still going on. IQHQ is also looking to have the MBTA trailers removed, their goal is to have this really be aesthetically nicer than it currently is. Jennifer said when she walked this with Nick from DCR she agrees with Kaki that this is a temporary solution, and this does not meet a standard path from DCR or the city's standards. She said it's a necessary project to get rid of the frost heaves, so that it's a plowable surface and accessible.

David Lyons asked if anyone knew when this was last paved.

Jennifer stated that it has not been paved in the last twenty (20) years.

Jim stated he believes the pavement is from when the Alewife Station was built in the 1980's.

David asked if there were any upgrades in the northern part of the path.

Jennifer said there will be no changes to the path, just a mill and overlay to make it accessible. She said she expressed her displeasure with the submittal and the lack of attendance. She said

she feels it's important and it does meet the standard of a negative determination and allowable to do a maintenance activity in this location. Jennifer said they can condition it with controls while the project is going on. She said this would only be a two-day project, milling and then paving and the surface will be usable for winter 2023. Jennifer said she would draft a response to DCR and copy the commission on it to follow up with questions with what would be a more permanent solution for this area going forward.

David said he would like to know their thoughts on that.

Purvi said she's in a different mine set with this and glad that they are not widening the path and looking at this strictly as a maintenance project because they are not changing the footprint. She said that this is temporary and there is more permanent plan coming. She said she would like to put them on notice, and that the commission would expect better submissions in the future.

Kaki stated in the chat "Can we have a condition be that we want to see pedestrian upgrades that are consistent widths, etc?"

Purvi stated that she would like to understand what two feet in certain areas looks like, this is adjacent to the BVW and buffer zone and she would like to see more impervious area adjacent to the buffer zone. She said that this is a three-foot path that is not heavily traversed.

Kaki stated in the chat "DCR will not volunteer to upgrade this unless pushed."

Jennifer wanted to bridge all these comments, she said what she can do is ask IQHQ to come in and walk the commission through what the pedestrian connections will look like at the end of their project to see if there is something planned especially where the headhouse has not been presented to the commission yet.

Purvi agrees with that.

David agrees as well and to get an update on the project. He said he is ok with the maintenance project if there is a plan for upgrades in the future not only with widths but also with materials. He said he hopes this is just a temporary fix resulting from the construction in the area and it's not another 30 years before something else happens here.

Kaki stated in the chat "It would be helpful to have that meeting."

Erum Sattar said she agrees with everyone, and it would be helpful to hear about the long term plans.

7:21 – Public Comment Closed – no comments

4 – In Favor, 3 – Absent, 0 – Opposed, 0 – Abstained

7:21 – The commission approves a Negative Determination of Applicability with a special condition of tree protection.

4 – In Favor, 3 – Absent, 0 – Opposed, 0 – Abstained

7:22 - Informational Presentation

Lechmere Canal Park

John Twohig from New England Development was in attendance and introduced the staff at the meeting. John talked about the background on the project, he said as part of Cambridgeside 2.0 and reimagining Cambridgeside one of the issues was what can be done with Canal Park how can it be refreshed. John stated that they have had dozens of meetings with the city and the Cambridge Planning Board. He stated that they have gone out and met multiple times with various abutters, condominium associations and formed an advisory committee where members of the city and public sit on. This board have met 10 to 12 times and talked about issues of the canal and what people would like the team to focus on knowing this is a City of Cambridge asset. John stated that they also met with DCR and when they met and the teams shows you pictures of the land under the bridge, DCR's comment was the bridge looks lovely as it is, and they saw no problems. John said some of the key terms came out of the meetings was accessibility and maintenance, also they did not want this team to mess things up. John said in this presentation the key areas of importance were the edge along the mall, the experience coming down Thorndike, which is the area near the old Sears store, the area over by the lawn near One Canal, the playground, the area near the terrace of Thomas Graves Landing and the final two areas were two areas under Land Boulevard regarding lighting and the condition. He said the key things were resetting bricks, preserving the trees but upgrading the understory of them, safety – upgrades to railings and spacing and fall zones. He said lastly was lighting and improving safety for people at Canal Park.

Katie Barnicle the Senior Wetland Scientist with Ilex Environmental, she stated that there are seven (7) areas were proposed improvement not physically but conceptually. Katie showed an ariel view of the area, she said that there are seven (7) proposed improvements and the first one was softscape which is the vegetation and trees, the other is hardscape which is just about resetting the bricks. She said there is also the amenities, replacing benches and lighting and there is art, connectivity, and ADA compliance and sustainability. Katie stated with any Wetland Protection Act project you need to start with what's already existing. She showed a picture of the canal, Thomas Graves Landing to the right looking at the gazebo. She said that there are two wetland resource areas, the first one is land subject to coastal storm flowage which hits around where the stone all is near the Thomas Graves Landing area is located, she said most of the lower walkway around the canal would be underwater. The other one would be land underwater of the actual canal and the one hundred (100) foot buffer zone associated with that. Katie pointed out that there is no natural occurring bank, instead they have a physical feature that acts like a bank but it's not a wetland jurisdictional bank, so there is not riverfront area because its technically human made canal. Katie pointed out that a Zone AE is a coastal flooding zone, but she said that the dam that was built in 1910 and upgraded 1978, stopped any tidal influence. Katie said that the dam prevents any tidal influence but not during the one hundred (100) year storm. Katie stated that DCR owns a section of the park and also, they manage underneath Land Boulevard, but the remainder of the property is owned by the City of Cambridge, but once owned by New England Development gave it to city but manages it in conjunction with the city. Katie stated that they have work in the floodplain, but the biggest area where work is proposed is the lower walkway around the canal, presently it is stone dust, but they are looking to replace it with a durable year around surface with a drainage system. This will allow for the walk to be plowed, maintained, and manage stormwater with less flooding pockets. Katie explained that as part of this project there is no new work, all work is being replaced or refurbished. Katie showed the

commission the six (6) work areas and explained that five (5) out of the six are within jurisdiction. Katie explained that a portion of the “great lawn” area is within the jurisdiction and the “playground” is completely out of the jurisdiction, so they left that out of the filing. Katie explained in the “mall area” the biggest change will be with the walkaway and replacing the stone dust with something more durable, otherwise its fixing loose bricks, replacing amenities, adding in new seating, the trees will remain but working with the City Arborist on the tree making sure they are properly pruned and healthy and adding to the lower vegetation and shrubs. She stated that “Thorndike Way” the bricks will be reset, railings replaced to meet ADA complaint needs, ramps will also be rebuilt for ADA compliancy. She also said they will be improving the softscape, adding more soil and plantings to help with the trees and removing some of the brick area. Also, there will be additional lighting in this area. Katie said with the “great lawn”, she had marked out where the one hundred (100) foot buffer zone would be and that it would be regraded and reseeded, any bricks or granite will be reset as well and there have been talks about adding in some bike racks. Katie said the big change with the Thomas Graves terrace is that the stone dust will be gone and replaced with a better and more durable surface to manage. She also said that the stairs will be rebuilt so they are ADA complaint with hand railings and adding in kayak tethers so the water’s edge so more usable and refurbishing the chairs as well. Katie explained that the work under the Land Boulevard bridge will consist of concrete repairs to walkways and walls, cleaning and painting the walls and proposing new lighting as well as working with DCR and the city for a possible art installation. Katie explained how the stormwater management system would work and be maintained along the canal walkway, it would be a slot drain and protected to not drain into the canal.

Jennifer said that there will be a site walk on December 13, 2022, at 10:00 am. Katie stated that they will be filing the submission to be heard at the December 19, 2022, meeting.

Kaki Martin asked in the chat “Is it possible to provide a bit more information on what type of paving system you will be using when you say, ‘durable surface’.”

John Twohig said there were a few ideas they were thinking of one was the stone dust with a Stay-lok system or the other product would be a bituminous product. He said he was looking for feedback on any concerns or suggestions.

Bob Daylor stated that since this is a city property, they have brought it down to two surfaces to use and have designed the drainage system to accommodate both.

Kaki stated in the chat “and to confirm this detail would be used for any of the choices you are looking at.”

Katie confirmed that was correct.

Purvi asked at what storm event are you designing this storm water system to.

Bob Daylor stated they are working with the city to meet the 2070/10 year storm. Bob explained that because of the volume of crushed stone that there is a continuous slot drain running completely around the inside of the seawall and the cross slope would pick up the drainage into the slot drain and discharges into the stone filled underdrain which eventually drains into field drainage that exists now and will eventually empty into the canal. He said none of this exists today and they have designed it so the first flush of rainfall on the surfaces can be captured and recharged into the soil behind the seawall and only after that would there be a discharge into the river. He said this also meets the city standards for phosphorus, protection, and phosphorus removal into the Charles River.

Erum Sattar stated that she understands that there has been a lot of public outreach and community involvement but wanted to know how much the community understands that this is not a full protection from a certain type of storm.

Katie asked if Erum was speaking about the coastal flooding.

John Twohig said the commentary that has been happening within the community has mostly been about the pooling/flooding around the lower canal, plow ability. John said people understand that it will be better but there have not been discussions of how it could be better.

Katie stated that the top of the wall that borders the lower canal walk, the taller wall is at or below the one hundred (100) year flood plain.

Purvi wanted to confirm that will the 2070 you are accommodating the 10 year and not the other years storms. Bob agreed. Purvi also asked if there was any adaptability in the design to accommodate a greater storm event, a possibility for expansion of the system. Bob stated there could be a possibility to expand the system but that they would need to think about how the Charles River dam would manage a larger event.

Jennifer stated that we are looking at the informational presentation tonight and also have received the submittal for the December 19, 2022 hearing. Jennifer said there is also a site walk at 10:00 am on December 13, 2022.

Katie also stated that the city has a five hundred (500) foot abutters policy for any Notice of Intent notifying abutters of the public hearing and they did a comparison of the jurisdictional one hundred (100) foot abutter notification that's required under the Wetlands Protection Act and it goes from two hundred (200) abutters to fourteen hundred (1400) abutters and the costs for printing and mailing out everything certified mail with return receipt is extremely high and will also take a person a full week to get all the notifications out. Katie said they put together a request to waiver that to the commission since this was a highly public project and a lot of the community and abutters were all involved in the project, they would like to work with the commission to notify the one hundred (100) foot abutters instead.

Jennifer wanted to remind the commission that this policy is in place because when there is work along the Charles River there are no abutters to the river so many years ago, they looked at GIS to see when there is work in the river where is the closest person to notify and that is how they determined five hundred (500) feet. Jennifer also said this is a policy and not an ordinance so there is room for the commission to weigh in on this.

Purvi asked if a lot of this abutters are in high density areas or in large buildings where a notice can be placed in the lobby where there is high traffic, and the residents will be notified.

Katie explained that a lot of these are condo owners and not renters so they would have to notify each owner.

Purvi said that a lot of condos have a homeowner's association so that you can give them the information and have them distribute it.

John said that there has been a lot of involvement from the Thomas Graves Landing and Two Canal Park, so they can notify the associations and give them the notice and can post it in the buildings.

Purvi said she is in favor of public meetings, notifications and public involvement but she is not in favor of printing out vast amounts of paper when an electronic format can work. She thinks as many people should be notified but it should not be burdensome for the applicant.

David Lyons asked Jennifer if this policy has only applied to projects on the river in the past. Jennifer confirmed that was correct.

David said we have not been doing five hundred (500) feet for other projects around the city.

Jennifer agreed.

David asked the applicant if they would also be notifying the advisory boards, East Cambridge Planning team and constituency groups of the hearing.

John said they will be in front of the East Cambridge Planning team on December 14th and have one hundred and eighty-six (186) certified mailings going out to the owners of the abutting condominium buildings.

David agrees like Purvi for the applicant it would be more effective for them to reach out to organizational leaders then to just send notices to individuals. David is ok with the waiver of the five hundred (500) foot requirement.

Purvi asked if Jennifer would work with the applicant on a happy medium with the notifications whether it be just two hundred (200) feet or a full waiver.

Jennifer agrees she will work with the team to find something that works.

Kaki stated in the chat "I'm ok with a waiver too but I do want outreach to be maximized".

David asked if any of the products that are being used at Fresh Pond would be an alternative for the durable surface walkway.

Jennifer said the applicant has narrowed it down to a non-traditional asphalt surface and that they are currently working on for the final submittal.

Katie agreed with Jennifer she said they are looking at Stay-lok, which is one that they have had problems with at Fresh Pond and then the other would be a traditional pavement.

Jennifer said that they have used a pervious asphalt at Fresh Pond that works well.

Katie said any of those would work with the stormwater design.

Jennifer said that Stay-lok does not work in our area and it's not plowable.

Purvi said that previous asphalt is a lot of maintenance, so she would hate for it to not work if not probably cleaned.

Jennifer agrees, and the city works on making sure that those services are cleaned properly.

Katie asked if the surface is not agreed upon by December 19th hearing, that there is a condition in the Order of Conditions, maybe it can be done administratively that they notify the commission of the material selected.

Kaki asked in the chat "Jen, I may be wrong, but I thought that Fresh Pond Res had some success with Stay-lok?"

Jennifer said they did but not in plowable areas, just in gardens areas and in no plowed areas. She said its up to the commission on how they would like to vote, but in the past, they have had everything 100% complete and submitted to the commission and the DEP, before the commission will issue an Order of Conditions without any outstanding or lingering items.

Katie understands that.

Purvi said she wanted to confirm that the Notice of Intent that was submitted last week might need to be revised if you are changing your process or approach.

Katie said that they designed it to be conservative, they designed it for a impervious material but it would be a better situation if they chose something pervious.

Purvi stated she was trying to figure out if there were any factors if you state it's going to be impervious and then it changes to pervious, but she said that is something to be discussed at the hearing.

Jennifer also stated that they do condition the O and M plan but that does not need to be submitted till they get the certificate of compliance.

Bob wanted to confirm Katie's comments that the drainage system is going to be 100% complete meeting the city's standards and if we were to choose a pervious surface it would not change the design.

8:15 – Administrative Topics

Meeting Minutes from November 14, 2022 were tabled till the December 19, 2022 meeting.

3 – In Favor, 3 – Absent, 0 – Opposed, 1 – Abstained

8:20 – Meeting Adjourned

4 – In Favor, 3 – Absent, 0 – Opposed, 0 – Abstained