

MINUTES OF APRIL 14th, 2021 MEETING

Access via phone (646) 558 8656 or via web at www.zoom.us with Meeting ID 931 4711 4084 / Password 304579

A meeting of the Longmeadow Conservation Commission was called to order at 7:03 P.M. on April 14th, 2021 and was again conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020, due to the current State of Emergency in the Commonwealth related to the Covid19 pandemic.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Al Laakso, David Dumais, John Bresnahan, Kiernan Mulcahy **Absent:** Andrea Chasen, Stephen Gazillo, Roman Berman, Christopher Nolan.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mary Breeding and Ed Weagle from PVYC, David Sagan from Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING: Mr. Laakso made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Bresnahan, to accept the minutes of March 24th, 2021 as presented. Roll call vote: Mr. Laakso, yes; Mr. Bresnahan: yes; Mr. Dumais: yes; Mr. Mulcahy: yes. All in favor 4-0, motion passed.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Salary \$2,730.19, Maintenance \$774.80, Office Supplies \$100, Miscellaneous \$-641.00, Wetlands Protection Fund \$7,690.65, ConCom Trust Fund \$9,589.75. The Miscellaneous account reflects a balance that is not aligned with the Treasurer's records, therefore he will be contacting the Accounting Department to determine whether the report is reflecting an unintended error.

RDA – PIONEER VALLEY YACHT CLUB OUTDOOR LIGHTING PROJECT: Mr. Weagle presented photographs and described the scope of work, which will be performed by a professional electrician and club member volunteers, as follows:

1. On parking lot and boat yards: five (5) prefabricated concrete light post bases will be installed to accommodate 12-foot high aluminum light posts. The bases, which are 6' high, will be buried 4' below grade, leaving the remaining 2' above grade. For the electricity supply, approximately 450 feet of 24"-deep trench (depth per electrical code) is to be excavated using a narrow trench bucket to allow for the installation of conduit.
2. On clubhouse walkway: refurbished low-voltage light fixtures are to be installed at 8' above grade and buried in the soil. For conduit installation, the trenches are to be excavated mechanically or by hand and disturbances will be limited primarily to the landscape planting beds.
3. On docks: LED flood lights are to be installed on stanchion uprights and conduit will be installed in trenches that are to be excavated by hand and located below the top of the bank. Existing wood posts in disrepair will be replaced with new wood posts of identical characteristics. All work is to be performed when the river level is below the work area and be staked with straw wattles.

Chair Al Laakso made a motion, and was seconded by Mr. Bresnahan, to issue a Negative Determination #2 and #6 for the proposed outdoor lighting work at the Pioneer Valley Yacht Club with the condition that the commission be notified prior to work commencement of the erosion control devices installation. Roll call vote: Mr. Laakso, yes; Mr. Bresnahan: yes; Mr. Dumais: yes; Mr. Mulcahy: yes. All in favor 4-0, motion passed. The applicant was notified of the appeal period.

DISCUSSION – DAVID SAGAN FROM SILVIO O. CONTE NATIONAL FISH & WILDLIFE REFUGE: Following a recent presentation by Tom Geser, Mr. Sagan appeared before the commission to provide some updates on his organization's latest efforts in their Fannie Stebbins division:

1. The agency currently oversees the entire Connecticut River watershed, which amounts to around 7.2 million acres of land and works with partners to achieve the goals of wildlife preservation while promoting responsible hunting and fishing practices, wildlife photography, environmental education and environmental interpretation. Portions of the watershed, including the roughly 360 acres of Fannie Stebbins, is owned by the agency.
2. Some of the ongoing efforts of the agency revolve around invasive species management and monitoring, trail clearing and maintenance as well as public outreach by means of educational signs along trails.
3. One of the most significant milestones achieved in the Fannie Stebbins area is the recent floodplain forest restoration project, which is now the largest of its kind in the entire Connecticut River watershed. Another successful project is the recent completion of the viewing platform near the intersection of Pondside and Birnie Roads, which has generated conversations on whether to consider additional structures for similar uses in other areas of the floodplains.
4. The most recent objective the agency has set is the formulation of a plan that may guide visitors' experience in a matter that ensures the public's safety by deterring illegal railroad crossing behavior. Ideally, the floodplains would offer paths for two separate enjoyable experiences on both sides of the tracks, with the trails on the west side of the tracks being accessed from the future parking lot area to be built at the intersection of Old Birnie and Old West Roads, which is being funded by a FLAP grant.
5. Another topic being considered is the crossing of Longmeadow Brook along the abandoned West Road trail, with stakeholder Tennessee Gas Pipeline expressing interest in the past in the location's improvement that would allow emergency vehicles to safely access the nearby shut-off valves from Birnie Road and its newly-built railroad crossing as opposed to the current access point on Bark Haul Road.

Chair Al Laakso mentioned the Longmeadow Fire Department's designation of the floodplain area as high source of fire hazard and the Fire Chief's concern over inadequate access to said location should there ever be a fire. As Mr. Sagan pointed out, federal grant opportunities are being closely monitored that could fund projects aimed at facilitating all-terrain access for firefighters; prescribed fires are also a tool used by the agency to curb fire hazards, although the Longmeadow floodplains prove to be a challenging location for this practice due to the proximity of the highway.

The commission thanked Mr. Sagan for the valuable information provided.

OTHER BUSINESS – The following items were discussed:

1. A tree violation on a resource area was reported earlier today at 32 Lincoln Road, adjacent to conservation property. The commission will contact the current owner to investigate the matter.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bianca Damiano