



CITY OF MELROSE

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Melrose Conservation Commission Minutes for September 17, 2020

Present: Kate Hickey, Aaron Weieneth, Paul Moore, Susan Murphy and Richard Doucette *(connection issue at beginning of meeting)

Absent: Mike Paiewonsky and Ryan Sloan

Staff present: Eric Devlin

Ms. Murphy opened the Remote public meeting at 7:35pm and read the Remote meeting statement below.

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Melrose Conservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the City of Melrose's website, at www.cityofmelrose.org. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, or in the event that we are unable to do so, we will post on the mmtv3.org website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

All Votes will be recorded via roll call votes. Extension to permitting deadlines applicable to Commission proceedings pursuant to Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020. Deadlines extended out 45 days after conclusion of the State of Emergency.

Minutes-

Motion by Mr. Moore to approve the minutes from August 20, 2020, as written. Mr. Weieneth seconded the motion.

Roll Call vote: Richard Doucette – *Absent, Kate Hickey – yes, Paul Moore – yes, Susan Murphy – yes, Aaron Weieneth – yes
4-0 in favor.

Invoices-

\$4,300 invoice from Solitude Lake Management for Towners pond/ Swains pond treatments.

Herbicide was applied to Towners pond for Lily pad growth control in August and Spot treatment at Swains pond. Followup treatment suggested by staff for Towners pond, not in current contract.

*Mr Doucette rejoined the meeting at this point.

Discussion:

Ell Pond Water Chestnut Strategy – Lots of public support and interest recently for the water chestnut issue, it has gotten worse this year. Several treatment options, some considerations such as possible dissolved oxygen depletion if herbicide applied to a large area with mass die off of vegetation. High cost and difficulty getting equipment into the pond for mechanical harvesting. \$2,800 cost quoted for treatment of the area near the DCR pool with clearcast herbicide. Approx. \$13,000-15,000 cost quoted for 1 year mechanical harvester treatment. Subcommittee to be established to explore best options for management and make recommendations to the Commission. Subcommittee to be populated by a couple members from the Commission and a couple members from the Parks Commission along with other volunteers. A list of recommendations to be submitted to the Commission as part of the next budget. Getting area residents to be aware of the issue and support for control methods.

Staff to check with Mystic River Watershed Association to see if they have done mechanical harvesting/bulk cleanup in the past that they were using September small hand pulling dates for later growth cleanup. Staff suggested earliest time to start hand pulling/removal of water chestnut plants by hand is late June/early July. End date for hand pulling is mid-August due to the biological deadline of when most seeds have matured and started to drop. Most effective to remove plants before Mid-August.

Finn McSweeney – 4 to 6 weekends possible for pulling. Mid-June pull is a little early, July 4th weekend suggested start date/ last weekend in June. Large volunteer turnout possible that would require lots of work to coordinate. Lot of work expected to coordinate large group of volunteers. Majority of seeds tend to bloom only in the first few years, seeds could be viable for 10-12 years. Mechanical harvesting would only be necessary for two years to get the majority of the growth under control. Multi-year followup plan with primarily volunteer hand pulling. More public interest in the pond this year. Dense growth near cove that would be difficult to do by hand. First two or three years seem to be the most important years. Past treatment efforts are also a contributing factor, increased water clarity also had an unintended consequence of allowing more light to reach pond bottom.

A strong volunteer follow-up program required with the mechanical harvester option. Parks, DPW support required. Big organizational effort needed for coordination of a large volunteer group and parks department/DPW. Ryan and Richard were both at DCR training, possible good members for the subcommittee if they are interested. Part of budget should explore funds for kayaks/canoe rental for volunteers.

Kara Foucher – Melrose High School Sophomore, interested in starting a high school community service project for volunteer hand pulling of the water chestnut. Suggested Stoneham for kayak rental if City could fund it for a big volunteer effort. To start spreading awareness during the current school year to try to get a bunch of volunteers available for the summer.

Maria Haggerty – Works at the Fitch Home that abuts Ell Pond, recently became aware of the water chestnut problem in the pond, knows several staff members there are interested in helping out.

Cindy Luongo – Lake Ave resident, 20-year resident. Noted that the situation has rapidly gotten worse. Interested in learning how the pond got so bad as quickly as it did. Thinks the mechanical harvesting would be the route to pursue first as Finn suggested. Ms. Murphy explained that issue has existed for years, current treatment plan wasn't aggressive enough in hindsight. Additional funding to be pursued for future years to treat more aggressively.

Marilem Ferentinos – Lake Ave resident. Audio issue with connection. Cindy Luongo spoke with her and stated that she would like to join the subcommittee as well.

More budget should be requested to control water chestnut at Ell pond. COVID uncertainty was main reason for not requesting additional funding for earlier herbicide treatment this year.

Mechanical harvesting to be investigated for next year. Look for additional volunteers to join the Subcommittee. Finn McSweeney, Cindy Luongo, Marilem Ferentinos and Kara Foucher volunteered to join subcommittee.

At next meeting, Commission will need to appoint volunteer members to subcommittee

15 Bow Street – Homeowners Hugh and Veronica Walsh present via dial in. Technical difficulties with Webex video connection. Staff described several complaints about unpermitted filling in the area. Staff visited site with the homeowner and observed a large area of the back yard between the existing house and the drainage swale to the rear had fill added recently.

Steve Nardone of Nardone Foundations joined the call briefly, He was the contractor that conducted the work. Mr. Nardone – Work in yard requested by homeowners because areas of the yard had settled, wished to make yard flat (level) again. Swale at rear of property was not affected. Added approx. 24 cubic yards of fill, trucked out material (approx. 6-7 yards), and added approximately 12-13 cubic yards of loam. Approx. 30 cubic yards total of fill added to the rear property, over an area of approximately 5,000 square feet. No change to grade, elevation changed by an average depth of 2" fill above existing. Brought the yard to be about level with neighbors' property.

Mr. Weieneth asked if the landscape contractor had any knowledge that the work on the property was within the floodplain resource area. Important resource area, Commission looks at current conditions, not necessarily historical conditions.

Mr. Nardone- Just learned property was in floodplain on this phone call.

Hugh Walsh – City Engineering department held a neighborhood meeting this past October to discuss restoring the swale to original elevations approx. 25 years ago. 1988 swale originally done. A Former City alderman reviewed plans said Sycamore Rd is higher than Bow St. Big storms flood the street currently, recent big storm filled the back yard.

Ms. Murphy explained that the floodplain is the low area that collects rainwater from storms. Floodplains by definition collect stormwater from all higher areas. City flood plain Ordinance is very strict on no net loss of storage area. Flood waters that go to the area must continue to go to that area, can't be displaced off the property. Can't make the yard higher in floodplains.

30 cubic yards of fill were added to the floodplain. Options for consideration

- Remove the 30 yards of fill that was added to the floodplain.

- Make one area higher than it was originally and make another area lower to compensate. Notice of Intent would be required with engineering plans to confirm that no flood storage volume was lost.

FEMA floodplain map of the property shown on screen for reference. Drain and stormwater system is a separate issue for Engineering department. Mosquito complaints are to be directed to the City Health department.

Mrs. Walsh – Drain is 1.5 feet above the swale. Ground has sunken several inches in spots on their property. Installed in about 1988 when the swale was created. They clean the swale to the drain. Mosquito complaint from stagnant water.

Motion by Ms. Murphy to issue an Enforcement Order. Remove the 30 Cubic yards of fill from the property within 30 days. Mr. Doucette seconded.

Roll Call vote: Richard Doucette – yes, Kate Hickey – yes, Paul Moore – yes, Susan Murphy – yes, Aaron Weieneth – yes
5-0 in favor.

New/Old Business-

Land Donation - Staff support letter suggested to City Council. Commission is interested in the parcel.

Fall Cleanup - We are going to work with Keep Melrose Beautiful for coordination on Saturday October 3. Facebook page and cross share to the Melrose Community page.

The next scheduled meeting will be Thursday, October 15, 2020 at 7:30 PM.

Motion by Ms. Murphy to adjourn. Ms. Hickey seconded the motion and it was

voted 5-0 in favor.

Adjourn

9:22PM adjourn

Approved

Date.

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law, ' G.L. 39, 23B, the approval of these minutes by the Commission constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Commission as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.