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CITY OF MELROSE

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Melrose Conservation Commission Minutes for October 17, 2024

Present: Paul Moore, Jason Jancaitis, Charles McCabe, Craig Molway, and Emily Anderson.

Absent: Michael Paiewonsky, Forrest Tiedeman and Associate Member Dorian Rose.

Staff present: Ingrid Winkler

Mr. Moore opened the public meeting at 7:30 pm. All members participated in person.

Public Comment: None.

Review of Minutes:

Conservation Commission members reviewed draft minutes from September 19, 2024, meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Moore to approve meeting minutes for the September 19, 2024, meeting, seconded by Mr. McCabe. Motion approved 4-0. *Mr. Moore abstained from the vote due to his absence at the last meeting.

Certificate of Compliance – 79 Greenwood Street (DEP # 214-0225)

Ms. Laura Hamadeh, owner of 79 Greenwood Street, was present. Mr. Paiewonsky and staff had conducted a site inspection on October 14 and found that the work described in the Order of Conditions, issued on June 26, 2023, had been satisfactorily completed. As indicated on the OOC, Japanese Knotweed growth up to the rear fence line of the property shall continue to be mowed weekly during the growing season from April 1 to October 15 for several years until regrowth of the Knotweed no longer occurs. All plant material cut or removed must be disposed of properly and in a manner that prevents regrowth and/or dispersal of Knotweed to new areas.

Mr. Moore closed the public comment period.

Motion made by Mr. Jancaitis to approve issuance of a Certificate of Compliance to Ms. Hamadeh for work completed at 79 Greenwood Street, seconded by Mr. Molway.

Roll Call Vote: Emily Anderson – yes, Craig Molway – yes, Charles McCabe – yes, Paul Moore – yes, Jason Jancaitis – yes. Motion approved 5-0.

Possible Unpermitted work in or near wetlands:

Penney Road:

Staff had been alerted to what appeared to be a pile of fill next to the driveway of property at 110 Penney Road, adjacent to a wetland area. A drive by of the property confirmed the presence of a pile of what looked like fill in close proximity to wetlands. Staff reported that a letter was sent to the property owners on September 23, 2024, asking them to please contact the Conservation Office to discuss work being planned or done in what may be protected resource areas on their property. There was no response to that letter.

The Commissioners discussed further actions that may be taken and suggested sending another letter, this time via certified mail, referencing Melrose Wetlands Ordinances and showing maps indicating protected areas including buffer zone, floodplain, and 15-ft no disturb and 20-ft no construction setbacks. The new letter should more strongly encourage the property owners to contact the Conservation Office before the next ConCom meeting in November, to resolve this matter and ensure that the wetland resources on the property are protected. Staff will draft such a letter.

Baxter Street:

An anonymous complaint received by staff earlier in the summer alleged that the owner of 83 Baxter Street mowed cattails in the wetlands in the rear of the property. Staff drove by the property and confirmed that cattails were bent over near the edge of the wetlands and it was possible that they had been mowed down. A letter was sent to the property owner on September 23, 2024, informing them of the possible violation of the Wetlands Protection Act. There was no response to the letter.

The Commissioners discussed possible next steps and decided to revisit this in the spring if it appears that cattails are being mowed. Staff will put a reminder in the calendar to check on this property in spring.

Bench in Memory of Eric Devlin:

Staff reported that DPW has the DOA and can now begin trimming and pruning the area around Ell Pond near 700 Main Street, according to the Determination. The text on the bench will read: "In memory of Eric Devlin whose love and dedication to the natural resources of Melrose was an inspiration to us all." Staff is continuing to coordinate with DPW, Parks Dept., and the Mayor's office.

Pond Maintenance updates:

On September 24, 2024, Water & Wetland treated Towners Pond for the control of nuisance levels of waterlilies. W&W found that approximately 80-90% of the pond's surface was covered with waterlilies and watershield. While treatment went well and excellent coverage was achieved, W&W suggested that the Conservation Commission consider a "pond reset" with Sonar (fluridone), a systemic herbicide that, according to W&W, would dramatically shift the balance of the pond but it is quite expensive. Otherwise, an early-season treatment with diquat (or alternatively Clearcast (imazamox)) is recommended to control the non-surface species, such as bladderwort and starwort, followed by additional waterlily management.

The Commissioners reviewed proposed plans and estimated costs for maintenance of Ell,

Townners, and Swains Ponds in 2025. After surveying and sampling is completed in spring of 2025, the Commission will determine how to best treat each of the ponds, if necessary, based on sampling results and available budget. The Commissioners also discussed taking a watershed-wide holistic approach to managing runoff into the ponds and will look into this further.

Community Clean-Up events:

Staff reported that the most recent clean-up event hosted by the Conservation Commission was a success. The next volunteer clean-up day will be on Saturday, November 2, 2024, from 9am to 12pm, when the Conservation Commission will join Keep Melrose Beautiful for their community-wide event. The Conservation Commission will focus their clean-up efforts on Penney Road. Staff will coordinate with Keep Melrose Beautiful. Staff will also attempt to locate a trail steward volunteer e-mail list and send out an introductory e-mail to those volunteers and hopefully renew interest in the program.

Prospective New Associate Member:

Kaitlyn Calhoun was present and introduced herself to the Conservation Commissioners. Mayor Grigoraitis is seeking her appointment to the Conservation Commission to fill the vacant Associate Member position.

Other items:

Staff presented a proposed Conservation Commission Meeting Schedule for 2025. The final schedule will be prepared for the next meeting.

A resident would like to donate two kayaks to the Conservation Commission to use during clean-up events on the ponds. Mr. McCabe agreed to accept and store the kayaks on behalf of the Conservation Commission.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be November 21, 2024, at 7:30 PM.

Motion made by Mr. Molway to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Moore. Motion approved 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:19 PM.

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law, M.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.
