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CITY OF MELROSE

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Melrose Conservation Commission Minutes for November 21, 2024

Present: Michael Paiewonsky (arrived late), Paul Moore, Forest Tiedeman, Jason Jancaitis, Charles McCabe, Craig Molway, and Emily Anderson. Associate member Kaitlyn Calhoun was also present.

Absent: Associate member Dorian Rose was absent.

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 October 17, 2024, meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Molway to approve meeting minutes for the October 17, 2024, meeting, seconded by Mr. McCabe. Motion approved, 6-0 (Mr. Paiewonsky was not present for the vote).

110 Penney Road:

A second letter was sent to the owners of 110 Penney Road on October 31, 2024, via certified mail after there was no response to a previous letter sent on September 23, 2024. Mr. Higgins contacted the Conservation Commission on November 8 to set up a site visit. On November 14, 2024, Mr. Paiewonsky and staff met with Mr. Higgins and his contractor, Zine Bel Qaid, of Atlantic Masonry & Tile, LLC, at the property. According to Mr. Higgins, a raised deck along the west side of the garage was demolished as were the footings, asphalt pavement below the deck, and a small retaining wall adjacent to the paved area. A large tree was also removed north of the garage. The demolition work occurred entirely within the buffer zone and may have impacted the 15-ft no disturb zone. Mr. Paiewonsky asked the homeowner to have the wetland boundary delineated before any further work takes place. Staff sent the property owner a list of wetland consultants following the site visit.

The Commissioners discussed giving the homeowner a deadline to have the delineation completed and best management practices to minimize damage to the resource area from erosion and sedimentation. They would like to request that the homeowner install a silt fence and straw bales or wattles and spread straw mulch on the slope to prevent some of the inevitable erosion from rainfall. Staff will reach out to Mr. Higgins to discuss these requests and to ensure that they are completed within a 2-week timeframe.

Burnett and Laurel Streets Stormwater Management Project - A proposed City project is for the design and permitting of a stormwater management system in the Burnett and Laurel Streets neighborhood. Historically, a shallow drainage ditch was used to drain the area, but as development occurred, the ditch was partially enclosed in a culvert and available flood storage was sacrificed as land was reclaimed. As a result, many residents in the area experience flooding in yards and basements, particularly during high groundwater season. In 2021, the opportunity arose for the City to purchase two undeveloped parcels adjacent to the drainage ditch and there is also an opportunity to acquire an easement on a third, contiguous parcel. The drainage ditch connects these parcels hydraulically to an upstream City-owned wetland property, known as Burnett Park, which is currently low functioning due to previous impacts from beavers, trash, invasive plant overgrowth and sediment accumulation.

The proposed project includes restoration of the wetland area into a functioning resource and will evaluate improvements to the existing municipal infrastructure including repair or upgrade of existing pipes or outfalls. The goal of the project is to utilize nature-based solutions to mitigate flooding and manage stormwater flows by restoring the existing wetland, removing accumulated sediment from the drainage ditch, and utilizing the three undeveloped parcels for stormwater storage.

A representative of the design firm, Stantec, asked what the Conservation Commission's process is to obtain a waiver of the wetland ordinance setback requirements. A waiver would be required since the work will necessarily take place in a resource area in order to make improvements there.

From §231-6. Standards: "No permit shall be granted unless the applicant's proposed project complies with the following requirements or unless the Commission, in its sole discretion, deems it necessary or desirable to waive any provision herein."

Staff relayed the question from Stantec to the Commissioners. There is no specific protocol. Any waiver will be addressed and conditioned in the Order of Conditions after the Notice of Intent is filed.

New Associate Member:

Kaitlyn Calhoun has officially been appointed as an associate member of the Conservation Commission.

Meeting Schedule for 2025: The meeting schedule for 2025 was finalized.

Bench in Memory of Eric Devlin:

DPW is planning the tree work by the end of the year, however the tree replacement has not yet been scheduled. The cost for the plaque will be \$295, but the quote is only good

until end of year and prices are expected to increase in January. Staff will contact Lori Massa to discuss how to fund the plaque.

A resident recently contacted staff to inquire about naming a peak in Sea View Park. Staff will contact the Mayor's office and look into what would be involved in naming a peak. The Commissioners discussed getting Conservation area trails and any named features shown on google maps. Staff will research this as well.

Community Clean-Up events:

Staff reported on the volunteer clean-up event that took place on Saturday, November 2, 2024, along Penney Road. Even with very few volunteers, a large amount of trash and 24 old tires were removed from the wetland area north of Penney Road. Staff also reached out to DPW regarding an old hockey net that has become more visible and accessible due to drought conditions. DPW promptly removed the net.

Trail Steward Program:

Staff obtained a list of past trail steward volunteers and contacted all of them to determine if there is continued interest in this program. A few volunteers have reached out to staff directly with reports and updates. One new volunteer identified an area of concern on Sea View Trail toward the peak of the trail. Staff had forwarded this information to Mr. Molway, who is very familiar with the trails in this area. Mr. Molway said he will take a look at the area of concern.

Pond Maintenance updates:

The Commission will determine how to best treat Ell, Swains, and Towners Ponds, if necessary, in 2025 based on spring-time sampling results and available budget. Staff compiled a summary of treatment history at Ell, Swains, and Towners Ponds for the Commission to assist the Commission in planning and budgeting of future treatments.

Other Updates:

Donation of Kayaks: Mr. McCabe, on behalf of the Conservation Commission, has accepted and is storing two kayaks which were donated by a generous resident for use by the Commission in invasive species control and cleanups at Ell Pond. Staff will check into storing the kayaks near Ell Pond during the summer months when regular hand pulling of water chestnuts will occur.

Mr. Molway received a letter from residents who would like to name a trail after a recently deceased neighbor, Barbara Dufresne. According to the letter, Ms. Dufresne cared for her environment and the conservation land near her home. The Commissioners suggested that perhaps a plaque at the trailhead might be a nice tribute. Mr. Molway will look into this further and contact the residents.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will be December 19, 2024, at 7:30 PM.

Motion made by Mr. Jancaitis to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Molway. Motion unanimously approved, 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:37 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.