



TOWN OF PALMER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

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Sarah Brodeur, Chair
Donald Blais, Jr, Vice Chair
Peter Izyk
David Cotter

Agent: Angela Panaccione

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MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 1, 2016 @ 7:00 PM

Members Present: Sarah Brodeur (Chair)
Donald Blais, Jr (Vice Chair)
Peter Izyk
Dave Cotter
Angela Panaccione (Agent)

Members Absent:

Also Present: Mark Stinson, Mass DEP
Trevor Hermance, New Britain CT

Meeting Opens: 7:01 PM – Sarah Brodeur (Chair)

7:01 PM Administrative Matters: Minute Approval – October 18, 2016

Motion made by Peter Izyk to approve the minutes from Tuesday October 18, 2016 as corrected
Motion seconded by Donald Blais, Jr
No further discussion – vote taken: 4-0-0

7:11 PM Administrative Matters: Payable – Mileage \$216.54

Motion made by Peter Izyk to approve the payable to Angela Panaccione in the amount of \$216.54, for the reimbursement of travel expense for October 2016, from the Con Com Town Bylaw Expense Account
Motion seconded by David Cotter
No further discussion – vote taken: 4-0-0

7:10 PM Cont. Notice of Intent (NOI) DEP #256-0320: Peterson Road – Siegel; Access Road

A Notice of Intent submitted by SVE Associates c/o David & James Siegel for the change of use of an existing forestry access road to commercial access road for a renewable energy project. A section of the road crossed a Bordering Vegetated Wetland. The location of the proposed project is Peterson Road/Mason Street Turnaround and is also known as: Map 15-7.

Sarah Brodeur re-opened the Public Hearing for the NOI. Neither the applicants nor their representative were present; and no other public was present.

The Notice of Intent was required by the Commission as a condition of the Ratified Enforcement Order, issued September 20, 2016, to the property owners David & James Siegel.

The NOI is presented under the limited project provisions of 310 CMR 10.53(t): The construction of a new access roadway, or the improvement, repair and/or replacement of an existing access roadway, needed to transport equipment to a renewable energy project site, where reasonable alternative means of access to an upland area is unavailable, provided that it is carried out in accordance with the following general conditions and any additional conditions deemed necessary by the issuing authority.

Mark Stinson, of MA DEP stated the limited project provision was not needed because the project did not propose any resource area impacts.

The Agent & Chair Sarah Brodeur conducted a site visit today (11/1/16) at 3pm. The timber matting and added hay bales along the wetlands crossing were keeping sediment from construction equipment from entering the BVW. The

Motion made by Donald Blais, Jr to close the Public Hearing for DEP #256-0320

Motion seconded by Peter Izyk

No further discussion – vote taken: 4-0-0 – Motion Carries

Motion made by Donald Blais, Jr to issue the Order of Conditions for DEP #256-0320; with special conditions and Findings of Fact

Motion seconded by David Cotter

No further discussion – vote taken: 4-0-0 – Motion Carries

7:40 PM Administrative Matters: Other Projects, Monitoring, Enforcement and Violations

1. Violation Update – Palmer Motorsports Park Septic System: The Agent spoke with Fred Ferguson (PMP), this afternoon. As of today no site stabilization or restoration has begun. Ferguson anticipates it will commence this week as equipment and loam has been brought on site for the finalization of the leach field. He will notify the Commission upon completion for a follow up inspection. The Commission discussed the viability of planting the required trees and shrubs on site given the time of year (all planting should have been done before October 31). The Agent did not think it was a good idea to plant now, as most would die off due to weather. Mark Stinson, MA DEP as well as Commissioner David Cotter stated they could plant now as long as the plants purchased were in the dormant stage. Also, if the plantings do indeed die, Mr. Ferguson will just have to purchase new plants to replace those lost.

The Agent will be at Palmer Motorsports Park a lot over the next few weeks to supervise the restoration activities and will probably go over the hours per week she is allotted. She will keep track of any over hours and the Commission will discuss it again at the next meeting. If too much comp time is accruing, the State WPA funds can be used to compensate the over hours as previously voted on by the Commission, specifically for this project.

2. Beavers: The Commission has received several complaints about Beaver activity in areas where there previously was none. Three complaints were in regards to Beavers damming the Quaboag River in several spots. The Agent conducted site visit to the locations and, other than tree removal, it did not appear the Beavers were causing any threats to human health and safety. The Agent informed the individuals complaining about Beaver activity that this is beavers most

active time of the year. They are on a mission to get their dams up as high as possible in order to retain enough water behind them to prevent freezing when they enter their lodges for the winter.

The Agent also spoke with Doug Farmer about possibly writing a piece for the Journal about “Living with Beavers” in order to educate the general public about the role of beavers in the ecosystem.

3. OHVAC: The Commission was invited to a one-day workshop hosted by the Off-Highway Vehicle Advisory Committee on creating a blueprint for cooperative and sustainable OHV riding opportunities in Massachusetts. The Agent attended the workshop along with various other stakeholders from the OHV riding communities, environmental groups (Including Michele Girard from MACC & Eve Schuler from NHESP), private landowners, safety advocates, the local and environmental law enforcement, and related state agencies. The workshop was a roundtable format with stakeholders discussing various possible OHV riding venues. A main topic of discussion was converting old logging roads to ATV trails. The issue with this is logging roads are supposed to be temporary in nature and restored at the end of a timber harvest. Keeping the skid roads as permanent ATV trails would be a change of use and require local permitting. An interesting point to note is Maine & New Hampshire do not have the same forest cutting regulations as MA, so conversion of old logging roads to ATV trails is a common practice.
4. Fall Project – Baseline survey and boundary marking along Swift River Greenbelt: The boundary marking of the Swift River Greenbelt will be put on hold for now as the volunteers interested in participating in the Boundary Marking are unavailable or unresponsive.
5. Recreational Trails Grant: The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is accepting applications for Recreational Trails Grants. The next due date/deadline for all RTP grants is February 1, 2017. The Massachusetts Recreational Trails Program (RTP) generally provides grants for project costs ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000. However, larger projects of up to \$100,000 will be considered if the project is proven to directly impact multiple communities upon completion. The RTP is a reimbursement grant program, meaning all expenditures must be purchased first and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. Grants are awarded for a variety of trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects throughout Massachusetts. Recreational Trails grants are 80-20 challenge grants. In other words, 80% of the project costs are reimbursed to grantees, but at least 20% of the total project value must come from other sources.

Part of the Palmers’ long term efforts includes creating a Swift River Blue and Green Trail along the full lower length of the River (from the Upper Bondsville Dam down to the confluence with the Ware River.) The currently proposed project for Palmer could include both the Swift River Greenbelt Accessible Trail and the Lower Swift River Blue Trail. While the Commission may want to hold off on fully designing the Blue Trail until a takeout can be secured, the Commission should at least pursue the Green Trail this grant round.

The Accessible Trail will provide access for people of all abilities to a peaceful forest experience with views of the Swift River. The grant funds requested for the project will include construction of a parking area for handicapped vehicles, two resting/viewing areas along the trail with concrete benches, and a terminus overlooking the River with benches and a handicapped accessible table.

6. Eagle Scout Project: Dave Cotter will be supervising the Eagle Scout Tim for his Eagle Scout project which will include trail reconstruction along the Swift River Greenbelt. The project is scheduled to occur Saturday November 12, 2016 and will provide “a long lasting benefit” to the Town of Palmer.
7. C4R Annual Summit: The Third Annual Chicopee 4 Rivers Watershed Councils (C4RWC) Annual Summit will be held on Saturday November 12, 2016 at 9:00am, at the Palmer Historical & Cultural Center. The Agent will speak on Blue & Green Trail Planning along the Swift River, as well as the two clean-up the Commission has held on the Swift in partnership with C4RWC.

8:28 PM Administrative Matters: Forest Management Policy & Land Mngt. Committee

The Palmer Conservation Commission currently manages over 800 acres of land spread between several different conservation areas. The purpose of developing a Forest Management Policy and forming a Land Committee is to establish general goals and guidance, as well as a committee, to manage forests on these lands and on properties subsequently placed under the care and custody of the Conservation Commission. This information will guide the Conservation Commission and professional foresters tasked with developing land stewardship and forest management plans for the properties.

The policy and guidelines are intended to promote ecologically, economically, and socially responsible land stewardship and forestry. The overall objective is to assure the long-term viability of the forests while allowing for responsible human use. The Commission recognizes their role as land stewards for future generations, the intrinsic value of a forest independent of human needs, the value of ecological services provided by forests, and the need for forest products.

Motion made by Donald Blais, Jr to approve and accept the 2016 Forest Management Policy for lands owned by and managed by the Conservation Commission

Motion seconded by Peter Izyk

No further discussion – vote taken: 4-0-0

Office Closed: Monday November 21, 2016 – Friday November 25, 2016

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday December 6, 2016

Meeting Adjourned: 8:45 PM

Motion made by Donald Blais, Jr to adjourn at 8:45 PM

Motion seconded by Peter Izyk

No further discussion – vote taken: 4-0-0 – Motion Carries

Sincerely Submitted,
Angela C Panaccione, Conservation Agent