

Conservation Commission Meeting  
Virtual Meeting  
February 18, 2021

Roll call was taken of members and staff present included: Peg Arguimbau, Chair, Meredith Avery, Vice Chair, Stephen Cremer, Keevin Geller and Colin Barbera. Alan Westman and Jon Wasserman were not present. Staff present included John Thomas, Conservation Administrator and Jana Katz, Clerk

Arguimbau opened the meeting by reading Governor Baker's Executive Order of March 12, 2020. Per guidance from the State, Arguimbau noted that all votes would be taken by roll call. She then reviewed the ground rules for the meeting.

The remote meeting was called to order at 7:30pm.

**7:33 PM Discussion Topic Rattlesnake Hill Transfer Acceptance**

Arguimbau began the meeting. October Town Meeting voted for the Select Board to turn over care and control of the Rattlesnake Hill parcel to the Conservation Commission. The town is drafting documentation to complete the transfer. The commission needs to take a vote to accept action by the Town Meeting. Papers will be at Town Hall for signatures should the vote pass.

**Motion:** To accept transfer of Rattlesnake Hill Parcel from the Town of Sharon's Select Board to the Sharon Conservation Commission.

Barbera moved  
Avery seconded  
Avery - Aye, Cremer - Aye, Geller - Aye, Barbera - Aye, Arguimbau - Aye  
5-0-0 (Motion Passed)

**7:35 PM Discussion Topic Stormwater Bylaw Addendum Review**

Arguimbau began the discussion. By July, the town has to adopt a Stormwater Bylaw. Arguimbau, Avery and Thomas discussed the matter prior to the meeting and discussed it with the commission formally at the meeting.

The DPW asked the Conservation Commission to oversee discharges, where all pipes empty into streams and rivers; the Conservation Commission would be the issuing authority and provide oversight. Stormwater managers have not been clearly defined. Thomas would be the lead on projects within the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction. Additional regulations are necessary for navigating resource areas and culvert outlets. Construction Activity would be more involved.

Cremer asked about "FI" in the document. Arguimbau answered that neither Thomas nor herself had typed the document. She asked for other concerns and noted that the Conservation Commission cannot be in charge of anything outside of the commission's jurisdiction. Arguimbau doesn't want to make the Conservation Commission the awarding authority.

Avery asked if anyone reviewed the document from a legal perspective. There is no clear delineation between stormwater agents and authority; additionally there is question as to whether the Select Board would have the final say.

Thomas agreed and noted his thoughts. If the area in question falls within the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction, the commission should have final say. This is because resource areas,

buffer zones, streams, down gradient resources areas and other types of properties would be affected. Thomas has asked for site plans for culverts and out-fall but has not yet received them. Thomas noted the document is still in draft form.

Avery noted her concerns. Definitions are needed including clarifying stormwater in construction and in permanent conditions if there is swift compliance under MS-4. She described a scenario where Thomas would be the authority on wetlands in proximity to Massapoag that could discharge halfway up to Moose Hill. Avery would like inconsistencies reviewed and provisions included to protect the Conservation Administrator/Agent.

Arguimbau answered that there are two points to the bylaw. This addresses the construction part while there is another part which no one has seen yet. With the upcoming schedule: May will be Town Meeting and July will be deadline for Stormwater Bylaw implementation. She recommended the commission read through the document and send concerns to the office. Thomas will be in touch with the DPW and find out answers to questions and concerns. Thomas will report back with answers at the next meeting. Arguimbau also noted future budget issues. For now funding will be covered by the DPW. Arguimbau is concerned about long-term financial planning and the scope of the role the Conservation Administrator/Agent will play in this collaboration.

Thomas also noted the additional time that would be needed to review more permits with the new responsibilities. Thomas believes the office would see filings and might have projects dealing with maintenance work.

Geller questioned if there were provisions for tax increases to cover programming. He noted the Town of Milton instituted a stormwater tax based on the size of the roof area on every residential home. Arguimbau answered that there is nothing included in the document regarding taxes.

**7:40 PM - Discussion Topic Massachusetts Vulnerability Preparedness Workshop**

Thomas updated the Commission about the Massachusetts Vulnerability Preparedness Workshop he attended with Katz. The workshop invited various town departments to a virtual workshop with the goal of prioritizing actions the town can take to address climate change and its impacts. Specifically the initiative's goals include providing grants for the planning and implementation stages for projects.

Avery commended the program noting the possibility for assessing future flooding, increased rain events, and climate change. She stated that a town must be designated an MVP community by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. She also noted that the Dam or Increase Flood control at Cedar Swamp would be good to explore.

Thomas noted the February, March, and April deadlines for proposing grants. He stated the Fire Department, Council on Aging, Police Department, Fred Turkington, Peter O'Cain and others were on the call to brainstorm about town priorities.

Avery said she would be happy to help with grant writing and positioning. She also noted applicants can seek funding for educational programs.

Arguimbau said this topic will be put on the next meeting's agenda and agreed funding for Cedar Swamp projects is a good idea.

**7:57 PM Discussion Topic Manns Pond Funds**

Thomas spoke with Eric Hooper, Peter O’Cain, Kevin Davis, and Christian White at a biweekly meeting with the DPW. Hooper informed Thomas there is a surplus of funds available for a Manns Pond refurbishment project. Thomas wanted to pass along the information and noted if the Commission is interested in pursuing the project with DPW finances there would be limitations and financial planning details that would need to be worked out.

Arguimbau noted work would be in the wooded area on trails. Friends of Conservation recently upgraded the boardwalk and dam work was completed within the last few years. Arguimbau encouraged commission members to explore the area and noted it is one of the most used Conservation Commission land parcels. When wildlife are on the pond there is a lot of traffic there. Additionally, Eagle Scout projects there at Manns Pond, included installing benches after the new dam was constructed.

The land begins at Billing Street and continues up the brook to the pond and swamp before ending at Ames Street. Thomas noted that part of the upper trail is on school property. Avery noted the trail by Ames Street has a lot of invasive species and it would be helpful to put more of a vegetative buffer along the stream side, not on Manns Pond side. She asked if there is a timeline and if the funds are tied to anything.

Thomas said he needs to discuss the longevity of the funding with the DPW. If Conservation Commission members are interested, he will ask for more information. He believes the amount is \$30,000. Geller said he will also check to see what funding is available.

**8:01 PM Discussion Topic Filing and Scanning Updates**

Thomas described the digital database for filing as well as his work with Kevin Davis from the DPW on an electronic form for application processing. It will utilize open.gov, free software the town funds for processing payments and applications.

**8:03 PM Discussion Topic Scavenger Hunt**

Thomas described the premise of the Scavenger Hunt which includes goals of increasing public outreach, environmental awareness, and outdoor activity. The idea is based on a geocache project from Block Island where 500 glass orbs were hidden throughout the island. The commission’s project would hide something like large Easter eggs with seeds and information in them through Conservation properties in town. The timeline will be based on COVID regulations with a plan for summer or fall 2021 implementation.

**8:05 PM Discussion Topic State Ethics Training: Conflict of Interest Law**

The Assistant Town Clerk informed Thomas every commission member needs to complete the online training. He will e-mail the commission with necessary information.

**8:07 PM Other Business Approve Meeting Minutes**

Arguimbau noted there were a few necessary edits which she will discuss with Katz after the meeting. Cremer noted a few necessary edits as well.

**Motion:** To accept minutes as amended

Cremer moved

Barbera seconded

Avery - Aye, Cremer - Aye, Geller - Abstain, Barbera - Aye, Arguimbau -Aye

4-0-0 (Motion Passed)

**8:07 PM Other Business Lake Update**

Thomas updated the commission that levels were at a good level but will raise as ice melts. Arguimbau noted that she saw someone ice fishing near the Community Center Beach who caught bass, perch, and other fish.

**8:012PM Other Business Rose Lane**

Thomas informed the commission about a potential project at Rose Lane. Two lots (the northern lot and the southern lot) exist now with two houses on each lot. The proponent wants to sell the properties and subdivide the lots. There is a condition in the deed; the land cannot be subdivided without the Conservation Commission's review. The applicant's attorney reached out asking for a waiver. The parcel is 70% wetland and would be subject to a 100 foot setback. Conservation Commission approval would remove the deed restriction. Arguimbau said to wait and see what the applicant presents in terms of state law regarding buildability.

**8:014PM Other Business Next Meeting**

Next meeting will be March 4, 2021.

Topics for discussion will include: the Stormwater Bylaw, Manns Pond, Massachusetts Vulnerability Preparedness grants and ADA compliant trails or paths in town. Arguimbau noted there used to be an accessible trail from the Walter Griffin Playground to Hammershop Pond.

**8:17 Motion to Adjourn**

Cremer moved

Barbera Seconded

Avery – Aye, Cremer – Aye, Geller – Aye, Barbera – Aye, Arguimbau – Aye

5-0-0 (Motion Passed)