

Conservation Commission Meeting (via zoom and in person)

June 23, 2021

4:00 PM

Chairman Frank Lombardi Called the meeting to order at 4:04pm

Members Present: Frank Lombardi- Chairman, Valerie Yelton, Don LaPlante, Marcia Hammon, and Marsha Lombardi

Edits were made to the June 9th minutes, adding names of representatives from Eversource and DES who have been difficult to work with throughout this process. Minutes accepted.

Don got in touch with Barbara Richter from the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions. She took days to get back to him and then responded that since we are not members she wouldn't advise us or give assistance until we pay dues of \$200. Don was unsure of what the benefit would be of joining. Frank said maybe we would have access to legal advice? Valerie said it would be good to get some benefits, but if we don't know what is offered, then we don't know if that money would actually be well spent. Don finds a list of "benefits" on the NHACC website and reads them to the group, but it's very vague. Regarding this particular project, Barbara's e-mail gave the impression that we can't change anything, so that we should just go through the ARM fund and do the process Eversource wants us to do. In other words, she seems to take a "corporations just act like that sometimes" kind of approach. This doesn't give us much motivation to pay dues to NHACC if that is their stance on how Eversource has handled our situation.

Reverting to what needs to be done right now, we need to produce a comment for the Site Evaluation Committee/DES. Don recommends another task may be contacting our local representatives, explaining our position and our situation and seeking some support. Troy Merner is one, and Valerie believes Edith Tucker would be important to get in touch with, as Edith has been actively concerned about the landfill situation as well.

The committee drafted a letter to Rep. Tucker with our concerns in an appeal for help. E-mail is finalized and sent.

Now onto submission of written comment to DES. We are in strictly an advisory position, so this is the most important way that we can be heard and considered in the decisions about this project. If we submit written testimony, then it must be considered in the DES' decision. Frank feels we could probably use the letter we sent to Eversource as a template for this comment, because it details our concerns with the current proposal and our issues with how this process has gone forward with seemingly no regard for our Committee's requests of the company.

Commission looks again at the map of where Eversource's line will be going and where the tallest pole heights will be - directly in the viewshed of Weeks State Park. Once again, their plan is to decrease the number of poles in the wetlands, but taking the poles out of the wetlands still creates a lot of strain on the wetlands even without putting new poles in their place. Valerie believes there may be an ulterior motive here, and members seem to agree.

Although this project is not Northern Pass, and Eversource would deny that there is any connection, building taller poles in the viewshed of Weeks State Park would give a future project similar to NP the potential to argue that there are pre-existing towers in the viewshed. Otherwise, why would they choose that precise location to increase the pole height so drastically, in a manner inconsistent with the rest of this current project? Frank demonstrated that there are areas nearby, not even in the wetlands, where Eversource could potentially keep pole height down by leaving in the extra poles in. There seem to be many alternative options that Eversource has dismissed.

Committee drafted the comment letter to DES. e-mail with attached documents and maps are approved and sent. A letter with our comments was sent certified mail to NHDES.

We received a quick response from Edith Tucker. She says if we let her know who the contact person is, she may be able to draft a letter (with our help, so that she can detail our concerns).

Under new business, Don says at some point we need to go to the Selectboard and request our monies to be rolled over each year so that we have funds in the future when we need them, rather than having to request warrant articles for things when we have needs. Frank says we should contact Lancaster Conservation Commission and get the language for that so we can propose it to the Selectboard.

Frank says we also need to get some projects finalized for the \$3,000 Eversource mitigation funds. This is just the start, because Eversource is going to return to us in the near future, as funds will be available in the coming year. There could be up to \$60,000 available, because the construction mats are going to be there through the duration of the project and they need to continue to offer mitigation funds. The Committee recognizes there is a lot that needs to be done, researched, planned out, studied, and more, by professionals and not just us.

Next meeting is scheduled for July 14th at 1:00 PM. Marcia motions to adjourn, Marsha seconds. Meeting adjourned.


Chair WCC

7/14/2021