



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE  
MAYOR**

JANUARY 24, 2017

**MINUTES**

MEETING AT SOMERVILLE CITY HALL  
93 HIGHLAND AVENUE  
3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM  
7:00 PM

*Meeting notes prepared by Vanessa Boukili, based on a recording of the meeting.*

**Commission Members in attendance:** Rachel Borgatti, Jamie Lefkowitz, Michael Fager, Mathias Neuber, Owen Wartella

**Commission Members absent:** David Turin

**Others in Attendance:** Gene Crouch (VHB), David Webster (FRIT), Mary Kocol, Cristina Kennedy

**Staff:** Vanessa Boukili (Conservation Agent)

Mathias Neuber brought the meeting to order at 7:02 followed by introductions.

**1. Update: Water quality monitoring at Assembly Square - Gene Crouch, David Webster (7:03)**

- a. Three water quality monitoring reports have been submitted (Sept 2015, May 2016, Nov 2016). OOC required 3 reports per year. Six additional reports are needed.
- b. Con Com sent letter to VHB in December 2016 to request additional reports, and asked to address the fact that water quality units are not functioning as they should.
- c. Last sampling event sampled one unit on Grand Union Blvd and two units on Great River Rd. Other two units on corner Grand Union and Revolution Drive are difficult to sample due to traffic patterns.
- d. Water quality system was designed around 10 years ago. At the time, manufacturer Total Suspended Solid (TSS) sheets stated that these units would result in ~80% removal. Current manufacturer literature states that units remove 35-65% TSS. VHB measurements are closer to 30% removal.
- e. Stormwater handbook indicates that 80% TSS threshold is indicated for completed site. Moreover, 80% is yearly average, not the value for every storm. Project site is still under construction, which may result in elevated amount of TSS entering drainage system. May be taxing the system.
- f. The 80% TSS removal standard was based on removing 80% of sand-sized particles (110 mm range). This is not a practical standard because it cannot be measured. New standards (New Jersey) are now based on a wider range of particle sizes, and require 50% TSS removal.
- g. The water quality units at Assembly were designed to meet the criteria allowed at time (removing 80% of sand-sized particles). They may work efficiently for this specific particle size, but we cannot determine if they



are or are not working as promised. Gene has seen the units functioning, and they are capturing a lot of material. However, the standards have changed, and the units are probably undersized to reach today's standards.

- h. Although may be in compliance, but the water is not as clean as it should be. What can be done?
  - i. FRIT built the infrastructure system and conveyed it to Somerville. The City now owns the infrastructure and the streets. FRIT is not going to replace or update them.
  - ii. Since TSS removal standards are set for after construction, perhaps wait to sample until construction is complete? Construction in area will continue for many more years (4-6+). Even if load is higher with construction, results should be equivalent since the TSS measurement is based on percentage of removal. If anything, higher loads are likely to result in higher % TSS removal.
  - iii. The 80% removal goal is for the entire treatment train (includes street sweeping, catch basins, etc.). Street sweeping frequency is unknown, but generally accounts for 5% of treatment train. Catch basins account for 20-25% of treatment train.
  - iv. Can extend treatment train to get to 80% by adding low impact treatments such as bio-retention basins, swales, gravel strips, sediment forebays, etc. [Note: stormwater tree pits don't work.] May want to require future developments that go into system to have features that allows [non-roof] stormwater runoff to pool and sediment to settle before spilling over (i.e., 44% pre-treatment using low-impact treatments).
- i. Why do we accept runoff from construction sites at all?
  - i. Have to work within bylaws of what we have. Need overhaul of stormwater standards. Owen would like to work with city on new stormwater standards.
- j. Purpose of sampling?
  - i. City will have to comply with requirements of MS4 permit. But MS4 permit is about bacteria (sewer overflow), not stormwater. This outfall is not combined, so will not contain sewer overflow.
  - ii. Original agreement was made to monitor the water quality.
  - iii. Data will determine the real-world efficiency of these units. We will not know where TSS are coming from (if due to construction, etc.), and we no longer expect to see 80% removal. But can use the data to convince city to create better stormwater standards for construction projects.
- k. Conclusion: FRIT/VHB to leave system as is, and to continue to monitor water quality. Commission will have limited expectations for TSS removal.
  - i. Sample 3 times per year.
  - ii. Collect data from all six sites at each sampling event. This will provide comparative data for the entire landscape. For timing, may need 2 teams at each event. Make notes of any anomalies.
  - iii. Sampling periods are Jan-Mar, Apr-Jun, Oct-Dec. Next sampling will occur by March 31<sup>st</sup>. Can expect report by end of April. Con Com will discuss report at the May meeting (if not before).

## **2. Update: Assembly Block 5A - David Webster (7:51)**

- a. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, David Webster was notified of certain issues with the construction that were not in compliance with the OOC. On January 24<sup>th</sup> he notified the construction team and provided Vanessa with contact information for the project superintendent (Jake McManus). Everything should be resolved by the end of the week.
- b. David will tell Jake to contact Vanessa once the corrective actions have been taken.

## **3. Update: Geotechnical Investigations for J-1 System Mystic River Crossing Replacement (Spectra Energy) (7:53)**

- a. Site work included soil test pits, boring holes, and soft digs.
- b. Photos of final site visit were shown.
- c. Straw was distributed over work area, but some areas were not well covered.
- d. Additional site work will be done later this year or next year. Re-seeding will occur after work is complete. Straw covering should be maintained until re-seeding occurs.
- e. Gene will tell the contractors to add more straw, and will contact Vanessa after the straw is spread out.



**4. New Business (8:02)**

**a. Letter to Governor Baker re: gas pipelines**

- i. MACC circulating letter opposing new interstate pipeline.
- ii. Vanessa has received 5 emails and 2 phone calls from constituents asking Somerville Con Com to sign onto letter.
- iii. At least 30 other Commissions have signed on.
- iv. All Commissioners agreed to sign on to letter.

**b. MACC Annual conference: March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

- i. All-day Saturday conference in Worcester.
- ii. Vanessa will coordinate registration for any commissioners who would like to go.

**c. Community Preservation Committee projects**

- i. MyWRA has proposed a project in park near Blessing of the Bay as part of a larger greenways project.
- ii. Michael on board of directors for MyWRA, and has recused self from decision process for CPC funds related to this project.
- iii. Would another Commissioner like to sit in on the decision for this application?
- iv. Michael will ask David if he wants to do it. If not, Commission can provide a letter with opinion.

**5. Updates: Ongoing projects (8:19)**

- a. Updated on-going projects spreadsheet. Contains more columns with details of NOI process. Will share spreadsheet with Commissioners prior to each meeting.

**6. Updates: Assembly Line Park (8:26)**

- a. Site inspection 1/20/17: Owen, Michael, Vanessa. Everything looks good.

**7. Other Business**

**a. Review Order of Conditions special conditions template (8:28)**

- i. Send out template prior to meeting. Any updates needed?
- ii. Need to review in detail. The separate list of non-standard special conditions is very useful.
- iii. Table updates until next meeting.

**b. Community gardens update (8:31)**

- i. Vanessa met with community garden coordinators on January 10<sup>th</sup> (5 coordinators from 3 gardens). Discussed expectations and needs.
- ii. Community garden fees to Conservation Commission for last year still need to be collected. These funds should be able to cover city coordinator stipend.
- iii. Invite folks interested in city coordinator position to come to next Con Com meeting for discussion. Should also submit letter of interest/ philosophy on coordinating community gardens.
- iv. City coordinator position entails collecting fees, managing Somerville garden email, managing coordinator list, managing wait list and helping garden coordinators to manage their lists, liaising with gardeners, community, Con Com, etc.
- v. In past have invited all garden coordinators to Con Com meeting. It was useful and we should do it again.

**c. Update on vacant commission seat (8:45)**

- i. Advertisement went out yesterday (Jan 23), along with advertisement of open positions on four other boards. Ad to be posted on website, Facebook, Resistat, local papers, etc. Applications due by Feb 14<sup>th</sup>.
- ii. Selection process? Commissioner input is welcomed. Will discuss details at next meeting.

**d. Update on Commissioner reappointments and paperwork (8:53)**

- i. Michael, Mathias and David reappointments approved.

**e. Conservation Commission bylaws (8:56)**

- i. Bylaws document from 1998.
- ii. Vanessa to contact Lisa Brukilacchio (Conservation Agent at the time) to find out more about bylaws.

- iii. Rachel and Michael bylaw subcommittee. Read through and make comments and report back at next meeting.

**f. Website updates (8:58)**

- i. City has new website. Some (not all) of information on old Con Com page has been migrated.
- ii. Proposed updates include: change picture, how-to forms, upload NOIs when submitted, upload approved minutes, remove details about open space planning, change the number of community gardens, update term-limits, update community gardens map.
- iii. For next meeting, everyone look at website and record any corrections or ideas for improvement.

**Approval of minutes**

- 1. Approved November 22, 2016 minutes with one amendment at 9:13.

**Adjourn**

- 1. Motion to adjourn- Owen
- 2. Second- Michael
- 3. All in favor: 9:14

For more information contact Vanessa Boukili at 617-625-6600 x 2516.

