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TOWN OF AYER
TOWN CLERK



Town of Ayer Conservation Commission

Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432 * 978-772-8220, ext. 143

Minutes for 1/11/2024

Location: Ayer Town Hall, 1st Floor

Present: Jon Schmalenberger (Chair), Mark Phillips (Vice-Chair), George Bacon (Member), Jen Amaya (Member), Jessica Gugino (Member/Clerk), Heather Hampson (Conservation Agent)

Not Present:

APAC taped: YES

All Public Hearings are opened under the Wetlands Protection Act (MCL Ch. 131, section 40)
and under the Ayer Wetlands Bylaw (Article XXVI)

7:00 PM – Open Meeting

- **Confirmation of Agenda**
 - **VOTE:** G. Bacon moved to confirm the agenda as posted; M. Phillips 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously 5-0.
- **Public Input**
 - None received.
- **Public Meeting: Request for Determination of Applicability – Snake Hill Road at Pierce Avenue, Ayer Department of Public Works (DPW)**
 - Assessor's Map 22, Parcel 21-12
 - Town Engineer Matt Hernon and Civil Engineer Delaney Dionne were present on behalf of the DPW.
 - The project proposes to improve the deficient drainage conditions at the outfall pipe that carries stormwater drainage from Pierce Avenue underneath Snake Hill Road, to discharge at the edge of the road toward the bank to Sandy Pond.
 - Accumulated sediment that is blocking the two drainage pipes will be removed from the outfall, to be followed by the installation of an apron lined with filter fabric and riprap that should improve conditions.
 - Mr. Hernon estimated the distance between the pipes' outfall at the edge of the road to the pond at between 25-30 feet.
 - The project should take a day and will involve only limited land disturbance.
 - G. Bacon asked if the pipes needed to be cleaned.
 - Mr. Hernon said the DPW usually does a camera inspection of the inside of pipes and will make sure to do so for this project.
 - While not expected, if issues were found, at worst it would involve a shallow trench in the road to replace a piece of pipe.
 - H. Hampson said there is a significant drop-off from the pipe outfall and it has already created a big hole; having this project address and improve the drainage conditions will help prevent further erosion.

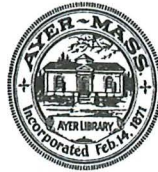


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- On Long Pond it was observed that the ecoharvester could not handle the removal of floating 'muck islands' as they were too thick and heavy for the equipment.
 - In CLC's 9/18 minutes, regarding ecoharvesting generally, it was also noted that "In many cases, the treatment removed the top part of plants while leaving lower sections in place."
 - In CLC's 10/25 minutes, their proposed budget (subject to approval) for 2024 treatments is for \$190,200 – for testing lakes, ecoharvesting on Long and Forge ponds, herbicide treatment on Spectacle Pond, and plant surveys and recommendations.
 - All in all, J. Gugino said this was well outside of any budget ConCom could hope to pass at Town Meeting, and the overall efficacy, given comments noted above, was in question as well.
 - H. Hampson has been doing similar research on a different alternative weed treatment method: hydro-raking/mechanical harvesting – which pulls plants up from the bottom of the water rather than the top.
 - The only company in the area that provides this service is Solitude.
 - The Town of Peabody contracted to do hydroraking on one pond for a cost of \$190,000, and even then went over budget.
 - They are proposing to add a second pond this year with a budget of \$240,000.
 - Hydroraking can rake as deep as 18 inches, and its effects reportedly can last up to 3 years.
- **Conservation Commission Office and Member Updates**
 - Beaver activity
 - H. Hampson has received several phone calls from residents, including some on Sandy Pond, where ongoing beaver damage to trees has been noted, especially in the vicinity of the causeway bridge between Sandy and Flannagan ponds.
 - She has contacted the DPW about putting protective wire around vulnerable trees, at least those located on Town land.
 - She has also received complaints about beaver activity from residents on Sunflower Court, by Long Pond.
 - In this area, the beavers have blocked a culvert in spite of a beaver deceiver.
 - As this is private land, H. Hampson advised them they need to have maintenance done on the deceiver device, and if they wanted to pursue trapping (and killing) of beavers, they would have to go through the Board of Health.
 - For residents in general, it was noted that sturdy livestock fencing, 30-36 inches high, can be wrapped around tree trunks to try to discourage beaver chewing.
 - (Chicken wire would not be strong enough.)
 - H. Hampson will look into putting an information piece about this on the Town's Facebook page.



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- DPW stormwater systems
 - H. Hampson has been working with the DPW to review private stormwater systems in Town in order to ensure that such permits are in compliance.
- Ayer Solar II
 - Solar II's contract for an environmental monitor, as required by the Order of Conditions (OOC), has lapsed and was not renewed.
 - The monitor from Epsilon who has been doing this work contacted H. Hampson to see if ConCom still wanted their inspections to be performed.
 - H. Hampson told them yes, especially as the proponents of Solar II have been reluctant to have her on site for her own inspections, even though this is mandated in the OOC with advance notification.
 - Rohit Garg has been traveling out of the country and has been hard to reach.
 - With the particularly heavy rainfall that brought well over 4 inches of rain to the area in December (12/18), H. Hampson said the stream crossing area has again washed out and will need to be repaired and addressed.
 - ConCom members agreed that the continuation of environmental monitoring is necessary, especially as some work is still needed on the site and a Certificate of Compliance has not yet been issued.
- Next ConCom meeting – 1/25/2024
 - So far, two RDAs are on the agenda, one for the conversion of a deck into a 3-season porch on Shelly Lane, and the other for cleaning out the detention pond off Sandy Pond Road at Cannongate – which is technically now a wetland.
 - J. Schmalenberger asked if there was a maintenance plan from when the detention pond was first installed, and H. Hampson said that was a great question, given that there do not appear to be any records of such from way back.
- **7:57 PM – Adjourn Meeting**
 - **VOTE:** G. Bacon moved to adjourn; M. Phillips 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously 5-0.

Minutes Recorded and Submitted by Jessica G. Gugino, Clerk

Date / Signature of Approval:

1/25/2024 