

The Exeter Conservation Commission met in the Nowak Room of the Town Office Building, Exeter on Tuesday, December 10, 2013 at 7:01PM.

Call to Order:

1. Members present: Don Briselden, Virginia Raub, Cynthia Field, Mike Field, BOS Rep. Don Clement, Margaret Matick, Natural Resource Planner Kristin Murphy and acting chair, Peter Richardson.
2. Public Comment: None.

Regular Business:

1. Morrisette Property Trail Crossings-Eagle Scout Project: Aliabduallah Saroya presented his plan to build two bridges along the Morrisette trail where the crossings have become difficult to pass due to wet conditions and erosion. Another part of the project is to clear up debris along the trail as well as trim low hanging branches. A motion was made by Mr. Briselden to approve the Eagle Scout project with amendments to include a recommendation letter from the ECC and additional paperwork needed that Ms. Murphy has approval to sign.
2. Public Service NH Thermal Upgrade of Existing 115V Transmission Line through parcels within existing power line corridor north of Rte 101:

Sherrie Trefry a representative from GZA Geoenvironmental gave a presentation on the plan to mitigate impacts to wetlands in the areas described in the wetlands permit plan for maintenance to PSNH transmission lines. Board members were given copies of the plan to review and ask questions. The proposed sites are in need of maintenance to prevent sagging transmission lines which need to be raised. Splices along the transmission lines also need to be replaced in some areas. There will be five pole replacements inside of the Exeter boundary. Timber matting is proposed to minimize impacts of vehicles crossing wetlands without adding substantial pressure to the ground. PSNH conducted studies for which the timber matting distributes enough weight to equal a 150 pound male. Silt fencing and erosion control will be used as barriers into the wetland. After work is conducted a wetland seed mix and grass seed mix will be used to recover any lost vegetation.

The wetland buffer impact is 11,081 square feet affected by the project. There is no requirement for permanent buffer impacts. Fish and Game and the Natural Heritage Bureau provided advice for best management practices to minimize impact of the project.

GZA will be monitoring the area during construction and during construction through wetland areas to ensure barriers to wetland are functioning. Dr. Frank Richardson of NHDES (NH Department of Environmental Services) advised PSNH on the wetlands application. The main application was sent to Brentwood with copies going to other towns impacted. PSNH will go in front of the Exeter Planning Board on December 12, 2013 for the Conditional Use Permit application.

COMMENTS:

Alyson Eberhardt an ECC member not present sent in her questions. Her first question was related to whether splice sites could be moved to areas outside of wetlands to minimize impacts. Ms. Trefry answered that the splice locations are at existing splice sites and cannot be moved. The splicing should take half a day as not to extend impact. The second question was whether EW13 access route could be rerouted around the wetland. Ms. Trefry said they could reroute access but will impact an undisturbed vegetated area. It was pointed out that the access route in this area is only a bike path.

Another comment was about the Blandings Turtle nesting site in the proposed area and what PSNH will do to prevent significant impacts. Tracey Tarr will be the head wildlife biologist onsite and monitor to prevent impacts. The monitoring group will have complete authority over the project and PSNH must be in compliance with the permits issued.

The restoration of the access routes and other areas impacted must be 85% vegetated and the contract is not finished until GZA says the area is stabilized (reseeded,mulched etc).

A comment was made on the matter of informing the conservation easement holders for which the proposed project will affect. Notice was sent to landowners but not the easement holders. Ms. Trefry said that PSNH has the rights of way to the land.

Raynes Farm is one of the easements to be affected. Questions were about why they are not accessing the right of way from the existing parking lot and roadway. The contractor for the project will walk the land and make access agreements if changes need to be made to right of way access. The condition of the field and drainage impacts were also a concern.

Another question by Ms. Eberhardt was why replacement structure 157 would not be accessed by Watson Rd rather than by crossing the wetland. Ms. Trefry answered PSNH will use Watson Road for one part of the splicing but will need the access route to access other poles. An access agreement could be made with the abutting subdivision. Ms. Trefry also commented that there is a revised version of the permit plan to be submitted to DES and planning board. Ms. Eberhardt asked about where disturbances are unavoidable will they be reseeding with native vegetation? Ms. Trefry said they use a wetland seeding mix suitable for New England.

Ms. Raub inquired about the design and structure of the timber mats. The mats are 16 feet wide and they come in sectioned pieces that roll out.

The project is set to begin in the fall of 2014 with multiple teams working on the sections of the project. Mr. Richardson asked if the ECC could be notified during construction of the progress made and what the height of the new poles will be. PSNH will notify the ECC and the maximum height of the new poles will be 15 feet higher.

Mr. Briselden reiterated that easement holders could have concerns about the project impacts on the easement affected and language of the easement might conflict with the project plan. His concern was that currently they need more time to be notified and time to reply to the project. Technically the Planning Board meeting on December 12, 2013 will be the first Public Hearing for the proposed plan. The ECC agreed to find the easement holders and notify them of the issue. Mr. Clement found out that there are two easements affected; Bunker and Chamberlin. The ECC could be the holders of these easements and if so the language still needs to be reviewed. If the town is not the holder, then PSNH can notify the holders provided by the ECC. The holders may have time to comment even after the Planning Board meeting.

Mr. Richardson commented on the difference between maintenance and upgrade. Ms. Trefry answered this is considered maintenance as the transmission line is too close to the ground and needs to be replaced with a higher pole. The purpose for work on these specific lines is if a nearby power line went down, the poles in question need to hold the electricity load in the event of an emergency.

The group discussed that their task tonight was to submit A letter to DES (Department of Environmental Services) for the wetland permit and a memo to the Exeter Planning Board for the conditional use permit.

Ms. Murphy pointed out the prime wetlands in the plans do not match the maps for prime wetlands. It was explained that this is because when the maps were made for the project it was not clear where the prime wetlands ended and regular wetlands started. GZA

considered the whole area prime wetland so as try and avoid negative impacts to prime wetlands.

There was also the question about the need for a prime wetlands hearing. Ms. Trefry could not comment on the requirement for a hearing but speculate that there needs to be a request made by the public.

Ms. Murphy said she will review the easement language and PSNH right of way to ensure they allow for maintenance. Mr. Briselden made a motion to approve the recommendation conditionally until further research upon the easements that provisions of the easement and project plan are in conformance in order to allow sufficient time for easement holders to review the plan. Mr. Clement seconded the motion and the motion was passed.

A second motion made by Mr. Clement stated recommendations for the Conditional Use Permit submitted to the Planning Board with the same motion of the above mentioned but additionally the ECC will be notified of the project when work is taking place, the ECC will receive a summary report from the project biologist of the restoration completed after work is done, and that the reseeding mix used is appropriate for the land affected using the New England reseeding mix as stated by Ms. Trefry. Ms. Raub seconded the motion and the motion was passed.

3. Discussion to Append Elliot Property to Oaklands Town Forest if acquired: Mr. Clement suggested waiting to designate Elliot Property as town forest in order not to complicate the warrant article for this year. The board agreed to wait on a decision based on Mr. Clement's suggestion.
4. Dam Removal Feasibility Study: Tabled to the next meeting.
5. Open Space Committee: Tabled to the next meeting
6. Committee Reports: Tabled to the next meeting
7. Approval of Minutes: Mr. Briselden motioned to approve the minutes , Ms. Raub seconded the minutes were passed.
8. Natural Resource Planner Report: The Raynes Property Stewardship Committee discussed the lease to store antique pieces in the Raynes barn. She presented a draft five year lease with an auto extension. Mr. Briselden suggested to share the lease with other ECC members not present and allow the board to comment before moving forward at the next meeting.
9. Other Business: Ms. Murphy asked for suggestions for the Exeter Annual Report.
10. The next ECC meeting will be January 14 at 7PM in the Nowak Room of the Exeter Town Office Building.

Mr. Briselden moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms Matick seconded. The meeting ended at 9:03PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Sarah McGraw