

TOWN OF WESTHAMPTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MEETING Minutes

For the Westhampton Conservation Commission meeting on March 3, 2021 at 7:00 P.M. in their office at the Westhampton Town Hall, #1 South Road Westhampton MA

Zoom meeting

Members Present: Fred, Elvira, Brad, Jessica (recording)

1. Call to Order 7:00 pm

2. accept Minutes meeting of: January 20, 2021 (last two meetings, 2/3/2021 and 2/17/2021, cancelled due to lack of quorum; no new minutes to review or accept)

3. Review correspondence: No new mail

4. Old Business: None

5. New Business: PIL (Pine Island Lake) NOI Hearing for application of Order of Conditions—aquatic plant/weed management (present at meeting/hearing: Fred, Jessica, Elvira, Brad, Dominic Meringolo, Environmental Engineer, Solitude Lake Management, Jim Jewell and Janice Pegels, PIL Association, Martha Lellman, Alan Seewald, Chris Colica, Diana Killip, Bob Alcock, Ginny Curtis, Nancy Bals, Robert Tatro, Chrissy Baker, Randy and Gretchen Conklin, Hollum Conway, Lisa Zeitz, Rowan Morrigan, Jim Drisko—also present Laurie Sanders, Lew Cohen, Melissa Redwin)

Hearing begins at: 7:14 pm

Jim Jewell begins with presentation prepared by Dominic Meringolo, Solitude Lake Management regarding aquatic plant management/control—how to manage while maintaining ecology;

Dominic Meringolo, environmental engineer, presents aquatic vegetation management plan: dense vegetation, native species in lake overgrown, ecological restoration limitation project to enhance aquatic habitat of lake, ongoing/annual project—wants a 5-year Order of Conditions to continue to manage; multiple management applications, including both natural and chemical applications—herbicides/pesticide use; monitoring of water quality and plant health; drawdown every other year; harvesting, mowing, plant growth, bottom barriers; herbicide use to maintain vegetation balance, not until evaluation after two years?—which approved herbicides, where, for what exactly? No negative impact on fish and wildlife and plants. Lake will be monitored annually.

Fred: asking questions of Dominic Meringolo, and everyone on Board and interested parties—plant/aquatic reassessment every 2 years (Jim Jewell); monitor water quality, algae, native species

Brad and Dominic Meringolo discuss silt in lake/aging/growth/dredging, bottom barrier maintenance, drawdown issue, plant control;

Elvira: should we check on this in one year, rather than waiting 2 years; Cons Com should/will receive update regarding lake health after one year;

Fred: Herbicides? Mechanical removal or chemical? Check final report; herbicide use discussion necessary (look at Solitude Lake Management report)

OPEN TO PUBLIC:

Janice Pegels, co-chair PIL Management Committee, would like to avoid herbicides but wants all options on table, mechanical intervention, small boat harvesting (southwest aspect of lake), hand raking, draw down, options to avoid herbicide use; water shield? invasive species, jurisdiction over barriers, disposal of weeds?; wants to follow guidelines that also allow for boating, 3-5 acres of mowing/removal of weeds

Brad: recommends scraping and cleaning shoreline during drawdown; mechanically harvested aquatic plants useful for farmers;; silt/weed removal may indeed be beneficial

Rowan Morrigan: 52 Pine Island Lake: too much too soon? Concerned about Solitude Lake Management use of herbicides and residual effects on other species, doesn't approve of any chemical approaches until/unless better understanding and approval of all members of PIL, wants Cons Com to reserve allowing permission for chemical intervention , with understanding that many residents are concerned about chemical intervention (Board of PIL and PIL Advisory Committee—need more clarification) to PIL and connecting waterways and land; wants very specific info regarding any chemical applications to lake—when/where/how much? Needs clarity. Agrees that invasive weeds need to be controlled, but believes everyone on board with mechanical management;

Chris Colica 63 Pine Island Lake: disagrees with Morrigan—prefers herbicides to mechanical intervention, wants to keep use of herbicides/pesticides on the table as possible alternative, due to costs, etc;

Alan Seewald: middle position, cost, meet with Cons Com in 2 years if necessary, use of herbicides, hopefully not necessary. But could still be in OOC; wants Cons Com to apply robust conditions before any applications of herbicides

Brad: herbicide issue response—herbicide usage in/on lake—not directly applied to water, mostly applied to periphery, (Jessica—run off?)

Dominic Meringolo: herbicide application, details sent to Cons Com; herbicide treatment to lakes common (dosing and selection/area and species selective?); not full application, not to floating plants, look at list of approved, limited to aquatic plants/non-native species, specific herbicides in NOI, licensed applicators, prudent use;

Jim Jewell: strict criteria regarding any usage of herbicides

Brad: interested in mechanical harvesting as continual management, would have to be annual, but good way to start; may not be as cost effective but mechanical removal may be good idea to avoid chemical applications

Janice Pegels: Ma DEP supports community involvement, will take a few years to manage roots, but ultimately boat, etc. will justify itself within a few years (drawdown approval), 2 ft. draw down option on table; Wants this resolved asap; refers to comments by Mark Stinson, DEP

Mark Stinson not present, but we have his OOC comments reported by Dominic Meringolo, based on towns with similar projects—ecological restoration project to manage ecological species (man-made lake); use of mechanical harvesting/dredging, would not disrupt bottom sediments; guidance of use of hand harvesting and barriers,

Brad: no need to extend hearing, though Cons Com must further review information
Close Hearing/all members voted to close hearing—will notify if further info needed, annual reports, Cons Com will meet to further discuss detailed info for NOI/OOC
Fred will fill out/draft Order of Conditions within 21 days, subject to approval by Commission
PIL is missing Certificate of Compliance for previous drawdown: Jim Jewell, President of the PIL Association will send Cons Com previous Certificate of Compliance

Close hearing 8:23

Hearing ends at: 8:23 pm
Meeting Resumes at: 8:24

Laurie Sanders, on behalf of Westhampton Safety Complex Committee—set up site visit, NOI hearing to be scheduled for meeting, March 17, 2021; site visit planned for 8:00 am, Saturday, March 6, 2021

Melissa Redwin, RDA, 14 Shaw Rdl, Melissa and Pandora Redwin, property owners; building barn and new house on property; RDA application pending; schedule for March 17 meeting; possible drainage issues, wants to set up site visit ; grazing and native species; wetland delineation?—site visit set up for 8:30am Saturday, March 6

EnterSolar, Montague Rd. solar site: Fred reports on January 22, 2021 solar site visit, Fred met with Rob Miller, Superintendent of the project; no vernal pool problems; Fred noticed totally bare ground on East end of South array site, nothing growing, erosion problems, no mulch, totally barren. We need to check again, but this issue has been brought to Rob Miller's attention; Fred will send another letter to make sure that these issues are dealt with before spring.

Bear Research Study, Mass Department of Fish and Wildlife

Upcoming business: Safety Complex,, site visit, Saturday, March 6
RDA and site visit for 14 Shaw Rd., Redwin property
EnterSolar; Bear Research Study

6. Agenda: Next mtg /Next Agenda/notice of Zoom meeting will be sent to Town Clerk's mailbox for 3/17/2021

7.: Adjourn: 8:44pm