

**Peterborough Conservation Commission minutes  
February 16, 2023, 7 p.m., Peterborough Town House**

Present: Swift Corwin, John Kerrick, John Patterson, Bob Strong, Francie Von Mertens, Robert Wood;

Select Board Liaison Tyler Ward; Town Planner Danica Melone;  
Jeremy Fennell (Eversource), Elizabeth Olliver (Normandeau Associates)

**Eversource Conditional Use Permit for impacts relating to replacements of three utility poles located in the town's Wetland Protection Overlay Zone**

Elizabeth Olliver, Normandeau Associates, presented wetland mapping of the utility right of way running from Windy Row southwesterly to Wilder Road. Three of the 11 poles to be replaced are located within the town's Wetland Protection Overlay Zone (WPOZ). She explained that temporary timber mats are placed as work pads in the three pole areas.

Timber mats also are placed where the work access road crosses the WPOZ. Swift Corwin, who has done forestry on the property directly abutting the utility ROW, said the wetlands for two of the poles are mostly seeps located on a rocky slope. The third pole, number 12, located at the base of the slope and close to Windy Row, received Commission member attention for its sensitivity. Corwin, and Francie Von Mertens who walks the road, agreed that the roadside swale close to pole #12 becomes a stream when augmented by storm runoff and/or snowmelt. After a road washout a few years back uphill from the proposed work site, the washout area was paved as a swale instead of placing riprap in the washout gully that would slow runoff and allow some infiltration. Significant runoff therefore gathers momentum, and the vegetated swale near pole #12 becomes a small stream. Von Mertens also cited an unusual wildflower (meadow beauty) growing in and along the swale, along with a diversity of other native wildflowers (Joe Pye weed, swamp candles. . .).

Jeremy Fennell from Eversource said that work access to pole #12 from the Windy Row roadway would create a traffic challenge. Work involves placing a timber mat around the pole as a work area, excavating a circular hole, inserting a steel pipe within the hole, and then a pole within the pipe. The hole is packed with gravel, and the timber mat removed. If needed, the work area is seeded with a wetland mix.

The impacts are described as "temporary."

In discussion, ConCom members were impressed with site sensitivity ("air bridging" stone walls to leave them intact; timber mat work areas—not gravel—around the three poles in the WPOZ; inspection by an environmental monitor at least once a week.

Members agreed that pole #12 is a sensitive area requiring special attention. Elizabeth Olliver said she would direct the contractor's attention to that pole area, and Jeremy Fennell said that the possibility of a stormwater flush from the paved roadway swale also would be given attention.

**Dam removal discussion**

Von Mertens reminded members that Andrew Osterman, Budget and Recreation Committees member, raised the issue of Peterborough's over 50 dams, public and private, as a topic of budgetary concern, with his special focus on the Transcript Dam

with a sense that at some point, if not repaired, it would receive a High Hazard ranking by the state Dam Bureau. She'd had some discussion with Tyler Ward, ConCom Select Board liaison, and Seth MacLean at the Town House, that determined a decision to retain and maintain the Transcript Dam had been made a couple times in the past and recently by the Select Board.

Woody Wood, whose Master's thesis focused on dam removal, asked Tyler Ward as Select Board member for some background about past removal v. repair discussions. Tyler said a NH Division of Historical Resources study relating to the Main Street Bridge Project catalogued the Transcript Dam's defining historic value to the downtown district and the town as a whole.

A 2021 Hazard Mitigation Study evaluation of the Transcript Dam concluded with the decision to retain and to repair as needed.

At a recent Select Board retreat, when discussion of repairing a section of Transcript Dam as part of the Main Street bridge replacement, the Select Board supported repair where the dam meets the retaining wall rebuild.

Woody summarized the general topic of dam removal, and the Transcript Dam as a good example, by saying it's more complicated than most realize, needing considerable study—hydrology included for impacts to groundwater—which can be costly. And complicated politically (townspeople sentiment about scenic and historic value), financially and environmentally.

He said it's unlikely the Transcript Dam will receive High Hazard ranking as that relates to danger presented to downstream people/property in the event of breaching. More likely the dam's deterioration would prompt a formal Select Board decision process that would involve budget (remove v. rebuild), townspeople sentiment, Heritage Commission, ConCom, at a minimum. Until then, discussion risks generalities and conjecture with little relevant progress made.

### **Other**

December and January minutes were approved.

### **Monahan/Fremont trail link**

1. Members agreed with Swift Corwin's suggestion to pay Lou Shelly, trails consultant, a stipend on his second site visit.
2. Members approved a Welcome to Duffy's Woods sign concept that listed the natural and cultural resources found when exploring the 151-acre woodland.

### **Website**

Jeremy Blydenburgh-Cote has volunteered to help migrate the Open Space Committee's website over to the ConCom's minimal website presence, maintaining the link intact with its abundant information on land conservation past and present, and natural resource protection.

### **Otter Brook Farm**

Members discussed the wisdom of outreach to Otter Brook Farm manager about future plans.

/fvm