

**Ashfield Conservation Commission
Thursday, November 13, 2014
MINUTES**

Members Present: Lester Garvin, Chair (LG) Phil Lussier (PL) Janet Clark (JC)	Members Absent: Brian Clark (BC) Dave Fessenden (DF)
Others Present: Anne Madocks, Scribe Joanne Ostrowski, Bill Scaife, Addison Hall, Jon Redmond	

1. LG called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM.
2. Members present reviewed the minutes from 10/22/14. PL moved to approve minutes, JC seconded; unanimous.
3. The Tennessee Gas Pipeline project open houses were postponed. PL received an email from Eugene Benson from the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions stating Kinder Morgan received a request for more time to review information. JC The issue is confusing and difficult to know what to do in the meantime to prepare. Being present at the open houses and other meetings about this project is important.
4. LG Emily Stockman submitted a RDA approximately 1 ½ years ago to develop a site on Buckland Road for an RV – pad, water and sewer. Received a Negative Determination. Building permit application has been submitted. Will be submitting a NOI for a crossing at an intermittent stream. Question about the difference between a trailer and a RV under zoning. Would like to schedule a hearing for December meeting.
5. Junction of Smith Road and Smith Branch Road - LG talked with Mark Stinson today and DEP is concerned about bank stabilization, and wants time for a site visit. Discussion was stopped and to be continued when hearing opens at 8:00 PM.
6. PL Any response from Double Edge Theater. LG No response, he will contact them.
7. LG Stopped into DAR State Forest two weeks ago and work had not started relative to the Emergency Certification issued for bridge repair.
8. Upper Reservoir was drawn down for evaluation of the spillway by the Ashfield Water Commission.
9. LG opened the hearing for the Smith Road NOI at 8:00 PM. PL read the legal ad. Tighe and Bond will not be here tonight for this preliminary meeting, and will set up a continuation date and time. DEP suggested we not rush the project as they have some concerns about the design as submitted.

Addison Hall – Mr. Hall stated he has seen the plans and has general concerns about the impact on the west bank of the stream if the east bank is reinforced as planned. Next time high water comes down, it will throw water onto the west bank which coincides with the Hall’s property and an old mill site, not to mention further downstream. Mr. Hall’s wife Jodi was present during Tropical Storm Irene and observed a lot of water coming off the hill east of the road. He wasn’t sure how these plans try to increase culvert space or control channels for that phenomena. A steep hill on east side of the road, some of the washout is a function of water streaming down off the east hill.

LG How important is it to be able to drive the full length of Smith Road? Joanne Ostrowski – It is a pleasure, and a short cut when going to Buckland and Shelburne Falls, but not necessary. Designated as the only scenic road in Ashfield and would like to keep it “country-fide”. Instead of shiny new guardrails, they might get rusty ones, or something that blends in better.

Bill Scaife – Mr. Scaife said he notices living there right on the road that a lot of people use it as a walking trail for them and their dogs. He wonders how that will change if it is easier for a lot more traffic to travel there.

Addison Hall – Mr. Hall said he only moved back full time recently and the road has been very quiet and that has been good. The Halls have gotten used to going up the hill when they need to go out. Not sure how much of a hardship it has been for farmers in the area with their equipment. Probably the only business use he can think of. Whole foods try to run their trucks down to Clarks but that was a questionable strategy he thought.

Joanne Ostrowski – Perhaps the Town could make permanent the dead end sign.

LG – One option is to do nothing.

Bill Scaife - What is driving this project? LG believes the Highway Department has a grant to fund the work and move forward.

Addison Hall –This doesn’t require Ashfield to raise money so it is revenue neutral for Ashfield. LG – correct.

JC – Are there emergency reasons or the likelihood that they will be berated or asked five years from now to do this work when it will be much harder.

Addison Hall – Ron Coler said one reason to re-open the road would be if the mountain was closed and alternative routes were needed. Smith Road would be an alternative. PL – That does happen on occasion. Having been on the ambulance for a number of years, accidents on the mountain will shut down traffic up and down.

Jon Redmond – Mr. Redmond lives at the top of Smith Road and walks down the extension past the dead end. Is the road being repaired to help prevent a repeat of the damage down by Irene? LG – Correct, they have done some repair work on the surface. Jon – Will the repairs keep the road drivable until there is a storm to create erosion again? My concern is environmental – buttressing one side of the road will inevitably mean the other side is scoured and undercut. This is the first time he has seen the

plans with riprap planned for one side and some buttressing on the other. LG - Work would be confined to 625 sq. ft. and 2,000 feet would be untouched. Gabion baskets would be in the water and near shore, above that is riprap. DEP is concerned about this design and more critter friendly environment could be produced. At the same time, it is a very high energy stream and can get a lot of water running downhill.

Jon Redmond – By channeling and confining water to a narrow stream, it increases the water pressure and speed downstream and could produce more damage down at the Apple Valley end where it flows into Clesson Brook. I drove down by way of Apple Valley Road after Irene and Smith Brook could hardly feed into Clesson brook due to the volume of water. Seems like forcing a volume of water through a fire hose and it will come out faster and with more pressure downstream than we have now. The folks in Buckland who live along Clesson got hit pretty hard. That junction of Apple Valley Road and Smith Road got hit pretty hard. Any time a river or stream has been channelized, there has been more flooding, thinking of large rivers like the Missouri, there has been more flooding downstream than there would have been otherwise if there were a floodplain, perfect place for the water to empty. We don't have that. This design could be building a fire hose that would not only put more water downstream but also scour the west side of the brook and west bank and do considerable damage and be more costly in the end. And it might not take an Irene size storm. We are lucky to have FEMA money to repair the road. A smaller storm that FEMA wouldn't fund, we wouldn't have the funds to make the repairs.

JC – Didn't see any info in the NOI about impacts.

Bill Scaife – Gabion section, near old mill dam butts into the side of the creek. That part of the dam will need to be destroyed. What will that do to the structure of the bank? Bank seems to be fairly stable above the old dam location and stream is very straight. As soon as it goes over the dam there is turbulence and a bend.

LG – Good questions. Recommend to accept DEP recommendation to have more review and a site visit. Continue the hearing to the second Wednesday in January (1/15/14). Site visit by DEP to be scheduled. ACOE has jurisdiction in cold water stream.

Jon Redmond – ACOE was involved in cold water streams in 70s. They are not always your friend.

Addison Hall – How much conversation have you had with DEP? LG We have received a file number and have the email correspondence if you would like to see. DEP has seen the plans and they don't like them. Karen Hirschberg and Mark Stinson have said the plan is not critter friendly.

JC – Can we asked for an impact evaluation from engineer considering the resulting possible impacts of flood impacts downstream, erosion into private property and structures? Doesn't look like that was considered.

JC- Should the Conservation Commission be the ones to ask the questions or should DEP? Addison – Do you have experience working with DEP on initiatives? JC/LG Yes, we are the first line of defense but DEP comes in when problem is too big or too complex. We have the same responsibility to enforce those regulations.

Addison – How much money has been spent to engage Tighe and Bond to date? LG – Unknown. Addison – is it possible for any of us to be a part of the DEP site visit. LG will let them know when that will be scheduled. PL – We could post the site visit as a meeting.

Jon Redmond - Would be coming up from Philadelphia so notice about date and time very important. LG would you (Addison) or Jody be willing to take pictures of dam abutment. Jody has some pictures from Irene. LG – It is an historic mill site. Addison – The first road down that hill was up at the west bank and there is a snowmobile trail in the field that is all that remains of the old road.

JC – Read sentences in Tighe and Bond NOI about how it complies with DEP stormwater standards, but still believe they should address flooding.

Jon Redmond – Do you know what DEP wants to do? PL- DEP and NHESP involved in Route 116 near Bullitt Road. Wildlife friendly project stream restoration. JC – Read some information about habitat uses from the NOI.

PL Motion to continue the hearing to 1/14/15 at 8pm; JC seconded; JC- Will DEP attend? LG hope so; accepted.

10. Online Building Permits – BC absent and no computer connection.

11. PL – motion to adjourn at 8:40 pm; JC seconded; unanimous.