



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

TUESDAY, MAY 28TH, 2019, 7:00 PM
MINUTES

MEETING AT SOMERVILLE CITY HALL
93 HIGHLAND AVENUE
3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

Meeting notes prepared by Malik Drayton

Commission Members in attendance: Rachel Borgatti (Chair), David Turin, Cristina Kennedy, Aladdine Joroff, Michael Fager, Owen Wartella (arrived at 7:17 pm), Mathias Neuber (arrived 7:17 pm)

Commission Members absent: None

Others in Attendance: Kristen Stelljes (SomerStat – Community Preservation Act Manager); Kat Rutkin (Groundworks Somerville)

Staff: Vanessa Boukili (Conservation Agent), Malik Drayton

Rachel Borgatti called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm followed by introductions.

New Business:

1. Conservation restriction for 5 Palmer Avenue
 - 1st conservation restriction in the City of Somerville's history
 - 5 Palmer parcel was purchased with CPA funding
 - Groundworks Somerville to hold the Conservation Restriction
 - State Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EEA) has a model Conservation Restriction to that must be followed closely.
 - Why Groundwork Somerville?
 - City of Somerville cannot hold a Conservation Restriction against itself due to conflict of interest
 - 3rd party is required to hold the Conservation Restriction
 - 3 Conditions necessary for an Organization to hold a Conservation Restriction:
 - Groundwork has an Environmental Mission
 - Groundwork has the capacity to hold the Conservation Restriction
 - Bylaws state that they can hold real property



- Article 97 explanation
 - Must stay a park in perpetuity
 - Can be overcome by a 2/3rd vote
- House will be abated and is scheduled to come down after school is out of session
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- Boundaries on the conservation restriction will be the bounds of what is purchased.
- Property will be incorporated by Glen Park
- How does the City designate open space?
- Park Space? Open Space? Garden?
- Will there be more of a public process or is the property slated to become a community garden?
- Area will be remediated and an appropriate usage will be designated
- Further acquisitions?
 - 35 Richardson → Pocket Park/ Affordable Housing
- Groundwork - Urban Agriculture
 - Reclaiming greenspace fits into the mission statement
- What is the mediation between opposing uses??
 - Greenspace vs. Urban Agriculture
 - a. How are the conflicts addressed?
 - b. Definition of open space is broad → no artificial turf
- Groundwork gets a \$6000 fee which is then used to do annual inspections to ensure the City stays in-line with the requirements of the Conservation Restriction
- 5 Palmer property was purchased for \$500,000
- Any Conservation Restriction acquired with CPA money will be brought before the Conservation Commission.
- How are decisions influenced by Groundwork Somerville?
 - Decisions in regards to use is determined by the City of Somerville
 - However if use doesn't align with the Conservation Restriction Groundworks will step in in order to enforce it.
 - They are only present to uphold the Conservation Restriction.

Vote: To approve the 5 Palmer Conservation Restriction as presented by Kristen Stelljes. Unanimously approved at 7:33 pm. [motion – Fager, Second – Joroff, vote 7:0:0].

Updates and Discussion:

- 1) Community Gardens forms and manual (7:08 pm)
 - Corrections & edits are discussed
 - No feedback from Tara as yet
 - Forms and manuals are close to completion
 - **Action:** *Commissioner Kennedy to incorporate comments & corrections for the Community Garden manual and disseminate to Commission.*
 - Outstanding question on infractions
 - Needs simplification
 - Should gardeners tend to plots within 7 days to be exact?
 - Is more structure needed?

- Prescriptive vs. restrictive
- Give garden coordinators more latitude?
- Manual can act as a backup when enforcement needs to occur
- Language - shall vs. may
- Conservation Commission will be the arbiter of infractions
- Confirm with Erica that the waitlist can be combined
- Should this document have authors?
 - Conservation Commission should be the author of the document
 - Date on document also need to be changed
- CPC (Community Preservation Committee) application for the expansion of the Bikeway Community Garden?
 - This cannot be done without the Conservation Commission
 - The area needs remediation
- Has the soil ever been re-tested?
- Does the Conservation Commission have money?
 - \$8,000 - \$20,000? Uncertain
- Raised beds still have contact with the soil underneath
- Should there be a protocol to soil test garden plots?
 - **Action:** Agent Boukili to find out how much money in ConCom account and what funds can be spent on.
 - **Action:** add garden soil testing item to the agenda for the 06-25-2019 meeting

2) Ongoing Projects (8:08 pm)

- 5 Middlesex Ave.
 - Started work 5/28/2019
 - Not in area that is under Conservation Commission jurisdiction as of yet
 - Agent Boukili performed site visit with project team and discussed erosion/sediment control measures and other OOC conditions.
- Expired OOC – Water Chestnut (July 2010)
 - Jennifer Lawrence - Groundwork Somerville
 - Expired OOC cannot be extended
 - Project needs to be closed
 - Can we close it?
 - Should we leave it open?
- Mystic River Path Extension Pilings (Dec 2010) – DCR
 - Expired; needs to be closed
 - Undercarriage work
 - Can we hold Groundwork Somerville accountable for not closing out their projects?

3) Letters/ Notifications (8:20 pm)

- Letter to DCR regarding Draw 7 Park
 - Letter to be drafted by Commissioner Fager
 - Changes to plans and the bridge, changes the letter
 - Initial concern was the playing field

- DCR is moving away from fields as they are focusing on Foss Park
- Letter should discuss why artificial turf would not be ideal at Draw 7 Park.
- Commissioner Fager to draft letter before the date of the next meeting

4) Committees & Task Force Reports

- Somervision 2040 Committee (8:27 pm)
 - Rachel Borgatti co-chair
 - Somersuppers
 - Forums to collect data
 - Somervision2040 Working groups
 - The creation of comprehensive plans
 - Allows for the adjustment of goals
 - Recommendations
 - Assigned to working groups; 05/29/2019 is the date of the first working group
 - Rachel Borgatti is the Captain of the Open space working group.
 - Currently 5 members (2 of which are from the Open Space Task Force)
 - Allowed to add more members
 - Possibility to reach out to gardeners? Playing fields people?
 - 5 meetings total
 - There will be 2 meetings over summer
 - Final draft is due in Oct 2019
- CPC Update
 - Making current open space more accessible
 - Somerville Museum
 - Entirely staffed by volunteers
 - Museum Access board
 - Didn't spend awarded monies in 3 years due to lawsuit regarding elevator
 - Emergency ask of \$600,000, received \$300,000
 - Powerhouse School Park
 - Privately owned public space (POPS)
 - Ask - \$122,000 (50% Open space funds/ 50% Budget Reserve)
 - Required funds to finish park
 - Emergency Request awarded
- Open Space Land Acquisition Task Force (7:37 pm)
 - 125 acre open space goal, created in 2010
 - Thus far 19.9 acres of open space have been created
 - 5.76 acres of Privately owned Public Space (POPS)
 - Transformative areas – ex. Union Square, Assembly Square
 - Kristen Stelljes drafting report
 - Zoning / taxing
 - Creation of POPs and making them more accessible
 - POPS in Boston example
 - Post Office Square
 - Required programming
 - Building in the financial District

- Independent dwarf
- Not truly accessible nor advertised
- Maxwell Green
 - No signage
 - How do we get signage on a park such as this?
 - City would have to force signage as an easement agreement
- Parks & Open Space currently working on a solution
- Do POPS that are not publicly accessible have any environmental benefits?
- Kristen Stelljes provides information on the financial background
- How do you incorporate developer feedback?
 - That was decided not to be an issue to take on
- Purchasing land in the City of Somerville
 - \$4 Million/ acre
 - 2 Million on development of acre
 - \$6 Million Total
- In order to reach the OpenSpace goal of Somervision 2030, \$550 million would have to be spent for the acquisition and development of open space
- City of Somerville has a land acquisition fund
 - No money is in the fund currently
 - Money will have to come from the general fund
- Discussion is brought to a close and Kristen Stelljes departs (7:53 pm)

5) Associate Commissioners - (Tabled)

6) Action Item Review (8:47 pm)

- **Action:** Agent Boukili to provide comment letter regarding ENF for Pedestrian Bridge to Conservation Commission. **[Complete]**
- **Action:** Garden subcommittee will submit a draft of all garden documents to be sent out to the ConCom and Garden Coordinators in time for the March 26th ConCom meeting. **[Partial – Forms Complete; Manual pending]**
- **Action:** Agent Boukili to ask Thomas Dalton about checkbox for Conservation Commission permits on DCR forms and get sample DCR form(s). **[Complete]**
 - New applications created in mid-March which now have a section that requires applicants to provide any other permits (including Conservation Commission)
 - Permit is required to be provided during the application process or prior to a permit being issued
- **Action:** Boukili to update Garden Map to include more street names (remove walkshed circles or put on interactive map so that people can zoom in and out). **[Incomplete]**
 - The GIS Map has been updated, but a more interactive map needs to be made in google maps
 - The Shape-up Somerville Map includes Community gardens
- **Action:** Send email to DPW, Planning, Engineering, Capital Projects, and any other departments who might review construction or development projects. Remind them of Conservation Commission jurisdiction and requirements that must be following when working near the river. **[Incomplete]**
 - Item to be added to the agenda for the 06-25-2019 meeting
- **Action:** Commissioner Joroff to revise ConCom Policies document, then Commissioners to read through it again to make sure everyone is willing to follow it. **[Incomplete]**
 - Item to be added to the agenda for the 06-25-2019 meeting

7) 2019 City Nature Challenge results (8:57 pm)

- Draw 7 Park
 - 68 Species with i-Naturalist application
 - 186 Observations
- Boston
 - 1574 Species (15th Place)
 - 10th Place in observations
 - 154 Cities Participated in challenge

8) Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Report (9:01 pm)

- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Report (MVPR) has not yet been received, but a link will be sent out shortly to Commissioners.
- Contact Jess Fosbrook (Assistant Director, DPW Engineering)
- *Action: Agent Boukili to send link to MVPR to Conservation Commission when it is received*

Other Business (9:02 pm)

- 1) Vanessa Boukili to transition Conservation Commission role as Conservation Agent over to Malik Drayton.
- 2) Commissioner Kennedy to switch projects with another commissioner because she works for the state which creates a potential conflict of interest.

Approval of minutes:

- 1) Vote to approve April 23rd, 2019 minutes with 3 amendments as amended 9:07 pm [motion – Kennedy, second – Wartella; vote: 7:0:0].

Adjourn:

- 1) Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 9:07 pm [motion – Fager, second – Wartella, vote: 7:0:0].

Outstanding Action Items:

2019

May:

- **Action:** Commissioner Kennedy to incorporate comments & corrections for the Community Garden manual and disseminate to Commission.
- **Action:** Agent Boukili to send Complete forms to Eric, Tara and Garden Coordinators to be reviewed and turned into Google Docs.
- **Action:** Agent Boukili to send link to MVPR to Conservation Commission when it is received

March:

- **Action:** ConCom to send letter to Patrick and DCR asking for details of milfoil treatment plant and meeting summary from discussion of chemicals to be used.
- **Action:** Commissioner Borgatti to craft Associate Commissioner job description.

February:

- **Action:** Garden subcommittee will submit a draft of all garden documents to be sent out to the ConCom and Garden Coordinators in time for the March 26th ConCom meeting.
- **Action:** design and price out signs to add to Medford's outfall poles.
- **Action:** Commissioner Fager to review results [of Draw 7 sediment sampling results transmittal] and follow up.

2018

November:

- **Action:** Commissioner Fager to draft letter to DCR re: Draw 7 Park, Commissioner Turin and Kennedy to assist.

October:

- **Action:** Agent Boukili to work with T&I staff on educational brochure formatting.
- **Action:** After reformat this brochure to be able to easily print it, put this on website.

September:

- **Action:** Boukili to update Garden Map to include more street names (remove walkshed circles or put on interactive map so that people can zoom in and out).

April:

- **Action:** Send email to DPW, Planning, Engineering, Capital Projects, and any other departments who might review construction or development projects. Remind them of Conservation Commission jurisdiction and requirements that must be following when working near the river.
- **Action:** Commissioner Joroff to revise ConCom Policies document, then Commissioners to read though it again to make sure everyone is willing to follow it.

List of Meeting Documents (located here K:\OHCD\Shared\Conservation Commission\Agenda + Minutes + Legal Notices 2019\2019_05_28_Meeting_Documents):

- Agenda (2019_05_28_Agenda.pdf)
- April Meeting Minutes (2019_04_23_Minutes_Draft.docx)
- Ongoing Projects spreadsheet (Ongoing Project Data.xlsx)
- 3. Draft Procedures Manual March 26_VKB_April28_CK.docx
- Somerville CR #1 Ref. #16599 Acknowledgement Letter OK for Local Signature.pdf
- Somerville CR #1 Ref. #16599 EEA Approved for Local Signatures