

BELMONT CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES

APPROVED

August 7, 2003

Members Present: M. Flamang, M. King, R. Foster, J. Smith.  
Associate Members Present: M. Velie.

Additional Attendees: See attendance sheet.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

Public Hearing –Notice of Intent – 653 Concord Avenue

This hearing was postponed to August 14, 2003, because notice was not properly given.

New Business

M. King raised the subject of methods to keep the Commission's meetings streamlined so that the meetings do not run late. She suggested that we look at the clock during Commission meetings so that we can keep things on track for a reasonable finishing time. Unfortunately, lengthy public comments cut down on the amount of time Commission members have to discuss things among themselves. She referred to the Zoning Board of Appeals as an example of a board that moves things along and adheres to its own timeline more strictly. R. Foster agreed with her and proposed that we limit public comment to 2 or 3 minutes. If an explanation takes longer, it should be in writing. The McLean Committee gave the public time to comment but did not engage in dialogue with any commenter. Perhaps that would move things along better.

G. Clancy pointed out that allowing only one half hour for Commission business at the beginning of each meeting may not be enough. M. King suggested that we increase that to three-quarters of an hour. G. Clancy pointed out that some members of the public may not know the details until the presentations are made. Also, if written comments are required from the public and submitted at the meeting, Commission members may not actually read and consider them before voting on a particular proposal or issue.

Public Hearing – Notice of Intent – Rear 336 Concord Avenue, Replace Existing Storm Drain Grate (7:35)

Justin Gould from Faye, Spofford & Thorndike made the presentation on behalf of the Town. The grate at Wellington Brook, behind the library, will be replaced. FEMA will pay 75%, or \$155,000, of the cost of replacement. There has been flooding from time to time because the existing grate does not have capacity to handle storm debris. There is a 10' X 5' culvert there. Concrete will replace some of the existing riprap to prevent

erosion (some of the granite blocks have moved out of place due to erosion). The culvert size will not change, and the bottom of the culvert will remain at the same elevation.

General maintenance of the grate will be done manually, but if there is a high volume water event, a backhoe can be used. The new design will permit that to occur with less damage to the grate itself. The grates will be checked routinely, but the Town hopes to station a backhoe there during storm events to prevent flooding.

The bank will be altered for 50 feet on either side of the grate. A coffer dam will divide the stream in half during construction in order to allow the flow to continue while construction proceeds. The work will be done in the fall, when flows are low.

M. Flamang noted that the Commission is not approving the specific design, just assuring that the resource area is protected. The Order of Conditions will contain specifications as to plantings to be made after construction is complete.

Public comments were invited. John Forster wanted to know whether there is any other permit required for the work to proceed. G. Clancy responded that the Town Engineer has reviewed and approved these plans. Mr. Forster stated that he thought the design should be reviewed by someone else, too.

Sue Bass stated her concern that more of the brook is being jacketed in concrete under this plan. She would instead like to see some of it freed from the culvert. She would like the Commission to insist on that. G. Clancy replied that that is something the Selectmen would have to do.

Jane Otte stated that she lives in the area and is grateful that something is being done to try to remedy the flooding problems she has experienced. There is also a safety issue. Children now walk into the culvert at the other end, at Clay Pit Pond. David Otte is also in favor of the new grate. He has seen that the Town pays attention to the grate in approaching flood situations.

John Forster stated that he just wants to make sure the new grate is competently designed. M. Flamang said that the minutes of this meeting will be forwarded to Tom Gatzunis so that he is aware of those concerns. He also stated that he has been involved professionally in the design, operation and maintenance of systems with grates such as these. It is a sound design and provides for safe clearing of the grate to try to avoid flooding.

M. King asked generally whether the Commission should alert neighbors that the grate needs to be kept clear of debris so that they are aware. Could the Town remove trees and branches to make maintenance easier? G. Clancy indicated that there were private owners upstream. There is also a deep sump basin at the edge of the library parking lot to help minimize debris accumulation.

The Commission voted to issue an Order of Conditions requiring that vegetation be replaced with appropriate vegetation, and requiring a vegetation barrier under the riprap. All ground cover must be low and non-deciduous, and grass will be required at the point where the Town needs to access the grate. Siltation barriers and hay bales will be required during construction; no stockpiling of materials is permitted near the stream.

New Business (continued) (8:20)

Sue Bass stated that she had received a telephone call regarding Junction Brook. The caller reported that they had observed foam at the bottom of the stream and a smell of sewage. R. Foster asked whether the Board of Health had been called. That is the appropriate channel for such information.

R. Foster will bring the Lydia Ogilby letter of thanks to the September meeting.

The meeting was then adjourned at 8:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held at the Faculty Dining Room at Chenery Middle School on Thursday, August 14, 2003.

Prepared by:  
Johanna Smith