

Conservation Administrator's Report

Jo-Anne Crystoff, Conservation Administrator and Agent

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The state of emergency instituted with the arrival of Covid-19 has brought with it a new set of operating procedures to the Conservation Commission. The Commission is keeping to our regular meeting schedule using Zoom with public participation possible. The Commission has resolved the complicated issue of being able to issue permits to applicants that can be recorded at Registries of Deeds. The Commission has discretion regarding opening public hearings during the state of emergency.

Commission meetings are being held via the Zoom software platform. Meetings are limited to 90 minutes and are open to public participation. We are finding it challenging to get through our agendas in the allotted time and looking at plans is very difficult.

The High Street drainage improvement project, overseen by the DPW, has been completed. This project entailed a Request for Determination from the Commission.

Ayer's local wetland protection bylaw was approved by the Attorney General's office. Posting in publicly accessible places and publishing twice in the newspaper have been accomplished and our bylaw is in effect. We will begin drafting regulations for our bylaw soon.

Enforcement Orders have been issued for work at 0 Central Avenue, including tree clearing and paving in the buffer zone to an intermittent stream. The Commission, the landowner, and Mr. Hillier (who paved his neighbor's land, in the buffer zone, without her permission) have resolved the issue of the paving. The paving has been removed and disposed of legally. The issue of tree clearing in a resource area and buffer zone as well as grading in the buffer zone remain unresolved. The Commission is requiring Mr. Hillier to file a Notice of Intent by June 15, 2020. If the Notice of Intent is not received by this date, the Commission may begin fining Mr. Hillier.

A peer review contractor was chosen for the Ayer Solar IIB Notice of Intent. EcoTec, an environmental consulting practice in Worcester, was chosen jointly by the Commission and the applicant's representative. Work on this review will begin when the contract has been signed.

A ponds' weed treatment contractor was chosen for this season's ponds' treatments. Solitude Lake Management will again provide this service for Ayer's ponds.

The Commission will keep up with its twice monthly meetings providing public participation through the Zoom platform. During the state of emergency, the Commission has sole discretion to open public hearings. Please contact the Conservation Office with any questions or concerns at 978-772-8249 or at concom@ayer.ma.us.