

Meeting Minutes
Herring River Executive Council (HREC)
Thursday, September 14, 2023, 3:00 pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom

HREC members present: Geoff Sanders, Helen Miranda Wilson, Janet Reinhart, Brian Carlstrom;
Coordinator: Carole Ridley; Others present: Christine Odiaga, Tim Smith, Dave Koonce, Christa Drew, Gail Ferguson, Barry McLaughlin, Josh Yeston, Al Kraft, April Wobst.

Minutes

Following the meeting welcome and introductions, the draft minutes of June, 15 2023, were approved by consent.

Herring River Restoration Project Update

Carole Ridley introduced Wes Stinson of Environmental Partners, to provide an update on construction of the Chequessett Neck Bridge.

Wes Stinson reported that pipe piles for three piers that support the temporary bridge structure are being installed. There are 24 piers in total. Pier caps are in the process of being formed and concrete will be poured next week at piers 1 and 2. After that, concrete abutments will be poured. Beginning in mid October, sections of the temporary bridge superstructure will arrive on site. The temporary bridge should be operational by the end of the year. The relocation of existing utilities will be under this structure may cause a temporary loss of service to occur and those affected will be notified. The project is on budget with \$4.8M of the \$30M cost expended. The only significant change order thus far was a MA Department of Transportation requirement for larger piles. Work on the permanent bridge will begin in the winter.

Helen Miranda Wilson asked how the herring are doing, whether the Selectboard had decided on external cladding, and how long utility service would be interrupted. Stinson said that he was not sure if Herring out migration had occurred yet. Ridley noted that herring passage is allowed at all stages of construction. Stinson reported that Fuss & O'Neill is preparing a life cycle cost analysis of cladding treatments that will be presented to the Selectboard for its input on cladding. The temporary utility disruption should only be a few hours.

Brian Carlstrom asked if the project was on schedule. Stinson reported that the project is on schedule and things are going to plan.

Barry McLaughlin asked how temporary bridge components will be transported to the site. Stinson said that the bridge sections will be delivered by flatbed truck, with 2-3 trips per day.

Geoff Sanders provided the update on the Mill Creek Water Control Structure. The US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service has granted \$8M to construct the structure. The 25% non-federal match funding is being provided by the National Park Foundation and MA Division of Ecological Restoration. Bids were received over the summer and Sanders anticipates that a contractor will be announced soon. The earliest construction could begin is November 1 due to time of year restrictions for the Northern Long-eared bat.

Ridley provided an update on low road elevation and culvert replacements, and property mitigation. Final design for elevation of low-lying roads and culvert replacements is progressing. The bidding and construction start schedules for low road and culvert work have been revised to Summer 2024 (bidding)

and Fall 2024/Winter 2025 (construction start) to allow ample time for completion of final design and competitive bidding, and meet all applicable time-of-year restrictions. The revised schedule will not alter the timeline for restoring tidal flow to Herring River. Because flood mitigation work on four private properties is closely aligned with the timing of low road work, the schedule for installation of protective measures on private properties, including Chequessett Club golf course, also has been revised to begin late 2024.

Tim Smith provided an update on vegetation clearing. Clearing of woody vegetation on an additional 40 acres in Duck Harbor is expected to resume in December 2023, for a total of 120 acres cleared. Additional clearing of approximately 60 acres of woody vegetation between High Toss Road and the Chequessett Neck dike is expected to take place in Winter 2024. The clearing and access plan is still being developed and will need to go out to bid.

Smith also provided an update on the spoil berm pilot project. This project would utilize spoil berm material to fill unwanted man-made channels. He noted that 30% plans should be ready in November and permitting would begin early in 2024.

Wilson asked if woody material from tree clearing left at Duck Harbor was interfering with plant growth or drainage. Smith replied that the material is integrating with the soil and plants are growing through it. There is also no discernable change in drainage. She asked if changes on the Duck Harbor cleared surface are being monitored, and they are. Wilson also asked what is the dominant species of phragmites, which is *Phragmites Australis*.

Ridley reported on recent low dissolved oxygen readings in Lower Herring River which are being discussed with MA Division of Marine Fisheries and the Town Herring Warden in light of the herring outmigration. Low dissolved oxygen readings have been observed in Cape Cod Bay also. Dr. Kevin Kroeger of USGS recently presented an update on his Blue Carbon research, which is ongoing.

Member Announcements:

Brian Carlstrom announced that this would be his last meeting as he is taking a new post in Colorado beginning in October. He said the project is an example of conservation and community conservation and stewardship that is being noted around the country. He wished the project continued success. He also noted that Leslie Reynolds will capably fill in as Acting Superintendent until a new Superintendent is hired. Ridley and others thanked Carlstrom for his leadership of the project during a critical period and wished him well in his new role.

Public Comment:

Paul Faxon requested that neighbors to the vegetation clearing have an opportunity to meet with Tim Smith to review the clearing areas and access plan when that is available. With regard to the Mill Creek project, he noted that contractors may be tempted to park or transport heavy equipment over Chequessett Knolls Rd, which is a private road. Carlstrom remarked that both requests would be addressed.

Next Meeting Dates

The following meeting dates remain in 2023:

Thursday, December 14, 2023, 3:00 pm

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:50 pm.

Minutes approved by HREC on December 14, 2023 and submitted by Carole Ridley.