

Hopedale Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 25, 2022

Call to Order: 1 pm by Becca Solomon
Meeting held virtually via Zoom.

Attendees on Zoom:

Becca Solomon, Dave Guglielmi, Marcia Matthews.

Stephen Jahnes, MBTA; Omar Alchaar, MBTA; Dan Cannata, Environmental Scientist VHB; Tess Paganelli.

Public Hearing

Emergency Bridge Repair on the Bellingham-Hopedale line.

Becca: Our only item of business is the emergency certification request from the MBTA for a bridge repair on the Charles River. I will pass that over to Stephen and Dan.

Dan Cannata: Thank you for being with us on short notice here to discuss this proposed work. I can give a little overview. MBTA has identified that a pier on a bridge structure over the Charles River is experiencing deterioration leading to a loss of structural integrity. The bridge itself spans the river in both Bellingham and Hopedale. We did meet with the Bellingham commission this past Wednesday, to discuss the project as well. This work can be permitted as an emergency action under the provisions of 310 CMR 10.06. This is a declared emergency by a state agency, the MBTA.

Stephen Jahnes: Thank you for meeting with us today. Just wanted to give you the overview of the project site because it's not an easy place to get to. You have to walk on the right of way of a single-track bridge. That is not the timber superstructure and historic granite abutments. The timbers that are in question are down in the waterline. There's two of them. They are an interface between where you see those columns going down and timber pilings that are driven deep into the ground below so they transfer the loads from the columns down into the pilings. What we're seeing is advanced deterioration over the last 40 years. We have a couple views of the plans. There's an elevation of the bridge and a close up of the end of the timbers that we're repairing, and then an overall view of the pier and elevation. We are going to encase those two members in concrete and basically drill rebar through it to allow the whole thing to become a shored up cohesive system again. Because of this location in the waterline, pour in the wet which means that we would do all the formwork and all the rebar in the water using a dive team and then come back in and pour concrete which would be still in the waterline. We've left those two items out of the plans in order to first talk with the two Commission's and see if there is a direction in which there was a preferred method.

Stephen Jahnes (cont'd): We have some additional information on the methods of wash where they would be done and some of the mitigations that they would do to help protect the wetlands. Just want to give a quick moment to see if there's any questions on the work.

Marcia: I wanted to know if you're going to use hydraulic concrete.

Stephen Jahnes: Yes, it would be hydraulic concrete, a fast-curing concrete because of the fast time period necessary due to get the trains back on the tracks, so we have this specific product in mind. The dewatering plan to make the conditions right, we would use a water-inflated dam and pump around the site to get water from one side of the dam to the next. We estimate right now that that dam would be in use for about a week. It has the option to deflate if there happened to be an unexpected storm or high flow. We would also have double layer forms and a waterproofing layer in between them, and that would help to contain the slurry. Both these methods will have to be designed and detailed in depth by the contractor and have an opportunity for review by us the consultants and anybody else who needs to have a chance to review. The tracks carry the Grafton-Upton Railroad which is a freight company that runs trains over twice a week. The tracks can also be used as an MBTA bypass in case there is a need.

Marcia: The MBTA is a bypass it's not a regular run?

Stephen Jahnes: The tracks are not used as passenger train regular run because there's a twice a week scheduled freight.

Dave: Is the line commonly used or not used because of the severe deterioration?

Stephen Jahnes: It is currently in use. It has a speed restriction of 10 miles an hour.

Dave: Do you plan something more substantial in the future?

Stephen Jahnes: The extent to which work that needs to be done to replace this structure is pretty involved. It was going to take much longer than what we needed to do a quick replacement. We're looking at around a two-year range to do a total complete replacement. This is a temporary repair to shore up the system.

Dave: Will you be filing a notice of intent?

Stephen: Yes, it won't be a repair that time; it'll be a complete replacement.

Dave: I received Bellingham's copy mostly filled out emergency certification. They filled out the work to be approved section. I do have one question. I'm presuming Bellingham already affiliated to issue their emergency certification on there, and did they add any conditions for the work beyond? Describe the work?

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Dan Cannata: They did. Their commission is planning on this weekend to sign the actual document. The conditions they were asking for was oversight by professional wetland scientists. And also, just going through the required protocols for working with the beaver dam located in the area was typically to the Board of Health and that would involve having a beaver expert on board with the contractor during construction.

Becca: I would find it prudent that we make sure our conditions match Bellingham's and recommend that we add those conditions to ours as well.

Dave: The beaver dam is located in Bellingham?

Dan Cannata: So the town line cuts right through here. The dam is right here on this side. It's a crossing here from one abutment or one shoreline to the other. One big material.

Dave: Are the beavers in Bellingham?

Becca: Well, the dam is in Bellingham. The beavers probably go back and forth.

Dave: Are the tracks owned by the MBTA?

Stephen Jahnes: Correct. They're owned by the MBTA as far as Keolis. Whenever you need to get access to those tracks, you need to go through Keolis.

Dave: How deep is the water there that you need divers?

Stephen Jahnes: Divers because it's a certification for the work. They might need to stick their head underwater in order to get the correct location for a drill hole. But mostly it's the tools and equipment that need to be used so they have divers do that type of work

Dave: Is the certification for 30 days and another 30 days?

Dan Cannata: This would be the 30 days. The rest would be clean-up.

Stephen Jahnes: We have to coordinate schedule.

Omar Alchaar: Hold on issuing the certificate until we know when we can start.

Tess Paganelli: Make sure I've got them locked down before.

Becca: Issuance date is when we put it in the mail.

Conservation Commission voted unanimously to issue a certificated permitting the emergency work to be conducted at the earliest convenience of the applicant.

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Becca: The emergency certification will be issued once the applicant notifies us they're ready to receive it. And it will have the same conditions as Bellingham with the wetland scientists, and the beaver monitor.

The meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m.