

**Town of Pelham, NH  
Pelham Conservation Commission  
6 Village Green  
Pelham, NH 03076-3723**

**MEETING OF 04/13/22**

Members Present:

Karen Mackay, Paul Gagnon  
Lisa Loosigian, Kara Kubit (alt),  
Al Steward, Mike Gendreau,  
Ken Stanvick

**APPROVED 05/11/22**

Members Absent:

Scott Bowden (alt)

Paul Gagnon brought the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. He appointed Ms. Kubit as a voting member for this meeting.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

Motion: (Steward/Gendreau) to elect Karen Mackay as Secretary.

Vote: 7-0-0 in favor.

Motion: (Mackay/Steward) to elect Mike Gendreau as Vice-Chairman.

Vote: 7-0-0 in favor.

Motion: (Gendreau/Mackay) to elect Al Steward as Chairman.

Vote: 7-0-0 in favor.

Mr. Gagnon thanked the Commission and members thanked him for serving as Chairman. Mr. Steward assumed the Chairman's duties immediately and led the Commission for the remainder of the meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Pelham/Hudson town line	Special permit application for temporary impacts to wetlands and WCD for the 326 Transmission Line Structure Replacement Project for Public Service of NH/Eversource Energy – Presentation by Conor Madison of GZA GeoEnvironmetal, Inc. and Kurt Nelson of Eversource Energy.
-------------------------	--

This case regards a special permit through Planning for upcoming maintenance work of the 326 electric transmission line that crosses into Pelham from Hudson, then returns to Hudson. There are 5 powerline structures in Pelham. One of the wooden structures will be replaced by a steel constructed structure. The work on this powerline structure requires a special permit from Planning because of work in the wetlands and WCD. A wetland permit will be submitted to the

state for approvals. This work will be filed under a Statutory Permit by Notification. This project qualifies for this type of permit because it is a minimum impact project with temporary wetland impacts.

The proposal is to replace utility structure number 121. The old structure is made of wood. The poles are cracking and splitting due to weather damage and have a number of holes from woodpeckers. The replacement structure will be made of steel. The poles will have an 'H' shape with two poles and a cross piece connecting the poles. The conductors will sit on the crosspiece. Access to the site will be off Bush Hill Road in Hudson, NH. A previously existing gravel service road allows access to the site. The road was originally built for the Merrimack Valley Reliability Project. The road width, culverts, and road quality are all in good condition and no further expansion or maintenance of the road will be necessary for this project.

The 2019 Utility Maintenance Projects Manual will be used to ensure proper procedures for the project. Best management practices (BPM's) will be followed, which include timber matting to cross wetlands. The timber mats are 4 feet by 16 feet and will be laid across the wetlands. The mats will press down the vegetation in the wetland areas. Heavy trucks will then be able to cross the wetlands while causing minimal damage to the wetlands. The mats will be removed after construction. The vegetation should recover easily once the mats are removed. The mats will be cleaned to remove seeds from them prior to being installed so as to avoid spreading invasive plant species to new locations. Silt socks will be installed to prevent erosion of sediments into the wetlands. The socks will be free from plastic webbing so turtles and snakes do not get entangled. An environmental monitor will be onsite to make sure BPM's are followed. Any issues will be handled immediately.

Statutory Permit by Notification permits must be coordinated with the Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) and NH Fish and Game (NHF&G). There are no rare, threatened or endangered species on the site, but there are some hits on species within a one mile radius of the project location. The town will be given notice from the state on any reports regarding these species.

The project is expected to begin in June. There is a structure in Hudson that will be replaced. This structure is directly over the town line from Pelham. There will be wetland impacts in Pelham for the Hudson powerline replacement. As with the Pelham replacement, the wetland impacts will be temporary.

Timber matting is built in 4 x16 foot sections. The gravel roadway is 16 feet across. The matting will lay across the road. Mats will be interlaced in order to distribute weight throughout. The matting is designed so as not to cause ruts in the wetlands. A 40 foot long section of road will require 10 timber mats. The existing gravel roads are in the uplands. The wetlands will be crossed on the timber mats. The mats will be removed when construction is complete. There should be minimal damage to wetlands and vegetation.

The work area for the structure replacement will be permitted for a 100x100 foot area around the powerline structure. Approximately 8,000 square feet (sf) of wetlands will be impacted in Pelham. These wetlands have WCD's, but the road is already built so these impacts have already occurred. There will be no further impacts to the WCD for this project.

The heavy equipment to be used on this project includes, bucket trucks with a 100 foot height, a crane to bring in poles, an excavator and bulldozer and a drilling rig with an auger for drilling the holes for the poles. The steel poles will be 80 feet tall. The poles are weighted on the bottom. The hole dug for the poles will be 3 to 3 ½ feet wide. The new poles will be offset from the old by about 5 feet.

The procedure is as follows. The mats will be laid across the wetlands. The new holes for the poles will be dug 15 feet deep. The new 'H' structure poles will be installed. The holes will be backfilled. The electric lines will be moved from the old poles to the new poles. The old poles will be cut out and removed with a crane. The equipment will be removed and the timber mats will be pulled up.

Eversource is working on a massive rebuild of old wooden structures and transitioning to steel. This is a common replacement job in NH. There are wetlands everywhere in the right-of-ways (ROW). These projects require environmental monitoring, multiple permits, state and Department of Environmental Services (DES) permits, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permits, land disturbance permits and weekly environmental reports. Deficiencies must be corrected promptly. The power company conducts annual inspections of its structures for defects. This line runs through Hudson, Londonderry, Litchfield and Pelham.

Motion: (Gagnon/Stannick) to approve the application and recommend this project to Planning.  
Vote: 7-0-0 in favor.

## **PRESENTATION**

Soak Up The Rain New Hampshire – How and why we soak up the rain, this program is run through DES and focuses on at home storm water management – Presentation by Lisa Loosigian

Ms. Loosigian is a member of the Conservation Commission and works for NHDES. She manages a program called Soak Up the Rain NH. Other states have soak up the rain programs as does the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Soak Up the Rain is within the Watershed Assistance section of DES which is almost entirely a pass through grant fund. Federal dollars are passed to states for watershed programs.

The Residential Stormwater Management Program (aka) managing rain water runoff at home focuses on education and outreach mainly to groups such as watershed and lake associations. Soak Up the Rain provides trainings in landscaping for water quality, rain gardens and can provide installation assistance. The website for the program is [www.soaknh.org](http://www.soaknh.org).

The state began working on this program when they realized there was no guidance to residential homeowners about storm water management. There has been a lot of rules and regulations for managing storm water on large developments, commercial properties and roadways. The missing piece was residential storm water management. DES employees wrote up the NH Homeowners Guide to Stormwater Management. The manual explains how and why it is important to manage storm water at home. The manual describes 10 do-it-yourself storm water solutions. DES

employees realized they needed away to inform state residents about this resource so they created the Soak Up the Rain program. The program forms partnerships primarily with lake and watershed associations. The program values these partnerships and works with these associations to understand a question or problem then come to a solution together. The program does not just tell the groups what to do, they work with groups to find a workable solution. The program will do site visits and make recommendations and may help with installations onsite to help manage runoff. The program will teach individuals how to install water bars or other systems then those people can pass their knowledge to more people to solve problems with runoff in their communities.

Soak Up the Rain and the related manual describes ten storm water solutions, which are rain barrels, drip trenches, driveway trenches, rain gardens, vegetated buffers, vegetated swales, infiltration steps, porous pavers, drywells, and water bars. Ms. Loosigian described 3 of these solutions to us. This document can be added to the town website along with helpful links. Mr. Gendreau has added the link to the Facebook page. The Soak Up the Rain website has additional helpful ways to manage runoff even if individuals cannot undertake one of the ten storm water solutions. Individuals can maintain their vehicles so oils do not leak from hoses, do not use fertilizers on lawns, have natural areas at the edge of lawns, use commercial car washes as they reclaim and reuse the water, in the winter use more sand and less salt to manage ice on walkways.

Rain gardens are a sunken flat bottom garden designed to capture rain water so it can soak into the ground. The garden sits 4-10 inches below grade to create a ponding area. Heavy rain will flow into the rain garden, be captured for a time in that location, and then will soak into the ground. Ms. Loosigian, along with other employees of DES, compiled a list of native plants that are suitable for rain gardens.

A water bar or rubber razor is a structure made of conveyor belt material sandwiched between lumber. The conveyor belt material protrudes above grade with the purpose of pushing water to the side of the driveway or path into a vegetated area. This keeps water from running down a driveway into a water body. Ms. Loosigian said old conveyor belt material can sometimes be acquired for free at sand and gravel companies. These companies periodically need to replace old belts. The used belts are perfect for building water bars as the belt material is flexible and can be driven over with a vehicle. Care should be taken with plowing as the plow blade can rip the water bar out.

Mr. Stanvick asked about the chemical content of the belts and pressure treated timbers used in the construction of the water bars. He questioned if these materials are safe for the environment. We might be making another problem. We should know if we are doing more harm than good. We are not intending to do environmental damage but we may be. This should be something we think about. He also asked if some of these storm water solutions could be recommended to land owners as well as developers when they come before us for approvals of a project. He thinks we need to take a holistic approach when we make recommendations.

Infiltration steps are built on a slope. Wooden boards can be used to box out steps. The step areas can then be filled with crushed stone or rock. These steps can moderate a slope so water slows

down and does not erode the slope. Other materials found onsite can also be used to make steps or moderate a slope. Ms. Mackay has used rocks found in the garden to make tiers on a slope and make steps.

The problem with increased development has been increased storm water runoff causing road flooding, road washout, and the weakened river and stream banks. The residential Soak Up the Rain program is a part of the solution to the problem of excessive runoff. Sediments running off surfaces and yards can cloud lakes and streams. This runoff can also contain phosphorous and fertilizers. Fertilizers encourage the growth of grass and garden plants, but also accelerate the growth of algae and plants in water bodies. This accelerated growth in lakes and ponds can cause cyanobacteria (blue/green algae) blooms that contaminate the waterbodies. There are more frequent and longer lasting outbreaks of algal blooms than in the past. Pet waste is also a problem as bacteria in the waste can get in the water and cause E. coli outbreaks. Residents cannot swim in water with high levels of E. coli.

There are impaired waterbodies throughout the state of New Hampshire. Impairments can be cloudy water, bacteria and/or algal growth. Storm water runoff causes or contributes to over 90 percent of the water pollution problems in the state. Pelham has impaired water bodies. Ms. Dena Hoffman, in Planning, has a list of these water bodies in town. Between regulations and awareness many point source pollution causes have been cleaned up. Now the biggest problem is runoff from roads and land.

Salts are a problem on the land and in water bodies. Salts are hard to treat and remain in water for years. Salts can seep through upland areas into water bodies. Salts are a big contaminate of concern with the state. The state has a program called Green Snow Pro which teaches salt applicators how to use salt affectively. The program teaches applicators how to calibrate how much salt to use depending on weather conditions and/or predicted weather conditions. Applications are related to temperature, temperature drop, precipitation, etc. Brine is used to pretreat highways in NH. This salt mix is designed so water will not freeze on the roads in a storm so less salt is needed to maintain safe roads. This is a big focus of DES. The only way to have less chlorides in water bodies is to use less salt to treat roadways. Currently, there is no way to treat chloride in water bodies. Phosphorus can be treated in water bodies. In lake treatments can be done by adding certain chemicals to bind the phosphorous and have it drop out of the water column.

### **MINUTES:**

Motion: (Stanvick/Gagnon) to approve the minutes of February 16, 2022.

Vote: 6-0-1 in favor. Stanvick abstained.

### **WALK-IN ITEMS:**

Mr. Gendreau volunteered to be the Conservation Commission representative on the new Off-Road Vehicle Committee that was voted on the town ballot in March. The Committee has one year to come up with recommendations about the use of off-road vehicles on town lands.

Motion: (Stanvick/Gagnon) to recommend Mike Gendreau as the Conservation Commission's representative on the Off-Road Vehicle Committee.

Vote: 7-0-0 in favor.

Earth Day is next week. Mr. Gendreau will add a link to the Facebook page with tips to help the Earth.

Ms. Mackay will look into how to allow town residents outside the meeting to be involved with the meeting. This was brought up several months ago and needs to be revisited.

Discover Wild NH Day is this Saturday, April 16, 2022 at NH Fish and Game, on Hazen Drive in Concord. This is a family friendly event.

The Commission would like to thank the voters for approving all of our articles on the ballot in March. The 9 articles included the following:

- a) A 2.5 million dollar bond to buy conservation land
- b) Change in current use from 75% to 100% for conservation land
- c) The change of Tower Hill Rd. and Spaulding Hill Rd. from class VI roads to class A trails
- d) \$56,100 for forest management
- e) Allowing Forestry to manage their own money and use without prior approvals
- f) Two prime wetland articles
- g) The purchase of the Blueberry Circle lot. This purchase has closed already.

In addition, the voters approved the citizen's petition to form a committee to study ORV use on town lands. Mr. Gendreau has volunteered to be part of that committee.

#### **NON-PUBLIC SESSION:**

Motion: (Mackay/Loosigian) to go into non-public session to discuss land acquisitions, to seal the minutes of non-public and to adjourn after non-public.

Vote: 7-0-0 in favor.

Adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Mackay,  
Recording Secretary