

Heath Conservation Commission

2025-07-31 Meeting Minutes

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM

Members present: Brian DeVries, Chair, Heather Rowe, Pam Porter

Others present: Honora Lovelace Tisell, Mass Electric Representative, Abutters: Barbara Gordon, David Gordon, Paul Lagreze (came later) Residents: Maureen Lattrell, Wanda Monney, John Mooney

7:01 Public Hearing Opened:

The purpose of the hearing was to review a Notice of Intent (NOI), MA DEP No. 180-0065, filed by BSC Group on behalf of Massachusetts Electric Co. for the installation/replacement of poles and overhead line associated with the 1019W1 distribution line along E. MainStreet, Taylor Brook Road and Avery Brook Road in Heath, MA MassElectric

Two hard copies of the NOI, including maps, had been previously submitted to ConCom Chair and Consultant. Consultant reviewed the project prior to the hearing.

Ms. Lovelace Tisell presented project which calls for 39 new poles along the route and 57 to be replaced. Project is along roadway and access is from roadway. There will be about 4 sq. ft of disturbance around each pole removed or replaced.

Consultant asked about tree removal in riverfront area and wetlands. He noted that there was no mitigation plan submitted for these removals. Presenter stated that because it is a limited project and for service of the public, a mitigation plan is not required.

Consultant verified that there are 75 trees within riverfront and 1 tree in wetlands area, constituting a conversion from forested to shrub woodland. The removal of these trees will admit more sunlight to the area and warm the stream. Consultant suggested planting shrubs to replace trees in order to provide shade. He also suggested improving the site by removing any invasive exotics. He asked if MassElectric would be amenable to such mitigation. Presenter said she would present it to the company.

A question was asked about the timetable for commencement of the work. The presenter said that the work in the Charlemont portion of the project was already underway and that the Heath portion would commence when the Charlemont work is completely, this fall at the earliest.

Consultant recommended that the ConCom discuss specific conditions. Presenter observed that some towns opt to see what the removal looks like before setting conditions.

A question was raised concerning replacing one tree with only one bush would be adequate and whether shrubs along the roadway would decrease visibility and make more work for the town road crew. Consultant said that the replacements were only to take place in the riverfront area and that there would be in a forested area where other trees would provide some shade. Shrubs planted in shaded areas might not be successful. He said that the shrubs would not create a visibility problem and could be cut back in the normal course of roadside mowing.

A question was raised about bank erosion. The presenter said that the trees would be cut but the trunks and root systems would not be removed. The roots are left to hold the bank. The consultant added that most of the poles are placed on the opposite side of the road from the river bank. He said he appreciated the care MassElectric had taken in its plan to do this.

A question was asked about the source of the fill being used in holes left by removed poles. There was discussion about requiring that any fill be free of exotic invasives.

Finally, there was a question about not leaving removed poles on the site after the completion of the project.

The presenter shared that this work had been undertaken because the feeder being upgraded has had one of the worst records of outages in the state. It was observed that these outages had taken place almost entirely at the switch yard, not along the roadways.

Hearing was closed following this discussion at about 7:40. A motion was made by Pam Porter and seconded by Heather Rowe that the ConCom approve the project be approved with the following conditions:

1. Removed trees within a wetland or within 50' of a riverbank will be replaced one for one with 2'-3' native fruiting shrubs.
2. HCC will be notified 7 days before the project commences.
3. Clean fill, obtained from local gravel suppliers and free of exotic invasives, will be utilized for backfilling holes.
4. No poles shall be left on the ground in the town of Heath more than 30 days after the completion of the project, including work by Verizon.

Motion passed unanimously.

There were no updates on gravel mining operation on Rte. 8A

There were no minutes submitted for review.

We agreed that in future agendas Chair would stipulate that items reviewed that were not on the agenda be only on an emergency basis. In addition, items for discussion at a future meeting will be identified but not discussed.

Chair said he would schedule the next meeting after he has had time to check on a couple of pending projects.

Respectfully submitted,

Pam Porter