



# Town of Sudbury

## Historical Commission

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### MINUTES DECEMBER 15, 2020 VIRTUAL MEETING

**Present:** Chair Chris Hagger, Vice-Chair Diana Warren, Jan Costa, Steve Greene, Diana Cebra, Taryn Trexler, Marjorie Katz, Fred Bautze – Associate Commissioner

**Others Present:**

Stacy Spies, Historical Preservation Consultant; Rick Conard, Railroad Historian – Wayland Historical Commission;

Director of Planning and Community Development Adam Duchesneau, Rick Conard, Railroad Historian – Wayland Historical Commission; Stacy Spies, Historic Preservation Consultant; Denise Bartone, Eversource; Paul Jahnige, DCR (MA Department of Conservation and Recreation); Brooke Kenline-Nyman, Eversource; Marc Bergeron, Epsilon Associates; Barry Fogel, Keegan-Wharlen; Vivian Kimball, VHB, Raymond Phillips, Nicholas Pernice and Julie Franco Leiberman

Mr. Hagger opened the meeting at 6:00 PM

**Eversource – Transmission Line Project**

Mr. Hagger stated that in consideration of the Eversource Transmission Line Project development and the Historical Commission Bylaw, the Sudbury Historical Commission's (SHC) function is "to preserve, protect, and develop the historical and archeological assets of the Town of Sudbury." He stated that the HC role on this project is under the Section 106 review where the SHC has to evaluate the impacts of the project on any district, site, building, structure or object that is included or could be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Hagger stressed that SHC is focusing its consideration regarding potential adverse impacts with the proposed underground transmission line as well as, the construction of a rail trail, in the larger context of the long approximate 3 ½ mile-long railroad corridor that contains a large number of historically-related/significant railroad artifacts. He stated that the railroad corridor and its individual artifacts that are found along the ROW (Right of Way) are important in relation to the history of the railroad running through Sudbury. He stressed the historical uniqueness of the Sudbury railroad corridor, stressing that the corridor has been frozen in time untouched - not been changed in the forty-some years that it ceased to be an active rail way.

Mr. Hagger stated that many of the significant artifacts look eligible to be listed in the National Register.

Mr. Hagger commented that the Commission has been looking at two projects – one project is the installation of the transmission line and what impacts it would have on the historical artifacts, and the bike trail project and what are the impacts from this project.

Mr. Hagger posed two big picture questions. Who would be designing and constructing the transmission line. He asked who actually would be designing and constructing the bike trail portion of the project – is that Eversource or DCR? He stated that it seems that there has not been a lot of incorporation of the railroad historical artifacts into the potential project design of either phases.

Mr. Jahnige replied that the project is a joint project – it is a single project of two phases, the transmission line, access road, rehabilitation of the bridges, restoration and planting were all in Phase I and when DCR takes over – paving of the rail trail surface, safety fencing, some plantings and rail trail amenities in phase II. He also stated that DCR has a design team in designing phase II.

Ms. Warren thanked Eversource and DRC representatives for attending the Commission's meeting. She commented on the recent December 11<sup>th</sup> Eversource letter's mention of Eversource's meeting with the Commission in November 2018. Ms. Warren pointed out that the 2018 meeting with Eversource was a preliminary meeting about the undertaking, that it was eight months before the Archaeological Intensive Survey was completed in May 2019, and that the Commission had only received an un-redacted copy of that Survey recently. She stated that the Commission is trying to understand the project which has been a moving target beginning in 2017 when the Select Boards of Hudson and Sudbury were publically told by Eversource that the bridges would not be involved in the project and not be touched then evolved to a late design changes about the railroad diamond to recently giving the examples of the projects' plans to remove and demolish the bridges and pave the rotary. She stated that the Commission has been trying to follow the details and the evolving changes in this project. She noted that when the Commission met with Eversource in September 2019 the Commission did not have in hand the Archaeological Intensive Survey and only recently received an un-redacted copy which the Commission is now beginning to digest.

Mr. Greene expressed concern about the railroad diamond and the railroad's historical importance, and asked if the design had been submitted to the MHC and the Army Corps. He suggested that to preserve the historical integrity of the diamond that one section of rail on both approaches on both sides for four sections of rail be retained as part of the design. He also expressed concerned about preservation of as much of rail as possible.

Mr. Jahnige showed a plan sheet of the new design of the diamond rotary. Ms. Warren requested that a digital copy of the diamond design be provide to the Commission.

Ms. Cebra remarked about the town's interest and efforts in the past to preserve the Section Tool House and awareness of its historical significance and residents would be outraged about what could happen to the House structure and the surrounding area. She commented that the loading dock platform is attached to the House and having the rails and Section House together has significance, and if separated it doesn't show what the building was used for. Ms. Cebra asked how the House, loading dock and tracks would be effected.

Ms. Warren asked if the MHC and the Army Corps been provided with a sheet plan that shows the loading platform within the footprint of the Section Tool House? Mr. Hagger asked that Eversource to get back to the Commission to answer that question.

Mr. Hagger asked how will the setting around the Section House be effected – how is it going to look different and are there going to be fences there? What is the 20 foot radius around the House going to look like?

Ms. Costa asked questions about the culverts – about locating and preserving them, and what was Eversource’s approach to dealing with culverts.

Mr. Hagger asked if the functional culverts would be restored and kept in place.

Ms. Trexler commented that she thought the way the Commission has changed looking at the corridor like it is as a whole instead of parts – and there is a really robust story to tell and that is part of what our Commission is charged with is to not only preserving history but promoting it, She stated it is important to look at all those pieces and how they can be highlighted together. She asked if the referenced plan set was the July 2020 plan set.

Mr. Hagger opined that a successful rail trail should incorporate and highlight the historical rail road artifacts and asked how these artifacts are going to be highlighted.

Ms. Bartone responded that comments to the Army Corps should include what the Commission wants for mitigation.

Mr. Hagger also asked about attaching the transmission line to bridge 128 on the visible outside of the plate girder. Ms. Bartone commented that the Commission make the comment to the Corps. Mr. Hagger stated that the signal M-1208 should be highlighted and preserved and protected, and it is preferred that bridge 127 be raised instead of being replaced. He commented that replacing the bridge is not the way to apply the Sec. of the Interior’s standards. And Mr. Hagger commented that the railroad corridor in Sudbury has a larger number of historical railroad features that are intact and Sudbury has more at stake than other communities.

Ms. Warren commented that July 2020 project sheet plans the Commission has do not show design changes so there are aspects of the design plans that do impact significant historical resources so the Commission needs the most recent plans.

Ms. Warren commented that updated plan sets have been provide to the Conservation Commission. She asked if the Commission had the latest plan sets and what is the current plan for these projects – does the Historical Commission have the latest information.

Ms. Trexler referred to the detailed renderings of what the bridges will look like that had been provided to the Commission and commented that the Commission has not seen such design renderings for other parts of the trail like around the Section Tool House or the diamond. She asked if DCR anticipated those design renderings will be produced at some point in the near future for the Commission to review – it’s becoming a little difficult to look at a plan and how this project all comes together and what the end product looks like is still kind of a black box.

Mr. Jahnige stated that there are no plans to produce any rendering for other portions of the corridor and understands the challenges of reading plan sets and visualizing what is happening.

Ms. Warren asked if DCR will gain legal access to the ROW after Phase I is completed. Mr. Jahnige stated that DCR has a lease agreement with the MBTA to have access now but the DCR construction project will not start until phase I is complete.

Ms. Warren asked if Eversource will be responsible for all of the construction that deals with all the historic railroad features during phase I to include removal of the track, replace bridge 127, partial replacement of bridge 128, removing/resetting the railroad features along the project that will be conducted in phase I? Ms. Bartone responded that sounds accurate. Ms. Warren then asked Eversource if DCR will be doing any construction work during phase I. Ms. Bartone responded no.

Ms. Warren asked questions about the choice of a trail surface material and if DCR has funding in hand to construct the rail trail. She also asked when DCR had engaged the Town of Sudbury in regard to the style and type of rail trail for this ROW. Mr. Jahnige stated DCR had engaged in a host of public outreach and multi-town and specifically with Sudbury staff and planning in 2017. Ms. Warren asked for DCR to provide that information to the Commission.

Mr. Hagger asked for information that he had previously asked for during the site visit for additional information from Eversource on why they needed to remove the granite blocks on bridge 128 on the embankment. He stated there is concern about why those blocks have to be removed and could Eversource commit to getting that information back to the Commission? Ms. Bartone agreed to provide that information.

Mr. Hagger also noted that the Commonwealth Heritage Group report identified the historic artifacts throughout the corridor but why did the report not address the National Register eligibility for these artifacts? Ms. Kenline-Nyman replied she believed that the railroad features were not the scope of the report but the report was for a full assessment of the historic district at that time.

Resident Raymond Phillips stated that he was disappointed about the direction of tonight's meeting with Eversource and DCR, and DCR has not had meaningful conversations in the past five years with Town boards/committees. He noted that the projects were not comparable to Weston and Wayland as those lines have been in place for 70 years.

Mr. Phillips asked if consultation with the Narragansett tribe has taken place with respect to the Section 106 permit. Ms. Kenline-Nyman responded such consultation for 106 would be the responsibility of the Federal Government agency role to discuss the project with them and Eversource's role would have been to involve them in the phase 1B if they were interested in the project. Mr. Phillips stated that the Narragansets were very interested in the project and if Eversource had spoken with Sudbury they would have known that Sudbury had funded a reconnaissance in 2017 by the Narragansett tribe members and that survey and report indicated they found a number of sites important to them. Ms. Bartone added that Eversource did consult and speak to the Narragansett tribe reps and were invited as part of our phase 1B efforts and to attend a session, which they did not appear for. She added that the Aquinnah and the Mashpee tribe were also consulted.

Ms. Warren asked who at the Narragansett tribe did Eversource consult with. Ms. Bartone responded it was Doug Harris. Ms. Warren asked when that happened. Ms. Kenline-Nyman stated she believed the Commission received a full word document about their outreach to the tribes. Ms. Warren stated that that

document did not include the Narragansets. Ms., Kenline-Nyman stated she would look into that again and try to get the information for the Commission.

Mr. Phillips asked why the applicants cannot answer these questions directly or deferred them to the SHC to ask the Army Corps of Engineers and suggested that the Commission not accept non-answers to the questions that were asked. He also asked which party is exactly responsible for paying for either the movement, the restoration, the rehabilitation, the signage as he has never seen any document over five years that spells out what will happen, what Eversource will do, and leave it to someone else to take care of the resources. He encouraged the Commission to insist that every historic resource is inventoried and the party that is responsible for rehabilitation and restoration be known. He also stated that asphalt paving is not an ADA requirement.

Resident Nick Pernice inquired if reports have been sent to tribal representatives and when the first 2017 archeological unredacted report was sent to the Mashpee tribe. He asked if the Nipmuc tribe had been consulted. He also asked if Eversource had ever provide the Narragansett tribe the three surveys: the Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey, the Historical Survey and the Intensive Survey.

Resident Julie Franco Lieberman, 19 Rolling Lane, asked Eversource about the location of the transmission line on the bridge, bridge peak loading and possible health risks.

Mr. Hagger stated that the Commission may have a need to talk with Eversource and DCR again, and will reach out for another interaction.

Ms., Bartone responded that Eversource looks forward to the Commission providing a letter to the Army Corps.

The following summarizes most of the topics and issues discussed during the meeting:

- The Commissioner posed various questions/comments to the panel, including: Who is responsible for the construction of the rail trail
- Who is responsible for the design of the rail trail
- Why did the plans for Bridges 127 and 128 change since November, 2017
- Why the demolition of the diamond was proposed
- After much resident involvement with preserving the Section House, how will it be preserved and maintained
- How close to the Section House, loading platform and rails will construction be
- Clear-cutting plans around the Section House area
- How will the setting/area around the Section House change – additional fencing, signage, etc.
- What will be the distance between surface manholes that cover the splice vaults.
- Could the section of fencing around the Section House be left in place
- Could avoidance process be used around the Section House in order to maintain the integrity of the Section House
- Possible elevation change around the Section House
- Had the MA Historical Commission (MHC) been provided with the footprint of the historic feature – the Station House; MHC noted that the project would have an adverse effect on the Section House

- The SHC has discovered additional culverts in the resource area, which are historical; can these culverts be preserved
- Feedback process to SHC when encountering mentioned historic element while construction takes place.
- Do the culverts require maintenance in consideration of hydraulics
- Will functioning culverts be restored and kept in place
- Date of most current project site plans outlining related avoidance plans
- Inclusion of all plan renderings/proposals, the plans as a whole depicting historical elements; such as the diamond renderings
- Could highlighting and incorporating artifacts be planned, rather than resetting and protecting the artifacts
- Alternatives to placing transmission lines along the girders on Bridge 128, as such implementation would not highlight the historical significance of the rarity of bridge girders in MA and possible to access from the rail trails so that people on the trail can observe the beauty and significance of these bridge features
- Could the design be modified to put the transmission line between the plate girders so visual impact will not be seen
- Could the M208 Signal be repaired in place, rather than being moved and reinstalling in consideration of the condition of the base, and should be a highlighted element on the rail trail
- Could Bridge 127 be raised rather than be entirely demolished, and questioned the applicant's statement asserting that replacement of the bridge was in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior guidelines
- Other similar rail trail projects which partners Eversource and DCR, on the same level of number of historical features as does Sudbury.
- Clearer explanation from the VHB letter dated September 30, 2020; which includes the Office of Secretary of the Interior affirming that such total demolition of Bridge 127 was recommended
- Has the Memorandum of Agreement been signed by Eversource and DCR
- When is the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement expected
- SHC requested draft/copy of the Memorandum of Agreement
- Has an avoidance plan been submitted to MHC
- All features be added to the avoidance plan, adding that a removal/resetting plan be forwarded
- Photo simulation submittal of all added features, to include signage, trail sensors, gates, partitions, etc.
- Depiction of alterations to the rail bed as the rail bed itself is a historic feature
- Is the Avoidance Plan executed by Eversource
- Width of vegetated clear-cut where the splice vaults will be located
- Consideration of stone dust rail trail
- Cost Analysis to lift and restore Bridge 127 vs. demolition of bridge and rebuild
- Does DCR have funding in hand to construct the rail trail
- Green Way Option
- Inclusion of Public Outreach
- Information regarding Removal of blocks at Bridge 128 on the embankments has not been received by the SHC

- Commonwealth Heritage Report aspects, such as National Register eligibility was missing

#### **Approval of November 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Hagger stated that the November 9<sup>th</sup> minutes were not ready for approval at this time.

#### **Adjourn**

Ms. Warren motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Costa seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous 7-0; Greene-aye, Hagger-aye, Costa-aye, Trexler-aye, Cebra-aye, Warren-aye, Katz-aye

VOTED: To adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:12 PM