

BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of Meeting
January 23, 2017
Broadmeadow Performance Center

A joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Park & Recreation Commission was convened by the Park & Recreation Commission at 7:02 p.m.

Selectmen present were Matthew D. Borrelli, Chair, Marianne B. Cooley, Vice Chair, Daniel P. Matthews, Clerk, John A. Bulian, Maurice P. Handel and Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick.

Park & Recreation Commissioners present were: Christopher J. Gerstel, Vice Chairman, Cynthia J. Chaston, Member, David C. DiCicco, Member, Michelle S. Geddes, Member, and Patricia M. Carey, Director of Park & Recreation

- 1. Joint Public Hearing with Board of Selectmen – Eversource West Roxbury to Needham Reliability Project:** Mr. Gerstel welcomed Board of Selectmen Chairman Matthew Borrelli, Vice Chairman Marianne Cooley, Dan Matthews, John Bulian and Moe Handel. Mr. Borrelli welcomed all who attended the meeting, explaining that the project is a federal mandate and that the Town of Needham would not make the final decision on the project route. The Board of Selectmen asked Eversource to pursue an underground route in Needham. Representatives from Eversource presented information on the project. The decision on the route will be made by the Siting Board, who is currently requesting information from Eversource and preparing for the public hearing process in March. Three volumes of information were submitted as part of the petition, or application. Volume One has the most detailed information on routes, and can be found on the Town's website, and all information on Department of Public Utility's (DPU) website. The preferred route, with variations, and the noticed alternative route can all be constructed. An overview was provided on the current right of way, and challenges for using it for either an underground or above ground option. The estimated construction time schedule in Needham would be eight months. Temporary pavement would initially be placed, but the final road repair will be done at a later time, under an agreement with Town officials. A traffic management consultant would create a plan with the Town, including Police, Fire, DPW and Schools, as part of determining the construction schedule.

Mr. Borrelli opened the meeting up for questions.

JB Royal (Broadmeadow Road) has used a meter to check radiation levels at various locations in and out of his home, and in areas along the proposed route, indicating that the levels of EMF are likely lower than in other locations people interact with daily.

Steven Brunelli (School Street) outlined his background as a physician and in public health. Studies of EMF are still not conclusive and have unanswered questions. The risk needs to be weighed.

Claire Fialkov (Warren Street) raised concern that the Town has not done its due diligence in researching the project and possible health issues. She has researched the health consultant providing input to Eversource and does not support their findings.

Chris Cox (Kimball Street) noted that the Town of Winchester has hired a consultant to do an independent analysis on a similar project. The analysis has shown that the proposed methodology for insulating the wires is not proven and there are other options that are less expensive that reduce EMF levels. He also noted that the methodology for studying and rating the routes is flawed and missing important components.

Ed Cosgrove, Chairman of the Board of Health, explained the process the Board went through to read and review extensive amounts of informational materials, including studies of EMF. Based on the data, the Board presented a two page review to the Board of Selectmen.

John Bergeron (Grant Street) questioned the scoring of the preferred route vs. the noticed alternative route. Using South Street as an example, why were there concerns for commuters when it appears most using it are not from Needham? How is the commuter route determined? The scenic road designation doesn't appear to impact South Street, as work would be done within the road. No mention of nursing homes or the hospital are mentioned in the scoring material. He questioned why the MBTA would support the preferred route rather than the alternate route that appears to have less impact on the commuter rail stations. There appears to be a bias towards protecting South Street.

Ted Villa (Kenney Street) stated that he felt more concern was raised for MBTA, Golf Course, and for Chapter 40B projects than for students at schools or in neighborhoods. He requested that East Needham be protected from more construction and more loss of trees. He asked that the Selectmen seek a waiver from the federal and state governments to keep the project from moving forward. He asked why South Street would get preferential treatment.

John Curtis (Greendale Avenue) and a trustee for the condominium association spoke on behalf of the 20 homeowners. They are concerned that 52 trees will be removed from their buffer. Construction is temporary, but damage to the environment is permanent. The preference is to move forward with the no-build option. He asked that a full study be undertaken and a rush to a decision not be made.

Ilan Barzilay (Thornton Road) asked how the scoring of each route was done, and whether information on the scoring was available. Mr. Borrelli noted that it is on the Town's website, as well as the DPU website.

David Moseley (Greendale Avenue) stated that he has Parkinson's Disease and worries about the impact from EMF on his implantable devices.

Sally Theran (Grant Street) noted that written information from Eversource was contradictory related to EMF.

Bob DeNoble (Webster Street at Harris Avenue) asked if there would be financial penalties if the estimated construction timeline was not met, and how residents would be compensated for the delay. He asked how to insure the temporary asphalt patches on the roadways would be replaced with permanent, and would it be done within 30-60 days? Mr. Borrelli said that the written agreement would be negotiated and would look at these types of terms.

Jimmy Phelan (Greendale Avenue) explained that his home was impacted with the building of the 40 B units, and the access from Greendale Avenue to the former gravel pit would go past his home. The 40 B units damaged his trees, and this project would damage more of them, plus the addition of shrubs between the 40B and his home had never been done. He noted the amount of construction and growth on Greendale Avenue, changing the long-time character.

Katie Buchheit (Grant Street) noted references to safe levels of EMF, but that there was not a scientific level that had been noted as safe. She felt that information provided was misleading. With children walking to school, any level is too high.

Allison McCarthy (Harris Avenue) had heard one projection for 18 months of construction, and another for eight months, and asked for a clarification. Eversource responded that the Needham portion was estimated at eight months, but that the full project from West Roxbury through Dedham to the Chestnut Street connection was 18 months. Ms. McCarthy asked if additional discussion would be held on placing the line on the current right of way, as it appeared to be the easiest method.

David Minard (Warren Street) asked why the Town would place permanent transmission lines underground in front of two schools. He stated that the Town had to spend money at other schools to correct unsafe conditions, and that this project would create unsafe conditions at two schools.

A resident (Grant Street) asked why a more rural route was being protected, when the preferred route impacted two schools and two commuter rail stations. A petition is being circulated to state a preference for the noticed alternative route.

A resident (Stevens Road) asked about the environmental impact on South Street and the ability to recoup costs for mitigation. What is the process for approval? Mr. Borrelli noted that the Town, through Town Meeting, needed to approve an easement across Town property, but that the approval for the route would be made by the Siting Board.

A resident (Grant Street) asked for further explanation on why the Right of Way would not be used, asking if it was a cost issue vs. a health issue?

A resident (Grosvenor Road) noted that the Broadmeadow neighborhood was densely populated and that the noticed alternative route passed by less homes.

Tammy Ghizzoni (Hillcrest Road) works at Pollard and feels the health and safety of students is the highest priority. Though they don't all walk to school, there are about 900 students at Pollard and 500 at Broadmeadow. Many other residents walk on these streets, too.

Laura Quinlan (Warren Street) asked for Needham to follow the Winchester model, by slowing down the review and asking for input from independent consultants.

A resident spoke about the amount of construction that has occurred at the hospital, and upcoming construction. She felt that the project was related to companies making a profit.

Mr. Borrelli thanked all the participants for their input, and opened the discussion up to the members of the boards. Mr. Bulian stated that he lived on the noticed alternative route, and has written a letter to Town Counsel to seek guidance on whether he has a conflict which will be reviewed by the state. He contacted a colleague in Winchester who explained that the project is for a larger transmission line to go through Winchester to service Woburn. He also stated that the Board of Selectmen is in the process of hiring a consultant to do a peer review. Mr. Matthews stated that he rose to speak, not to change people's minds, but to state that the project is a federal mandate. He said that the Selectmen heard all the concerns raised in the public hearing, and that all solutions would impact someone, especially as all are dependent on electricity. Mr. Borrelli thanked all those who had shared their comments and concerns. The peer review will be undertaken, while the Selectmen and Rep. Garlick look into confirming the mandate for the project.

Mr. Gerstel closed the public hearing at 9:17 PM and the Park and Recreation Commission went into a brief recess before returning to finish their meeting.

Mr. Gerstel called the Park and Recreation Commission meeting back into order at 9:23 PM.

Adjournment of Meeting: Mrs. Chaston made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:06 PM. The motion was seconded by Mr. DiCicco and the meeting adjourned at 10:06 PM.

A complete set of meeting minutes of the Park & Recreation Commission can be found at: <http://www.needhamma.gov/archive.aspx>.