

**Report - Briefing of Selectmen at their Meeting on August 11, 2021 by Conservation Commission
Chairman Maureen Criasia**

1. Appointments:

a. Conservation Commission – Maureen Criasia, Chairman.

Ms. Criasia briefed the Select Board regarding the 2021 Center Harbor vegetation control / herbicide application project by the NH Electric Coop (NHEC) and Vegetation Control Service, Inc. (VCS). According to Ms. Criasia, the Town received a letter, along with detailed maps and enclosures, from VCS in April 2021. This information was subsequently placed on the Town's website mid-July 2021, in anticipation of the spraying that would commence on or about August 1, 2021. Since that time, there have been some resident calls to Town Hall regarding the intended spraying. Multiple residents have expressed concern and contacted Ms. Criasia directly with issues pertaining to the herbicides' safety and potential negative impact on nearby lakes, ponds and their private wells. After reviewing the information, Ms. Criasia became concerned about nearby groundwater resources, i.e., stratified drift aquifers and their associated wetlands, especially Prime Wetlands that NHEC / VCS may not be aware of.

Ms. Criasia reported that she promptly contacted and spoke with the NH Dept. of Agriculture / Division of Pesticide Control (David Rousseau, Director), the NHEC Utility Arborist in charge of the spraying (John Geronaitis) and the NHEC /VCS Project Manager (Mike Couture). She was able to obtain from Mr. Geronaitis a list of the roads associated with the utility lines to be sprayed; that was immediately placed on the Town's website. She was able to obtain a copy of the State issued permit from Mr. Rousseau, and safety data information regarding the herbicides covered under the permit from Mr. Geronaitis. While continuing to interface with residents, (she requested calls coming in to Town Hall be directed to her), Ms. Criasia alerted the Town's Health Officer as was requested in the letter from VCS, and continues to actively communicate with him. Ms. Criasia reported that Mr. Rousseau attended the Conservation Commission meeting held earlier today, giving a brief presentation, providing the Commission with information, and answering questions.

Ms. Criasia stressed the future need for the Town and the NHEC/VCS to enhance communication thereby making available factual, accurate, and comprehensive information to residents going forward. She requested that the Conservation Commission take the lead going forward. She asked for the following steps to be taken:

- i. The Select Board send a letter to the NHEC/VCS requesting they "cc" the Conservation Commission on future written correspondence to the Town pertaining to herbicide application projects.

- ii. Permission request from the Conservation Commission to produce and distribute/display simple flyers with salient information to alert residents of upcoming herbicide application locations and other pertinent details.

- iii. Permission request from the Conservation Commission to be able to write and send a letter to the NHEC, recommending that future annual herbicide application project plans be published in a springtime NHEC newsletter mailing to its members. Chairman Viens supplied a contact at the NHEC for this purpose – Michael Licata, Vice President of Member Services and Public Affairs.

- iv. The Board agreed to all these requests

Commission Update: Ms. Criasia briefed the Board on recent changes to the Commission noting that she has been voted Chair of the Commission, and that Barbara Picard had rejoined the Commission and is assisting with clerking duties. The Commission is nearing a full complement of commissioners. There is currently room for 2 additional full commissioners and alternates. Selectman Viens will remain on the Commission as the Selectmen's' Representative.

Ms. Criasia also reported she attended the Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting on August 9, 2021. The ZBA granted a variance to a property owner at 11 Camp Road (TML 105-018). Because the property is within the state designated 100' Snake River Prime Wetlands buffer and its proximity to Lake Waukewan, the property owner will also need to seek a Shoreland and Wetlands permits from the State of NH. The NH Dept. of Environmental Services Wetlands Board will notify the Conservation Commission of its intended actions, including a possible public hearing in Concord.