

Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force
Minutes of January 30, 2024 meeting

This meeting was called to order at 8:30 AM, in person at Town Hall, and via Zoom, as noted on the agenda.

Present: Dale Abrams, Leigh Davis, Bill Meier, Brandee Nelson, Cindy Schoenfeld, and Christine Ward
Members absent: Andy Didio, joined late

Also present: Chris Rembold, Assistant Town Manager / Director of Planning & Community Development and Shep Evans, Conservation Agent. Megan McDevitt and Danielle Desilets from the engineering team

Ward served as Chair for this meeting.

Administrative Business

On a motion by Nelson, seconded by Davis, the minutes for November 21, 2023 were unanimously approved by roll call vote, 5-0.

Lake Mansfield Comprehensive Project:

Rembold said that a tremendous amount of work has already been accomplished and the work is shut down for the winter. Restart will be in March. Most of the rain gardens, swales, and large structures are installed and the parking lot is roughed in. Conduit is installed for future electrical for security cameras. Rembold said now we need Task Force input on the proposed work along the lake edge and replanting plans.

The Task Force discussed the plans for bank excavation, locations for culverts and rock rip rap, and replanting. Abrams sent an email, attached to these minutes, to the task force before this meeting outlining his observations and concerns. Concerns included replanting, removal of certain plants, and that many hundreds of feet of the bank when viewed from the lake would be rock. Rembold said we can discuss where and how to limit excavation and where existing plants along the lake edge can be either protected and saved, or removed and replanted after construction.

Rembold, McDevitt and Desilets said the plans currently include a variety of plants along the lake edge, and that portions of the under-road rock drainage areas can be reduced. That would save areas of existing plants. They suggested a site visit in March would help identify these areas.

There was a comment from Nelson, verified by Desilets, that contractors tend not to guarantee transplanted materials, as opposed to new materials of which they can verify quality. Abrams said transplanting is an important concern of his but at the bottom of the list he emailed, as he recognizes these challenges. He said a site visit is very important right now to determine construction impacts, and if plants can be removed out of the way. Other concerns he noted include biodiversity, plant quality, and very importantly, the types of plants that will be near the edge but actually below the waterline. Desilets said working on land under water would have permit impacts, which we didn't permit the entire bank. McDevitt said our permit for work on land underwater is mostly limited to the culvert crossings; we were not working below water line. But she said we will likely be able to limit much of the vegetation and bank impacts that is currently shown on the plans. Abrams asked that the rocky and concrete headwalls of the culverts should be replanted then if they are in the permit. McDevitt agreed and said we can plant those areas.

Ward asked Evans if supplemental planting would be allowed in the buffer zone. He said yes, planting of appropriate and native species is allowed. Ward asked about the role of the wetlands scientist. Evans said the wetland scientist for this project is to contribute to the planting plan, to ensure what is being planted is appropriate and healthy, and do monitoring after planting, including to make sure invasive plants are not

encroaching in replanted areas. Evans noted that if planting plans are amended, they should be endorsed by the Conservation Commission before the work starts. He said it's easier to do this than be forced to draw an as built plan later. He said that can make Certificate of Compliance difficult.

Kiosks: Ward said the Lake Mansfield Alliance is volunteering to replace the kiosks at the lake, and will work in conjunction with the DPW and Parks Commission.

Didio joined the meeting at 9:18 am.

Paths in beach area: Ward asked if the paths in the beach area will have a geotextile fabric. Rembold said yes. Ward said she is concerned about metal edging along these paths, and that it would trap water, and could heave up as a trip hazard. Desilets said the edging is used to keep the stone dust in place and keep the grass from migrating into the pathway. She said the steel edging is only six inches deep, with spikes to keep it in place. She said there is enough processed gravel base flared out beyond the edging to allow water to wick through the gravel, underneath the steel edging so ponding should not be an issue.

Updates from Committees: Meier said the Parks Commission has communicated its concerns about weeds in the lake, and their concerns about swimmers safety. Evans said the Conservation Commission will be discussing this in February and invited Meier to attend.

Citizens Speak: None

Next meeting: late March, to be determined, to discuss project status, planting plans, and the weeds issue

Adjourn: Hearing no further business, Ward adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:35 AM

Minutes prepared by:



Christopher Rembold

Chris Rembold

From: Dale Abrams <abramsdale@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, January 29, 2024 10:33 PM
To: Chris Rembold; Great Barrington Conservation Commission; Christine Ward; Andy Didio; Brandee Nelson; Cindy Schoenfeld; Bill Meire; Leigh Davis; Leigh Davis; Dale Abrams; Danielle Desilets; Megan McDevitt
Subject: Lake Mansfield Project Questions

****CAUTION:****

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Hello Task Force Members and Design Team Colleagues,

An amazing amount of work has been accomplished at Lake Mansfield, with so many great things happening with the beach and park area reconfiguration, construction of drainage swales for catching and filtering parking area runoff, improved culvert structures, etc. It's so exciting to see this long held vision coming to life.

As the project has begun to involve more work in the lake buffer zone, several questions related to the construction and restoration work in that zone have arisen. We may or may not have time for all of these questions at our meeting, but I'll put them on the table here and we can arrange additional time to discuss, as needed.

Please do not reply to this email.

1. Buffer Zone Restoration Planting Composition:

In reviewing the plans alongside the Lake Mansfield Native Plant Inventory, the plant list on the plan seems like it might be missing some important buffer zone species such as Speckled Alder, Winter Berry, Swamp Rose, to name just a few. **Can we set up time to fully review the species composition buffer zone restoration plant materials with the landscape designer and the consulting wetland specialist to ensure we do our best to replicate the lake's existing biodiversity?**

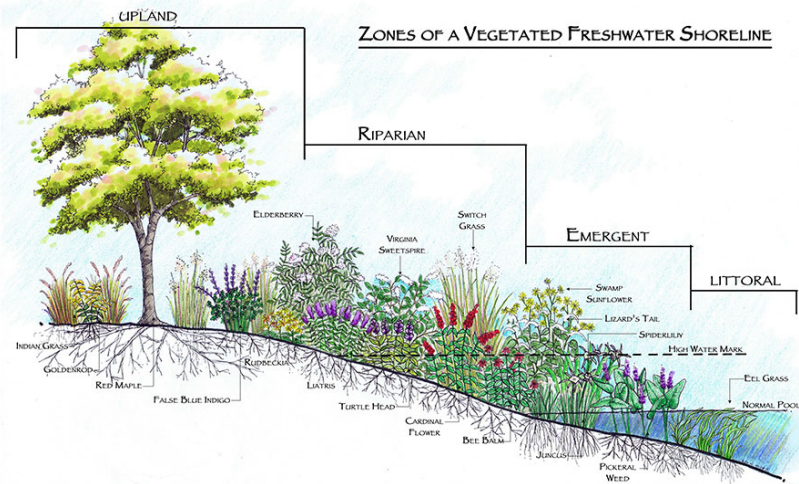


Lake Mansfield Native Plant Inventory and Native Plant Material Suppliers

2. Buffer Zone Vegetation Restoration Below Waterline:

What is the plan for replanting buffer zone plants at and below the waterline extending out into the lake? The plan seems to only show planting above the waterline. The diagrams and plant inventory provided previously, and here by GBLC illustrate the importance of plants that grow at or below the waterline. Healthy areas around the lake have extensive and diverse plant life in the first few feet off shore that provide a literal buffer against wave related erosion and important habitat for numerous aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species. Plants species including willow, dogwood, swamp rose, speckled alder grow in the shallow water along with numerous species of sedges, rushes and

pickerel weed. This diagram and several others are available to illustrate what this looks like conceptually.



3. Buffer Zone Restoration Area Planting Substrate:

How will the lake bottom surface be returned to a plantable soil substrate below the waterline where there are currently large rocks? In order for subsurface restoration work to proceed there will need to be a functional soil substrate for planting partially submerged willows, reeds, sedges, pickerel weed, etc. **How will the substrate be restored in an area such as the vernal outlet so that the area can be successfully replanted?**



4. Protecting and Replanting Existing Bufferzone Woody Plants:

How can we save and replant some of the larger shoreline willows, dogwoods, alders, and other plants during the remaining areas where shoreline reconstruction and restoration work will occur? We lost a number of plants in the area of the vernal pool. Below are before and after shots from the vernal pool area:

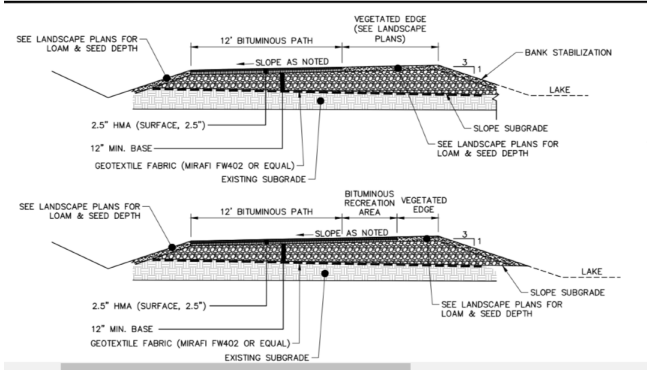


We'd like to improve on this in other areas along the shoreline including, but not limited to, the area near the lake outlet where many healthy plants remain. Below is an image of the lake outlet area where extensive woody shrubs (alders, willows, dogwood, etc.) can be preserved and/or stored temporarily onsite for replanting.



5. Minimize Bank Steepness in Restoration Areas of Full Shoreline Reconstruction:

Some of the cross sectional diagrams in the plan show a flat surface adjacent to the trail on the lake side with a relatively steep bank close to the lake. This may have a purpose related to runoff. **Where possible can the bank in the shoreline restoration areas (e.g. near whale rock) slope more gradually over a longer distance to lessen surface erosion and support a wider range of plant species?**



As we move ahead with the upcoming buffer zone revegetation and restoration work our goals should include:

1. Maximize native biodiversity in the buffer zone restoration work.
2. Replicate and replant a full range of submerged, emergent, and upland native plant species.
3. Preserve and/or store/replant existing native vegetation whenever possible.
4. Ensure that the reconstructed shoreline has plantable substrate above and below the waterline.
5. Minimize the pitch/slope of the shoreline restoration areas to lessen surface erosion.

GBLC would like to continue to work with the design and engineering team to ensure that we end up with a shoreline that's restored as a functional, naturalized shoreline buffer zone including submerged and emergent plants along the shore and upland wood and herbaceous plants adjacent to the trail. We are thrilled to know that the consulting wetland scientist was a former employee of the New England Wetland Plants, an excellent regional wholesaler of the native plants we hope are utilized in the planting phase. We'd like to request additional time with the design and engineering team to

review the full details of the shoreline stabilization and restoration plan and discuss the questions above in more detail.

Thank you,

Dale
