



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

In Attendance: Nick Cracknell, Nipun Jain, Howard Snyder, Amanda Armington, Howard Snyder, Jim Wilson, Joe Neipp, Joe Buckley, and Becky Frey

Absent: Chief Bailey, Lauren Blatchford, Chief Serino

Nick Cracknell called the meeting to order at 9:32 am.

Application Review:

1. 265 R, 277 R, 281, 287, 287 R, 287.5 Elm Street (Rocky Hill Development)

Steve Sawyer commented that they came to TRC last February for the preapplication. There have been some changes mostly in the southern neighborhood and it is still evolving as they work with the Design Review Committee. The overall layout has not changed. There is a major divided boulevard that necks down to a two-lane road after the roundabout. There are 85 units in the southern neighborhood. The northern neighborhood has 27 buildings that will all be for rent. There will be community areas. The north side of the boulevard has a horseshoe area, and they are still refining that area with DRC. They may remove some of the buildings and make it a green space. The neighborhood roads in the southern neighborhood are 20 feet wide and will have rear loading garages and driveways. The access driveways are 16 feet wide. The northern neighborhood has not changed since the last TRC presentation. It will have a 22-foot-wide road and 8 by 24 foot marked parallel parking spaces. There will be designated parking areas. There is full circulation throughout the north neighborhood. There are multiple ways to traverse through the neighborhood for access. They would like to confirm fire access with the Chief in the near future. Vanesse Associates is working on offsite mitigation for traffic improvements at the Elm St. and the Route 110 intersection. The development team met with DPW last Wednesday and it was a very productive meeting. They went into detail with the utility services and will be addressing those updates with the next round of revisions. They should finalize the southern neighborhood with one more DRC meeting. After that they will update the plans. There will be some fill to make the stormwater viable. The northern neighborhood has ledge and the soils are sandy loam which are not optimal. The majority of the storm water in the north neighborhood will be controlled under the pavement. There will be infiltration under the parking areas and under the roundabout. They will mostly be under paved areas to prevent disturbance in the buffer area. They are able to manage the 2-foot separation and meet all the guidelines with this design. The west side of the north neighborhood has a large infiltration basin that is 50 feet away from BVW. There is a



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

surface basin as part of the mitigation in the southern neighborhood and at the site entrance. They did a site walk two weeks ago and discussed updating the design to save the two historic homes at the entry. They are in process of relocating the storm water mitigation area at the entrance. The homes will be accessed off an existing driveway and will not be connected to the larger development. They did a survey and found that the property line was different than what they thought. They ended up with more land and that will allow for the relocation area. The utilities will be serviced from Elm St. They installed larger stubs when they redid Elm St. in anticipation of this development. The water and sewer from Elm St. will run through the entire development. The water loops around the neighborhood, so there is redundancy within the neighborhood. The sewer is a gravity fed system. They maintained a minimum 1% grade for the 8-inch main, which is above standards. The southern neighborhood will have their own water and sewer. They will call out the services in the next round of updates. The northern neighborhood layout is set. They are meeting the intent of the zoning. They should finalize the southern layout by the next DRC meeting.

Nick Cracknell requested details on what the wetland permitting will likely look like for this plan. Steve Sawyer responded that they were holding off submitting to the Conservation Commission because they would like to nail down the southern neighborhood. The new layout will change the storm water plan. They will most likely submit an application in early November.

Nipun Jain provided an update on the changes to the south neighborhood. There have been some discussions at DRC about extending the boulevard beyond the roundabout. If that works, then it would provide an advantage for emergency access. There have been some discussions also with regards to the new location of the club house. It would be helpful to see where the trash enclosures are within the dead end streets. Steve Sawyer confirmed they would be at the dead ends of the streets. They are set throughout the north neighborhood at the end of the streets. They are only providing trash enclosures for the northern neighborhood. The southern neighborhood will act like normal neighborhood, and will have roll out totes in their garages. Nipun Jain questioned where they would be pulled out. Steve Sawyer responded that it would be documented in the homeowner's association. The trash truck will run through the rear alleys. Nipun Jain commented that they need to account for how totes would be picked up.

Amanda Armington questioned if the trash collection areas were outside of the resource areas. Steve Sawyer responded that they were outside the 50-foot buffer. Some are within the resource area. Amanda Armington commented that they will need to make



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

sure it is covered or think about relocating them outside the resource area or as far away as possible. The ORAD was issued in 2024 and Amanda Armington questioned if the wetland flags were still up. Steve Sawyer responded that they are visible. Some of the numbers have worn off. They have been not refreshed. Amanda Armington suggested they reflag the area, so the Commission can see it on a site visit.

Amanda Armington noted there would be a conservation easement and questioned who would be maintaining the proposed trails. Steve Sawyer responded it was his understanding that the neighborhoods would be maintaining the trails. Amanda Armington commented that they would need to coordinate with the Conservation Commission on maintenance. Steve Sawyer commented that they started the layout of the trails. They are not planning to build boardwalks or anything. Amanda Armington questioned if there was an invasive management plan for the trail. Steve Sawyer responded they do not have one because right now there is only a general idea of the trails. The goal is to connect to existing trails like the Ghost Trail. They are hoping to make a trail network to connect through the MinCo development.

Jim Wilson commented that they should consider the handicap and EV parking space layout because sometimes those can conflict. Steve Sawyer confirmed they were already thinking about it. Typically, Fire doesn't want the EV spaces against a building.

Joe Buckley commented that they should clarify the layout of the right of way to the northern neighborhood. Joe Buckley questioned who the storm water management plan would be distributed to. Steve Sawyer responded that they would circulate to the Planning Board and DPW. The peer reviewer will receive it as well. The storm water management plan will comply with DEP standards. The northern neighborhood has seedy soils and ledge where they are attempting to meet the recharge standards. If they cannot meet them, then they could request a waiver. Joe Buckley requested more details on the basins. Steve Sawyer responded that there was a treatment bay and a water quality unit that runoff would go through prior to it reaching the basins. Joe Buckley commented that he had some concerns with trash in the southern neighborhood, but would follow up internally.

Nipun Jain questioned how much fill they would be using to install the chambers. Steve Sawyer responded that they are 4-5 feet deep. Nipun Jain questioned if the limit of work went into the 25-foot buffer. Steve Sawyer responded that some of it may bleed into the 25-foot buffer. They will identify that on the plan. Nipun Jain commented they should make sure to have those details called out separately.



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

Howard Snyder commented that the snow storage locations should be clearly shown on the plans. Howard Snyder questioned if they considered building walls along the highway and the neighborhood to mitigate noise. Steve Sawyer responded that he would need to check with the landscape architect. Howard Snyder commented that they should designate areas around units for delivery parking. Steve Sawyer responded that they would need to review that. The center unit has one garage unit and all the other units have 2 spaces per unit. There should be ample roadway parking onsite for visitors and deliveries. Howard Snyder commented that he will have more comments when the planting plan gets more detailed. Howard Snyder questioned if seed mix would go over the chambers. Steve Sawyer responded that they would do shrubs or ground cover. They are trying to put most of them under parking.

Nick Cracknell commented that one of the concerns with the plan on the screen is the secondary road proposed to be an informal gravel emergency access from the south to north. The traffic study submitted for the project does not require or recommend secondary access. It will be peer reviewed by the Planning Board. There's wetland impact if they put it in. Right now, the boulevard would allow either lane to be accessed by the fire department in an emergency. They extended the boulevard to get to the club house and administration building. They had to remove 9 parking spaces on the other side of the roundabout to make the divided boulevard. This would allow them to eliminate the secondary gray road and maintain access on the boulevard. Nick Cracknell supported saving the historic homes and relocating the storm water basin. The trail network is very important for the project. It is important to keep this an open process to figure out where the trails are and see if any bridge or boardwalk is needed. It is important to create connectivity to other trails. The city needs to see a preliminary layout of the trails. It would be good to do another site visit to see it. The City should hold the conservation easement and they can work out maintenance details through permitting. DRC has discussed a drop off lane where the basketball court and pool are. There may be some adjustment there. There is some discussion about relocating some of the buildings near the club house to make it function a little better.

Nick Cracknell questioned how much fill they were putting in the north neighborhood. Steve Sawyer responded that they will grade up to 495 and fade away. It will be a couple feet of fill.

Nick Cracknell questioned if any of the buildings have basements. Steve Sawyer responded that there were only basements in the southern neighborhood. Nick Cracknell noted they were still working on a final layout with DRC and a new plan should be circulated when that is finalized. The Planning Board hearing on Monday will begin



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

the process of selecting a consultant for peer review. They will be paying for the Planning Board to hire a peer reviewer. Vanesse prepared the one stop application, and they have had Beta review their work.

Joe Buckley commented that he needs to go back and look at their actual permit. The city may be able to help with stormwater MS4. They need to verify what they are responsible for.

Nipun Jain commented that they should consider a school bus route in the neighborhood.

2. 9 Alenclair Drive (National Grid Substation)

Joshua Lee Smith is outside counsel for National Grid. The applicant is Massachusetts Electric Company. The substation has been in existence for over 50 years in the R8 zone. They have filed an application for Planning Board review. It generally involves the replacement of equipment. There does need to be an expansion of the substation. It is an ambitious upgrade with a lot of the assets for the site. There will be a 10,000 sf expansion of the yard which will allow for two transformers that need to be replaced as well as a new control house. The metal clad switch gear enclosure will require a building permit. Residential properties surround the site. The south transmission line corridor with overhead lines and infrastructure is to the rear. They will be putting in robust new landscaping to create a good landscape buffer and screening. The proposed layout has two driveway access points for the substation for installation and maintenance. The long rectangular shape is the metal clad switch gear and on each side there are two transformers. Typically, they do not provide a robust landscape plan at unmanned stations. However, since this is in a residential area they want to provide adequate screening. The city has regulations for landscape buffer requirements. The plan is based on the configuration of the site and accounts for clearance requirements. They have limited area with respect to buffers. They are proposing a variety of different species in terms of color, variety, shade trees, and bushes. Brendan Mower, civil engineer, has worked with National Grid to put together the site plan for this project.

Jim Wilson questioned if there would be energy storage on the site. Brendan Mower from Bowditch Engineering responded that there would not battery energy storage on site. The metal switchgear building has a backup battery to keep it running but there is not any battery energy storage.



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

Joe Buckley questioned if there was a bathroom onsite. Brendan Bowditch responded that there would be one in the metal building. It is required. They are putting in a small grinder pump to pump out to the existing sewer. Joe Buckley questioned if this would be on slab or if they needed to put in piers. Brendan Mower responded that it was typically a combo of slab and drill shaft. They don't drive piles. They just auger a hole and put in rebar cage that they fill with concrete.

Howard Snyder commented that they were proposing loam and seed between the landscaping and the property line on the 11 Alenclair side. It would be good to see lower canopy trees for screening. There is other plant material they could use to better block out the transformers and equipment. They should plan to double-up screening on the 3 Alenclair side as well. There should be more than a single row of evergreens. Howard Snyder questioned if the gravel area would be pervious. Brendan Mower confirmed it would pervious. There is minimal runoff from the station itself. When they build up the station, they will over excavate down and put in 2 feet of crushed gravel then 6 inches of clean washed stone. There is a significant amount of volume in that area.

Nipun Jain questioned what the purpose of the bio retention basins were. Brendan Mower responded that they were a bit misleading. There is a small depression in the grading. The site is an old quarry and it does not discharge to a stream, wetland, or storm drainage system. The site currently drains to a dry well on Alenclair Drive and that's all that is out there today. They ended up with a net reduction in pervious coverage in terms of what is out there now. The gravel areas will sheet flow to the grass and to seed mix areas and soak into the ground. Howard Snyder questioned if the seed mix would be receiving enough moisture to retain plantings or if they needed a different variety that would tolerate dry spells. Brendan Mower responded that he would consult with the landscape architect. Howard Snyder commented that it would be good to introduce more plant material for. The proposed evergreens have a narrow popsicle shape. They should propose something wider.

Howard Snyder questioned if they needed to maintain the layout or if it could be rotated. Brendan Mower responded that they would not be able to rotate it. They located it where it is to balance the buffer they can provide on all sides.

Nipun Jain commented that the plan shows two access driveways and questioned if they needed both of them for operations. Nipun Jain questioned if one could be narrower. Brendan Mower responded that they need both of them and they are 20 feet wide. They need access during construction. Nipun Jain questioned if they still needed them after installation. Brendan Mower responded that they would still need both of them in case



Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025

City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am

there is a major repair or maintenance task. If a transformer breaks or they need to take one offline for a while, then they have a mobile transformer on a tractor trailer at the station.

Joe Buckley supported both driveways. It was a good call from a utility operation standpoint. Nipun Jain commented that they should look at the bio retention areas because they are not accessible. There are plantings that are blocking access. They need to think about the maintenance and access to that.

Jim Wilson questioned what the sound would be like for the new substation. Joshua Lee Smith responded that generally the sources of sound come from the transformers. The older equipment transformers that are there now are loud. The modern transformers will have a net reduction in sound.

Joe Buckley questioned what lighting would be like on the site. Brendan Mower responded that it would be directed inward. Nick Cracknell added that it would have to be dark sky compliant. Joshua Lee Smith commented that the lighting would only be activated when someone is there, which would be infrequent. Otherwise, there would be some support lights. Nick Cracknell noted they will need to be very clear on the lighting details for the Planning Board.

Nick Cracknell commented that he was mindful that the primary goal was supplying power to Amesbury and the secondary goal is to be as respectful as they can for the neighborhood. They are expanding the 8,000 sf substation to nearly 20,000 sf. This process is primarily focused on externalities that come with expanding the footprint both horizontally and vertically. It is a profound visual impact. They talked about lighting impacts. It will probably be fine on lighting and sound. The challenge is to make sure that it is adequately mitigated for visual impacts. The current substation is mostly hidden now. This new one will be very visible. Nick Cracknell encouraged the applicants to adequately mitigate that. Right now, it has not been adequately mitigated. They need taller shade trees and evergreen trees. They have a 50-foot spread which is a lot of space. The proposal is not incorporating proper materials. If there's a way to pivot the substation, it would reduce the size of the enclosure. If not, then they should consider clipping the corner along the top to keep the existing trees that already provide a tremendous amount of screening. It would be great if they could keep the trees. There are powerlines above it, but the whole neighborhood has that condition. If they are doing gravel driveways, then maybe they could look at 16 feet wide instead of 20 feet wide. There should be 3 rows of block at the end of the driveway to hold in the gravel and keep it on the site. Nick Cracknell questioned if it was possible to get rid of the



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

barbed wire on the top of the fence. The fencing should be all black vinyl chain-link fence. Joshua Lee Smith responded that the fence would be 8 feet plus 1-foot of barbed wire. It is the company standard. Nick Cracknell commented that he would encourage them to prevent the angle of the barbed wire and make it vertical. It would be even better to get rid of the barbed wire. Joshua Lee Smith responded that the fence does provide more screening than the rendering shows. Nick Cracknell commented that they should provide a photo and fence detail for the Planning Board. They should be very clear about what the screening is. They should coordinate with Howard Snyder on landscaping suggestions.

Brendan Mower responded that he appreciated the comments, and they could look to see if there's any ability to shift it around the property. It may be hard to preserve specific trees because it is a small site, and they have a large root system. Nick Cracknell responded that the oak tree in the front should be able to be saved. There are 8-12 trees that line the front of the enclosure, and it is hard to believe that none of them could be saved because they are not constructing anything within 50 feet. Brendan Mower responded that the footprint of the station goes within 3 feet of the fence, and it is going down 30 inches. Nick Cracknell commented that they should look at the means and methods along the front to see what they can preserve. Joshua Lee Smith responded that they will discuss the mature trees with VHB. They have to consider the clearances horizontally and the risk of a mature tree falling on the substation. That would be catastrophic. Nick Cracknell commented that in a perfect world there would not be any trees within 50 feet of any substation, but that is not the reality. They should evaluate how they can work with the existing trees.

Joe Buckely commented that Massachusetts has regulations they would have to comply with for public utilities. Brendan Mower responded that they have to comply with the national electric safety code and national grid have their own specific set of rules.

Joshua Lee Smith commented that they had a number of inherent regulations. Nick Cracknell responded that there are ways to apply the rules, and things were not always black and white. The project team should cite the rules they have to comply by. This is a unique circumstance. They should be able to reasonably accommodate the rules on the site retrofitting.

Nick Cracknell questioned what was happening offsite with the sub surface cables. Brendan Mower responded that was a separate project with a separate team. They are doing underground cables. Nick Cracknell commented that it would be nice to have someone be able to express the extent and details of that piece on Monday.



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
September 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

Brendan Mower commented that it sounded like there's a separate stormwater permit. Nipun Jain responded that if they were receiving a site plan approval, then they don't need to file separately under the storm water ordinance.

Joshua Lee Smith commented that these designs take years. They are working with neighbors and trying to be reasonable. They will take this feedback back to the team. Nick Cracknell summarized the discussion and the feedback to discuss with the team. They should evaluate what they can do with the front fence line to preserve what is out there. If they cannot make those adjustments, then they should work with VHB and get a new landscape plan with larger trees with wider canopies. They should be planted at a larger caliper and try to keep the red oak.

Brendan Mower commented that they may need to evaluate the sight lines. Nick Cracknell responded that would be a non-issue.

Administrative:

1. Minutes: 8-20-25; 9-3-25

Nipun Jain motioned to approve the minutes for 8-20-25 and 9-3-25. Seconded by Amanda Armington. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjourn

Nipun Jain motioned to adjourn at 11:45 am. Seconded by Amanda Armington. The motion passed unanimously.