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April 27, 2007

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
ON THE  
NOTICE OF PROJECT CHANGE

PROJECT NAME: Berkshire School Master Plan  
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY: Sheffield  
PROJECT WATERSHED: Housatonic  
EOEA NUMBER: 13852  
PROJECT PROPONENT: Berkshire School  
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR: n/a

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (M. G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.10 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that the change proposed in this Notice of Project Change (NPC) is insignificant and **does not require** further MEPA review.

The project was the subject of an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) in August of 2006. The Certificate on the ENF dated September 29, 2006, did not require the preparation of an EIR. As originally proposed, the Berkshire School Master Plan envisioned a series of improvement projects to be implemented over a 10- to 15-year period at the 404-acre Berkshire School campus located off Undermountain Road in Sheffield, MA. A major portion of the campus parcel is within Priority Habitat Area for a state-listed species. The entire school parcel is located within the Schenob Brook Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The proposed Master Plan projects include replacement dormitories, a math and science building, a new community center, a hockey rink, a field house, a small office building, and a maintenance building within an estimated 39.5-acre area of School-owned land. The projects will address the School's need for improved circulation, enhanced living space, updated educational

facilities, and modern athletic facilities. The project also includes upgrades to an existing wastewater treatment facility on campus.

### Jurisdiction

The project as outlined in the ENF was subject to review pursuant to Section 11.03(1)(b)(2), 11.03(2)(b)(2), 11.03(5)(b)(2) and 11.03(11)(b) of the MEPA regulations because it will result in the creation of more than 5 acres of new impervious surface; because the project may result in a prohibited “take” of a state-listed protected species; because the project is located within an ACEC; and because the project proposes the expansion of an existing wastewater treatment plant by 10% or more of existing capacity.

The project requires a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); an Amended Groundwater Discharge Permit from the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP); possibly a Conservation and Management Permit from the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP); review from Department of Conservation and Recreation’s ACEC program; and an Order of Conditions from the Sheffield Conservation Commission.

The proponent did not seek financial assistance from the Commonwealth. Therefore, MEPA jurisdiction applies to those aspects of the project within the subject matter of required or potentially required state permits with the potential to cause damage to the environment. In this case, MEPA jurisdiction extends to stormwater, wetlands, rare species, wastewater and drinking water.

### Project Change Description

As described in the NPC, the project change entails the redefining and relocation of several elements of the Master Plan as a result of consultation with NHESP to refine the boundary of actual state-listed species habitat on campus. These changes include elimination of the New Field House, relocation of the Maintenance Facility, and reductions in scale of the Berkshire Choral Festival Building and the North Residential Village. One Master Plan project has been expanded and accelerated. The proponent plans to begin construction on the Berkshire Hall building in summer 2007 instead of 2016 as proposed in the ENF. In addition, Berkshire Hall is proposed to be expanded by 7,200 square feet.

### Review of the NPC

The changes proposed in the NPC do not require any new state agency actions. In addition, the changes to the Master Plan projects will result in the minimization of environmental impacts:

- The total amount of new structures has been reduced from 293,000 sf to 263,000 sf;
- Land alteration has been reduced from 10.2 acres to 5.2 acres;
- New impervious surface has been reduced from 9.4 acres to 7.1 acres;
- Habitat effect has been reduced from 5.5 acres to 2.1 acres;
- New parking has been reduced from 298 to 221 spaces;

- Water supply needs have been reduced from 15,600 gallons per day (gpd) to 8,600 gpd; and,
- Anticipated wastewater generation has been reduced from 17,100 gpd to 8,600 gpd.

The Master Plan projects will result in impacts to Buffer Zone only. No new wetland fill is proposed as a result of the project change. The proponent has committed to avoiding any direct effects on wetlands within the ACEC and to implementing the best stormwater management, wastewater disposal and turf management practices to prevent indirect effects on waters within the ACEC. Best management practices are still proposed for stormwater and post-development flow will still be less than pre-development rates.

The proponent has worked closely with NHESP to design a project that minimizes impacts to state-listed species. The proponent will file a Request for Project Review covering all changes to the Master Plan in April 2007. The proponent intends to file a Conservation and Management Permit Application in June 2007. As part of the NHESP permitting process, the proponent will continue to require strict construction controls for all projects in and near habitat to prevent effects to the state-listed species. In addition, as mitigation for impacts to state-listed species, the proponent has agreed to place a Conservation Restriction on approximately 11 acres of habitat on the school campus.

### Conclusion

After a review of the NPC and consultation with the relevant agencies, I find that the proposed project change is insignificant, in accordance with the MEPA regulations at 301 CMR 11.10(6). No further review of the project is required as a result of the proposed change. I commend the proponent for working proactively with NHESP to reduce the project's impacts to rare species habitat, and note also that the proposed changes will reduce the potential for negative impacts to the Schenob Brook ACEC.

April 27, 2007

Date



Ian A. Bowles

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