



TOWN OF HINGHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Coastal Engineering Structures Policy

Purpose. This policy addresses a topic covered in Section 20.0 of the Hingham Wetland Regulations, with an emphasis on § 5(c) and 6(b): “The following activities proposed within Velocity zones (VE-zones) [and AE-zones] are likely to have an adverse effect on the protected values and are therefore prohibited:...New or proposed expansions of coastal engineering structures unless such structures are of a loose, sloped-stone design.”

The Commission is being approached more frequently by applicants seeking to install or modify an existing coastal engineering structure, such as a berm or wall, to protect their property from rising sea levels and storm driven tides. Although understandable from a property owner’s perspective, the Commission has generally taken a conservative approach to approving such projects. Many applicants have brought forth designs that do not consist of loose, sloped-stone. These proposals are NOT PERMITTED under the Regulation cited above and the Commission will not consider such a design.

The intent of this policy is not to deter applicants from seeking approval, but to assist them in understanding the Commission’s evaluation of proposals related to coastal engineering structures.

Policy. The Commission will accept for consideration proposals that conform to the loose, sloped-stone design or may be permitted under § 7 of the above cited Regulation. In general, the Commission will evaluate the following elements of the proposal:

1. Whether the proposed work substantially complies with the intent of the particular Regulation under which it is being proposed.
2. Whether the proposed work will achieve the goals of the applicant without adversely effecting Resource Areas or their wetland values.
3. Whether the proposed work is an overall benefit to the coastal community and the wellbeing of the marine environment.

In order to assure items 1 through 3 above, the Commission may request additional information, some of which is noted below:

1. A scientifically validated study of the proposal with appropriate methodology, especially where wave and wind action may be a substantial cause of seeking the installation or modification of a coastal engineering structure; or where impacts to marine life are anticipated; or where the proposed work may impact abutting properties not owned by the applicant, a study of changes in flowage and sediment transport.
2. A statement from a qualified professional on the effectiveness of the proposed work, based on issues such as climate change, and whether such work will have a reasonable, long-term, beneficial impact, as desired by the applicant, as sea levels continue to rise.