

**AMHERST CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
July 8, 2021
7:00 PM**

Present: Jenn Fair, Chair, LeRoy Gaynor Vice-Chair, Lawrence Ambs, Laura Pagliarulo, Ana Devlin Gauthier, and Michelle Labbe. Staff: Erin Jacque, Wetlands Administrator, and Stephanie Ciccarello, Sustainability Coordinator.

Absent: Fletcher Clark and David Ziomek, Director of Conservation & Development.

Fair opened meeting at 7:05 PM.

Review Notice of Intent to Convert to Other Use Ch. 61A §14 Property of Thomas F. Mitchell Family Trust and Mitchell Family Farm Trust Land on Sunderland Road (Parcel ID 2C-12)

- a. Provide a recommendation to Town Council regarding Right-of-First-Refusal

Jacque reviewed the documents submitted. Jacque reviewed the report she prepared on the wetland and water resources on the property, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program data (which was not present on the property), the Flood Zone data (existing and proposed), and the soils data, including prime farmland soils. Jacque abstained from providing a recommendation, but did state for the record that the land was not priority for acquisition or conservation purposes by the Town Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Jacque noted that late this afternoon written comments were provided by an abutter. Abutters comments were reviewed by the Commission.

Public Comment:

Janet Keller – prepared comments and submitted via email.

Hilda Greenbaum – asked about how much wetlands may be legally be altered.

Jacque noted up to 5,000 square feet of wetland may be replicated under the Wetlands Protection Act if performance standards are met.

Poll was taken. Ambs was not in favor of exercising the right-of-first refusal. Pagliarulo stated that Amherst should consider acquisition based on conservation value. Labbe agreed with Pagliarulo that the town should look further into the conservation value. Devlin Gauthier expressed points for and against looking into acquisition. Jenn expressed the town should explore acquisition. Gaynor was in favor of exploring acquisition.

Moved by Devlin Gauthier to advise that the Town Council exercise the right-of-first refusal on the Mitchell family parcel in North Amherst. Seconded by Pagliarulo. Vote 5 in favor, 1 against.

Pagliarulo- aye

Devlin Gauthier- aye

Fair- aye

Gaynor- aye
Labbe- aye
Ambs- nay

Review and consider approval of drafted Conservation Restriction proposed for 95 Old Belchertown Road.

Stephanie Ciccarello, Sustainability Coordinator was present to provide an overview of the Conservation Restriction proposed on the southern portion of the landfill. Ciccarello explained that the endangered grasshopper sparrow was nesting on both the north and south landfill. Solar fields were proposed and when the sparrow was discovered the town decided to develop the northern landfill with solar panels and preserve the grassland habitat on the southern side of the landfill for bird habitat. Ciccarello also noted the Dog Park, fencing, trail, viewing platform and kiosk. Mowing is restricted outside of the nesting season. Access will be needed to operate the landfill. Ambs asked by Kestrel was involved. Ciccarello answered that outside entities need to hold the CR. Labbe asked about the habitat management plan, suggested some adjustments to wording. Devlin Gautier asked if there was any concern from abutters. Ciccarello noted that input was gathered from surrounding neighborhoods.

Moved to approve the draft conservation restriction at 95 Belchertown Road. Seconded by Leroy. All in favor.

Moved by Devlin Gauthier to adjourn at 7:57 PM. Seconded by Pagliarulo. All in favor.