

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, April 29, 2015 – 6:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: David Webber, Chair, Rob Crouner, Bruce Carson, Greg Stutsman, and Christina Calabrese, Richard Roznoy and Stephen Schreiber (6:10 PM)

ABSENT: none

STAFF: Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director
Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

Mr. Webber opened the meeting at 6:02 PM.

I. MINUTES – none

II. PUBLIC HEARING – SITE PLAN REVIEW

SPR2015-00014 – Town of Amherst – Puffer’s Pond Conservation Area
(Continued from April 22, 2015)

Request Site Plan Review approval under Section 3.335 of the Zoning Bylaw, to construct site improvements, including repair of cribbing along the pond edge, installation of steps and repair or replacement of a handrail at the South Beach, restriping parking spaces, installation of wood chips along a path, installation of a handicapped accessible path and viewing area at the North Beach, installation of a new fence and repair of an existing fence at the dam (Map 2D/8, 5B/113, 5B/16, 5B/129, 5B/130, FPC, R-N and R-O zoning districts)

Mr. Webber read the description of the request and noted that this was a continuation of the public hearing that began on April 22nd. He stated that the Planning Board had continued the hearing to obtain more information about the proposed wood cribbing and to obtain pictures of the proposed fence.

Beth Willson, Wetlands Administrator, stated that she had done some research into those topics. The results of the research had been forwarded to the Planning Board via email. She presented a chart which listed various types of wood and wood substitutes that might be considered for the work at Puffer’s Pond. She stated that the material that was chosen, MCA or Micronized Copper Azole, was recommended by Integrity Development and Cowls Lumber. It is appropriate for fresh water emersion. She presented the specification sheets to the Board.

Ms. Willson stated that the applicant had looked at different options and had chosen the pressure-treated wood option with the least environmental impact. Micronized Copper Azole has received an EPP (Environmentally Preferable Product) Certification from the EPA. She reviewed the other products listed on the chart. CCA (Chromated Copper Arsenate) has been a topic of concern. Use of this product was restricted in 2004 for residential and commercial uses. It is still allowed in some industrial uses. This products is not being considered.

Ms. Willson reviewed other pressure-treated wood products, including ACQ (Alkaline Copper Quaternary), CA (Copper Azole) and MCA (Micronized Copper Azole). The chart shows that MCA has the least environmental impact of the pressure-treated products listed. The copper particles are micro-particles suspended in water. There is less copper per volume of wood. Both of the “azole” materials have better retention of the preservative.

Ms. Willson stated that these newer pressure-treated products are better than the older CCA or creosote. Ms. Willson stated that the applicant had considered Cedar, Douglas fir and plastic or composite material. It's hard to find the appropriate sizes in composite material or plastic. Also, neither of these products is appropriate for use in a retention wall. Plastic or composite materials do not stand up well to lateral forces. In addition the plastics or composite materials are shipped from the Mid-west, which adds significantly to the price.

The Board discussed the amount of material that might be necessary in the installation. Ms. Willson stated that in one instance, 200 linear feet is required (2 to 3 tiers high) and in another instance 75-100 linear feet is required (2 to 3 tiers high).

Ms. Willson stated that the applicant will reuse the wood that is taken out of the existing cribbing if possible, and will replace it if it is rotted.

Mr. Stutsman referred to an older study from 2000 that had some best practice recommendations, such as not sawing near the water. Ms. Willson stated that the people who do the installation, employees of the town, will do the sawing at the shop and bring it to the site.

Mr. Webber noted that the material data safety sheet showed that the product does not contain arsenic and it seems safe according to the data that has been received. He noted that plastic is not aesthetic, it is not natural, the process of producing it causes environmental problems and there is the issue of "outgassing" of plastic products, all of which may cause plastic to be a worse choice for the environment than MCA.

Ms. Willson presented photographs of the proposed black vinyl coated fence in wooded settings. She noted that the proposed fence will have a top rail. She showed photographs of the proposed location of the fence as seen from a point along Mill Street. She showed the existing condition and the condition with the proposed black vinyl coated fence sketched in. She noted that this type of fence blends in better in the landscape than the typical chain link fence. Ms. Willson stated that the proposed fence would be 6 feet in height. She also presented a photograph of the proposed bench, which will be a stone slab on two pedestals, probably Goshen Stone. The seat will be securely attached to the pedestals.

Mr. Crouner noted that the Development Application Report covered most of the changes that were proposed. However, the bollards that will block people from parking in front of the access way at the South Beach were not mentioned. Mr. Crouner explained that the bollards were a very important feature, allowing people to have access to the pathway from the parking area leading to the beach.

Mr. Roznoy expressed concerns about the pressure-treated wood product that is being proposed. He encouraged the Board and the applicant to consider high density polyethylene as an alternative. Use of this product would be good for the market in recycled plastics. He acknowledged the added expense of using the plastic products.

Mr. Roznoy noted that statistics show that pressure-treated wood is safe in certain circumstances, but he was not entirely satisfied that it would be safe where people are coming into contact with the wood. He wanted more information about why pressure-treated wood is safe when in contact with water.

Ms. Willson noted that the proposed wood product, MCA, takes less preservative than the older product. Ms. Willson stated that plastic warps and is hot. People will sit on and lean against it, which will be uncomfortable if it is hot. While the use of plastic and composite products are common for decking, they are challenging to use for structural purposes.

Mr. Schreiber agreed that composite materials are good for decking and he agreed with Mr. Roznoy's concern about reusing waste materials, but he cautioned that plastics and composite materials have problems when exposed to sunlight and are generally more fragile than wood products. He would be cautious about the use of recycled materials.

Ms. Calabrese stated that whatever product is chosen will have constant contact with water and will have a load on it from the retained soil. She expressed concern about the structural integrity of plastic or composite products.

Mr. Webber stated that there was general agreement that the use of recycled materials was a good thing to encourage. However, in terms of the safety of plastics versus wood, he thought it was a "toss up". Plastics are known for outgassing. Stone is superior, but it is expensive. Mr. Webber did not see plastic or composite products as so clearly superior that they would justify the cost or risk of failure.

Ms. Brestrup noted that she had spoken with a local landscape architect who described using MCA and the other newer pressure-treated products in playground and park installations where there was ground contact, without negative results.

Mr. Webber observed that the black vinyl coated chain link fence was not as bad as expected and it will improve safety for those who use the pond.

Ms. Willson stated that the kiosk will be built from locally harvested Hemlock.

The Board discussed signs. There will be signs on the kiosk, in specially designed locations within the kiosk. There will be handicapped signs for parking. The existing handicapped signs will be reused and repaired and new ones will be added at the North Beach to match those at the South Beach. A photograph of the existing handicapped parking sign was submitted to the Board and the applicant stated that the new signs will match the existing signs. The Board agreed to waive the Sign Plan, since sufficient information had been provided about signs.

Waivers

- Sign Plan
- Landscape Plan
- Lighting Plan
- Traffic Impact Statement.

Conditions

1. The cutting, shaping, drilling and other construction activities regarding pressure-treated wood shall not be conducted near the water where sawdust, chips or other debris might fall into the water. To the extent possible, cutting shall occur off-site.
2. Sawdust, chips, waste wood and other debris shall be collected and disposed of properly.

Mr. Stutsman MOVED to close the public hearing and to approve the application with the conditions and waivers as discussed and to find that the project meets the relevant criteria of Section 11.24 of the Zoning Bylaw, Site Plan Review criteria. Mr. Carson seconded. Mr. Roznoy asked that the town make every effort to use recycled products whenever possible. The vote was 5-0-2 (Schreiber and Calabrese abstained).

III. ZONING

- A. Zoning Subcommittee Report – none
- B. Public Comment Period – none

IV. TOWN MEETING

A. Zoning Amendment Issues

Mr. Tucker noted that the Board had received a draft report on a revised motion under Article 22. He asked the Board to authorize the Planning Board Chair and the ZSC Chair to finalize the report with staff. The Board agreed by consensus. Mr. Stutsman stated that it was useful to have this report since it contains relevant facts regarding the technical aspects of the proposed change.

Michael Alpert thanked the Board for its work but asked if the town really had an interest in diversity and inclusionary housing.

B. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none

V. OLD BUSINESS

Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none

VI. NEW BUSINESS

Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting – none

VII. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – none

VIII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – none

IX. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS – none

X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS – no reports

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission – Bruce Carson
Community Preservation Act Committee – vacant
Agricultural Commission – Stephen Schreiber
Transportation Plan Task Force – Rob Crowner
Amherst Redevelopment Authority – vacant
Design Review Board – vacant
Housing and Sheltering Committee – Greg Stutsman
Town Gown Study Steering Committee – David Webber and Greg Stutsman
Master Plan Implementation Committee – vacant
Zoning Subcommittee – Rob Crowner, Bruce Carson, Greg Stutsman, Stephen Schreiber and Christina Calabrese

XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

XII. REPORT OF STAFF

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted: Approved:

Christine M. Brestrup
Senior Planner

David Webber, Chair

DATE: _____