

**Conservation Commission Meeting
May 13, 2015
Town Room, Amherst Town Hall**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Bob Brooks, acting chair, at 7:02 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Present: Briony Angus (C) (arrived 7:30), Harvey Allen, Bob Brooks, Brett Butler, Fletcher Clark

Absent: Paris Boice, Christiane Healy

Staff: Beth Willson

CHAIR, DIRECTOR & WETLANDS ADM REPORTS

The Director and Chair were both not present for reports.

Beth sent around a doodle poll to set up another Open Space tour for June.

Beth has looked at a lot of erosion control, because several projects that the commission permitted this winter and spring are starting up; the new Hitchcock Center, Crotty Hall, 189 Mill Lane, The Brook Apartments and the Norwottuck Rail Trail.

Harvey noted that the Eastman Lane project looked great and Beth mentioned that they needed rain to establish the hydro seeding that was competed.

Beth said they are starting some work at Fort River Farm. They have marked off a parking area and sharing garden outside of resource areas. The Conservation Department is going to put together a comprehensive NOI for farming and invasive removal. To date about a quarter acre has been plowed and harrowed for the sharing garden, a portion of which will be a pollinator garden. They, referring to the land manager and assistant land manager, have a new trailer, a new plow and a new tractor through money approved at Town Meeting. Bob asked if the Commission was supposed to be involved in deciding if the work already done could be performed. Beth said that they stayed outside of the resource areas and no permitting was necessary. Brett pointed out that we visited the site on our last Open Space tour and discussed the plans for the site in the past. Harvey had some information about setting up the pollinator garden and Beth referred him to Stephanie Ciccarello, our sustainability coordinator and go to person for Fort River Farm.

The Agricultural RFP that went out for Wentworth Farm, which has already been issued three times, received a weak response. The goal is to reissue in the fall and perhaps plow that area so it looks easier for a farmer to use.

Beth described the contents of the meeting packet; a proposal for an event at the Hitchcock Center, comments from Jason Skeels and Natural Heritage about the Mill Valley Project, Chapter 61 Removal, Changes to UMass project, two inspection reports (Eastman Lane and Norwottuck Rail Trail), and a Certificate of Compliance.

The WMECO, now Eversource, project at Wentworth farm came with years of required monitoring overseen by the DEP. Instead of doing monitoring, DEP will require them to do a fish use and passage study for the new stream channel. Boyd Canard is working on the project. There was a discussion by Commission members of which species may make it up to Owens Pond through the step pools. Harvey said the wood duck box all but disappeared and they should fish it out and replace it. Commissioners noted the vegetation looked good, this time around. Blue bird boxes are now well placed and more spread out.

MINUTES

Hold the minutes until later in order to start the 7:15 hearing.

PERMITS/DISCUSSIONS

7:15 PM Event on Conservation Land- Hitchcock Center for the Environment for Campout at Larch Hill Conservation Area

Katie Koertan from the Hitchcock Center hoped to have its first camp out for Girls Into The Wild. The program is about nature immersion and although they had a sleepover inside the Hitchcock Center in the past, they now want to camp out in tents and potentially cook over a portable fire pit. There will be about 5-6 girls between the ages of 8-10. The event will start at 5:30pm and end by 8:00am the following day. Katie Koertan and another adult, an intern, would be supervising.

Harvey asked where the campsite would be located. Katie said Brad wanted them to be as close to the buildings as possible, but she said they would like to be further into the woods. Harvey suggested the “old garden” which is located on the west side of the common school and opens up into a little clearing, but is surrounded by trees. Bob asked why Brad wanted them to be close to the building. Beth said it was to minimize impact since the area around the building is mostly lawn already. Beth said Dave was more concerned about the fire. The portable fire pit does scorch the grass underneath, so it could be on the driveway, if used at all. Beth said she would check with Dave, but she also suggested contacting the Police for permission. Commissioners suggested perhaps using a camping stove instead.

The number of kids sounded good and camping in the “old garden” also seemed fine. Katie wanted approval for next spring as well, but Beth and the Commission requested that she come back to tell the commission how it went and file another request.

Allen moved and Butler seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-0) to approve the event on conservation land

MINUTES

Commission reviewed the minutes of 8-13-14.

Beth will amend minutes to reflect that no motion was made for Eastman Brook bridge withdrawal.

Butler moved and Allen seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-0) to approve the minutes of 8-13-14 with noted amendments.

Ch. 61 withdrawal – Jean Cannon & John Wysocki for Lot C Henry St. (Map 9A, Parcel 77)

Lot A, B and W from Henry Street were withdrawn from Chapter 61 recently and for some reason Lot C was not included, so the commission needs to vote to recommend to the select board not to use their right of first refusal.

Allen moved and Brooks seconded. Commission VOTED (4-0-0) to recommend to the select board not to use their right of first refusal.

7:30 PM Notice of Intent (cont'd from 4-21-15 mtg) –Mill Valley Estates LTD Partners for sidewalk and drainage system improvements within buffer zone to bank and bordering vegetated wetlands at Mill Valley Estates, 420 Riverglade Drive (Map 19B, Parcel 15).

Briony noted that we now have comments from the Town Engineer. Last time the commission continued because we were waiting for Natural Heritage and Town Engineer comments. John Furman from VHB in Springfield introduced himself and Jim Santucci. He reviewed the previous hearing, and said they wanted to restore the capacity of the drainage basins to its original design. He described the response from DEP that they hadn't addressed at the previous hearing, but have now. DEP said they should go back to the detention basins and make some improvements for TSS, total suspended solids. In response, they are now going to construct stone berms at all of the inlets.

They didn't have a separate erosion and sediment control plan; they usually just put it on their grading plan. They tried to follow all of the limits of grading with erosion control, but there were some areas left untreated on the plan, so they've now added erosion and sediment control in some areas. Also, the silt sacks that will go into the catch basins are now shown on the plan.

Beth asked about erosion control for the outlets coming from the sedimentation basins, especially those that are not vegetated. They have addressed that issue on the current plan, and will elaborate later in the presentation.

Proposal for basins; they will establish the contour of the basin that matches existing design and then over excavate and create a bench to lay in some stone, about 4 inches, then there will be a layer of filter fabric and then 4 inches of stone over that. This will allow for maintenance as it gets clogged without any disturbance of earth. Number of inlets coming into basins, put sediment forebays only on inlets coming from parking areas. Each building has drainage system that collects basically rainwater. So they've added a splash pad of riprap for those inlets.

Some inlets have not been found yet, but he thinks they will be uncovered when they are excavating.

One area where they will need to rework drainage pipe, where the water comes in and goes directly out untreated. In order to create forebay and maintain connection between the two basins, they are taking the pipe and relocating it to an area where they can install a sediment forebay, that will be the most extensive work in the basin. During construction they've added hay bales for erosion control.

Contractor is to identify the trees that he intends to cut down and before the work happens the owner and engineer will walk the site and approve, hoping to save some of the larger trees that are not problematic.

Extended the limit of work due to additional damage that pushed a pipe into a wetland area. Want to reestablish the pipe and armor it with rip rap as well as create a lawn area, by loaming and seeding, instead of current vegetation described as briars. Will be maintained as lawn.

Added temporary check dams with straw bales within lawn areas, for drainage and sidewalk work.

Beth voiced concerns about erosion during construction, especially during a substantial rain event coming from overflowing detention basins, which have no vegetation at all. She said hay bales only do so much, so they should be prepared to do something else when necessary. In response they talked about being strategic and phasing the project so that there is a limited amount of earth exposed at any given time to avoid an issue with erosion and larger storms.

Catch basins, total of five or six, will all be fitted with a hood on the outlet, which will help with any floatable contaminants.

Connected the erosion control, which was missing in some areas, so there is basically a ring around the central wetland system.

Reviewed Town Engineer comments and Beth said it was more of DPW issue than Con Com so we'll just say you must meet our engineer's requirements.

Natural Heritage letter was all set

Special Conditions

Beth- Need to meet Town Engineer's requirements

Harvey- Trees were of concern and recommend they not take all of them out.

If the commission is interested, they can come along or send a representative during the site walk to review which trees are flagged for removal.

Allen moved Brooks seconded. Commission voted 5-0-0 to issue the order of conditions with special conditions as discussed.

7:45 PM Request for Determination – Susan Tracy & Connie Kruger for removal of trees within buffer zone to bordering vegetated wetlands at 15 Hop Brook Rd. (Map 18C, Parcel 92).

Susan Tracy, homeowner at 15 Hop Brook Rd. said that after the winter there were several trees that were damaged. Therefore they wanted to remove some trees which had fallen into the yard or which pose a danger to people walking past. They have a landscaper, whom they regularly work with, prepared to remove trees on the property. Briony verified that the trees would be removed, but stumps left intact, and it was noted that all work would be done by hand. The property is sloped and there is a stream. There are wetlands and BVW on the property. Most of the trees to be removed are within the buffer zone. Beth indicated that the map shows where trees are compared to wetland lines. Steve Morse, from New England landscapes, will be doing the work. He is familiar with the space and with working within the wetland buffer. Beth noted that the homeowners seemed conscientious regarding the wetlands on their property.

Brooks moved and Allen seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to issue a negative determination.

Review proposed project modifications – UMASS/NEE Eastman Lane Duct Project

Kim Jaworksi- Bruschi from UMass presented proposed project modifications for Eastman Lane Duct Project.

Points discussed from submitted NEE memo:

1. Found that the pipe under Eastman Lane is deteriorating to the point where slip lining is not possible and UMass will be coming back for permitting to most likely put a concrete box culvert in, after they go through that process.
2. Would like to put a box grate in place of the flat grate that was put into place to keep out debris during emergency repairs.
3. Requesting, because of the steepness of the slope, to install riprap to stabilize the culvert headwall until they come back through with permitting to do the additional culvert work.
4. Want to replace the metal fencing between Eastman Lane and the wetlands.
5. Stream Restoration update. Beth indicated that the emergency riprap used for stabilization would need to come out as part of the final stream restoration.
6. Change the location of the 80 square foot mitigation area to an area directly adjacent to pond. Would like to plant newly proposed mitigation area, which is currently lawn, with elderberries.

Timeline for additional permitting and work will be next spring.

Applicant is asking if the work modified from this memo can be permitted right now, or if they need to do a full amended order of conditions.

Brooks asked if all of the proposed changes are minor or if the headwall work might be considered a major change. Discussion about impacts to resource area.

Butler moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to allow minor modifications, as indicated in the memo, to occur without amending the order.

Wetland scientist will be on site during stream restoration, and notify Beth when that work is happening, so she can monitor progress.

Certificate of Compliance – 57 Rosemary Lane (Lot 5 – Pine Meadows Subdivision)

The order of conditions is for the whole subdivision, but this is just for lot 5. The only jurisdictional part of the resource area for lot 5 is a very small section. Beth described a superseding order from the DEP meaning they have to do a Certificate of Compliance for both DEP and the Town.

Brooks moved and Clark seconded. Commission VOTED (5-0-0) to issue the Certificate of Compliance for 57 Rosemary Lane (Lot 5)

8:00 PM Discussion – Boice - CPAC Draft Community Preservation Plan

Boice absent. No discussion.

Adjournment

Voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at 8:25 PM.