

Minutes
Watertown Conservation Commission
Town Council Chambers
Wednesday, March 1, 2017

Conservation Commission Members Present: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Leo G. Martin, Patrick Fairbairn, Louis Taverna, Maria P. Rose, Charles C. Bering

Commission Members Absent: Charles C. Bering

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness (adopted on 4/5/17)

Pallotta McDermott began to chair.

1) Election of 2017 Commission officers – Chair, Vice Chair

Pallotta McDermott announced that she decided to step down as Conservation Commission Chairperson effective immediately. She explained that she has been on the Conservation Commission since 1981 and that the time had come for her to step down and take a seat as a member of the CC at this time.

Pallotta McDermott recommended that Leo Martin be named as the Chair going forward.

Motion: A motion was made by Taverna to nominate Martin as the new Chair of the Watertown Conservation Commission effectively immediately. Rose seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to elect Martin as the new Chair of the Watertown Conservation Commission effectively immediately.

A brief discussion was held about whether or not the CC should elect a Vice Chair. It was decided to continue taking a vote until the next scheduled meeting on April 5, 2017.

Martin took over the meeting as the new Chair of the Watertown Conservation Commission.

- 2) Public Hearing - Request for Extension of Order of Conditions- Public Hearing -**
321-0156/WWO-14-2 - For work associated with proposed subgrade electric distribution lines under portions of North Beacon Street and the North Beacon Street Bridge in connection with a new electric substation (Station 315) to be constructed in the North Brighton neighborhood of Boston. Applicant: Marc A. Bergeron, VHB, Inc., Eversource Energy.

Marc A. Bergeron of VHB, Inc. represented Eversource Energy in their request to extend the Order of Condition that was issued in 2014 and about to expire.

Bergeron explained that while part of the project is taking place in the town of Watertown, the portion of the project that is taking place in Boston has experienced delays and they just have not completed the project in Watertown yet.

Martin inquired if there were any changes that had been, or were expected to be made to the plans since the Order of Conditions was allowed in 2014. Bergeron said that there were no changes at this time and that none were expected at this time.

Martin directed Bergeron to get a set of design drawings to the attention of Hayward. Bergeron agreed to honor that request.

Motion: A motion was made by Taverna to extend the Order of Conditions. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to extend the Order of Conditions.

- 3) Public Hearing - Notice of Intent - WWO 17-1 – 64 Pleasant Street (Sasaki Associates).** For maintenance and repair of façade of a historic mill complex commercial building, within jurisdictional resource areas. Applicant PabloSavid-Butler/Steve Engler, Sasaki Associates, Owner

Steve Engler of Sasaki Associates who was presenting the project explained that the exterior of the building had been constructed out of T 211 plywood siding which had deteriorated. This maintenance and repair project is being proposed using a more durable material in order to upgrade the façade and foundation of the building.

The trees surrounding the building had over time grown very close to the building and had become impaired from spreading in a healthy, flourishing way. Engler said they were proposing to remove the trees surrounding the building which would enable them to set up scaffolding and access the building. Erosion control measures were being reviewed to protect the area of the building on the South Side which is close to the river. Engler reviewed photographs of the building which showed the trees and their impaired condition.

Engler reported that Epsilon had previously flagged the storm water swale and it was not believed that the area was jurisdictional.

Engler explained that the DCR, which is located next door to Sasaki would be notified about setting up the scaffolding of the building during construction. He also explained that they have plans to take measures to protect the drain between the Sasaki building and the DCR.

Conservation Commission Inquiries

Taverna asked if they plan to ground the stumps when the trees were removed. Engler said that they plan to remove the trees and ground the stumps as close to the foundation as they can get without damaging the foundation.

Fairbairn said he could see the problem with the trees so close to the building. He asked Engler to consider planting replacement trees far enough away from the building so that they may crown appropriately, maybe near the parking lot area.

Martin agreed that when he walked the site, he saw how the trees had grown right into the side of the building.

Rose explained that they would need to get permission from the DCR to do work on their property and made it clear that the Watertown CC could not grant authorization. She also suggested posting a sign "SLOW CONSTRUCTION AHEAD" as a warning to vehicles.

Public Meeting

Robert Kimberk, an abutter invited to the Whitney Hill discussion inquired whether or not there would be ongoing construction during Alewife Season. Travis Mazerall of Sasaki Associates explained that Dan Driscoll was concerned with debris falling into the river and even people coming and disrupting the migration process and that Driscoll's concerns would be honored in this project.

Kimberk inquired about the materials being used to repair the building and what they would use to prevent rot from occurring. Engler explained that hardy board material would be used to keep water out of the building.

Libby Shaw, resident of Templeton Parkway and of Trees for Watertown asked what would be done to give the trees involved in the project a long and healthy life.

Engler explained that about 5 years ago, they restructured the parking area in order to increase the space available for tree planting on the site. He said that the trees will have more room to spread out and grow into healthy, mature trees. He also mentioned that they are working on a Masterplan with a landscaper which more would be determined later and planning on planting more appropriate trees for the area.

The public hearing was closed.

Motion: Rose made a motion to approve the Notice of Intent and that an Order of Conditions for this project issue. Taverna seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached approving the Order of Conditions.

Martin reminded Engler that the DCR permit will need to be in hand to start the work.

- 4) **Public Hearing - Notice of Intent- 485 & 615 Arsenal Street-Arsenal Yards - WWO 17-2** - As part of a site redevelopment project, work proposed is within the 200-foot Riverfront Area and Watertown 150-foot Buffer Zone to the Charles River and includes installation of subsurface storm water management structures, construction of a multi-use pathway and regrading/repaving of specific areas. Applicant: Jeffery Heidelberg, BP Watertown Retail, LLC, c/o Boylston Properties

Jeffrey Heidelberg introduced the proposed project which had been before the CC last summer for an Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation which was approved at the CC meeting of July 13, 2016.

Heidelberg explained that the project has been reviewed and approved by the Planning Board with a Master Plan Special Permit in January 2017.

Ron Smith, Civil Engineer of R.J. O'Connell was present to review site features of Storm water management.

Tom Liddy, Wetland Scientist of Lucas Environmental was present to discuss regulatory requirements.

Chris Jones, Landscape Architect of Carol Jones Landscape Architects was present to discuss landscape.

Heidelberg explained that they came up with the plan to build out the mall in 1983 which is now coming down; however they will retain the Home Depot and Ann & Hope portion of the building from the 1983 construction.

The proposed plans for the development will include a design for pedestrian and slow vehicular traffic connection woven together with retail space to update the 1983 mall which is present now. In addition use of a green space behind the structure will support pedestrian access to Arsenal Park behind that and down to the river.

The retail spaces will be on the lower level with residential above.

Applicable Regulations in the Public Hearing

Wetlands Protection Act

Mass Storm water Policy

Watertown Storm water Management

EPA Clearwater Act

Roy Smith of R.J. O'Connell Associates was introduced to discuss the overview of the Storm water/Drainage System.

The regulations concerned were Mass DEP, EPA and Watertown Storm water Management.

Smith reviewed the Storm water/Drainage System and explained that Matt Shuman the Engineer for the town of Watertown had signed off on the Storm water Analysis.

Tom Liddy of Lucas Environmental appeared. He explained that there are no wetlands involved in this project, the 200 & 150 Buffer Zone extends onto the property, but no flood plains exist on the site.

There will be a multi-use pathway for pedestrians and bikes. An infiltration unit with additional grading and that there will be work in paved areas to rectify issues with parking spaces to enhance vehicular flow with low impact to the river front alteration.

Chris Jones, Landscape Architect with Carol Johnson Associates. He explained that the edge of the pavement along the riverfront remains unchanged, and that they are shifting the parking lot towards Home Depot and rebuilding the end islands to create 11,000 more square feet in the parking lot for plants.

In addition they are sculpting the slope coming off of Greenough Blvd. where a narrow shoulder exists by filling in the area to create a more natural looking space to the environment.

They propose to remove 26 trees in total in this project and will plant 89 more trees and shrubs listed in landscape plans are gentle, natural landscape to blend with Greenough Blvd.

Fairbairn questioned Jones about some of the species that were in the plan and Jones agreed that he would look further into Fairbairn's insights and address them at the next meeting.

No Agent Questions.

Public Comments

Sharon Bauer of 62 Pearl St-Bauer who is with Friends of Bees inquired about plans to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Heidelberg explained that Boylston Properties are Silver Level Certificate holders of the Leadership and Energy Efficiency and Environmental Design Standards (LEEDS). He explained that these are standards they must maintain to hold their certification. Boylston Properties will have full time staff on the property and will always keep the site looking its very best.

Robert Kimberk- He inquired about the additional windows and cars that will be present with the potential for washing and how this will impact the site. He wanted to ask them to analyze their projected levels of phosphorous being present in the drainage systems going out to the river. Heidelberg explained that there will be no car washing on the site. Liddy explained that the water is being treated once it is captured into the new system and that is how they calculate the levels of phosphorous in this instance as it is leaving the site.

Libby Shaw, resident and of Trees for Watertown asked what the expected life of the landscape is in terms of decades. Jones answered around 40-60 years at least.

Andy Campana of Robbins Rd. of the Bike Committee commented that he was in favor of a path through the park across Arsenal St. and to the river.

The CC made a decision to continue the meeting until April 5, 2017 to obtain more detailed information which they outlined before closing the public hearing.

Materials Requested by the CC for the April 5th, 2017 Continuation for the Public Hearing

Boring Logs

Groundwater Level Readings

Operations and Plant Manual

Licensed Site Professional Letter pertaining to soil contamination

Motion: Taverna made a motion to continue the public meeting to April 5, 2017. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached to continue the meeting to April 5, 2017.

5) Discussion – Tree Removal on City of Cambridge Watershed property

Hayward, Tree Warden for the town of Watertown explained that the trees that were removed on the City of Cambridge Watershed property, was to allow for Cambridge to maintain their utilities.

Elodia Thomas a resident of Marion Rd. stated that she thought Watertown should have been more proactive by communicating with residents about the removal of the trees well enough in advance to allow for the town to offer a forum for Watertown residents to hold a public discussion. Thomas also explained that if an ordinance had already been in place that may have required Cambridge to work with Watertown in a way that allowed the residents of Watertown to be considered in how this was being handled.

Michelle of 37 Paul St. stated that Cambridge does have a tree ordinance and said that she thought that Cambridge would never have allowed another town to come in and do what they did to Watertown.

Hayward explained that a municipality has the right to maintain their utilities. He also explained some potential hazards that could come of adopting a tree ordinance in response to the situation that had just occurred here with Cambridge.

Libby Shaw, president of Trees for Watertown said that she was grateful that the town spoke up when they did. She also felt that the actions of Watertown residents worked to get Cambridge to pause and turn over additional information to support why they were removing the trees to maintain their utilities.

Fairbairn said he felt it was important to discuss how we should approach these types of issues going forward. He also pondered examining a possible tree ordinance that would be effective even if utility maintenance was the reason for removal of the trees.

Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development and Planning was present for the discussion. He recommended that the CC take a deeper look at this issue and discuss options and analyze feasibility of them at a later time during a public meeting.

6) Informational Meeting - Presentation and discussion of Whitney Hill Park Annual Report (2016) as per the Town Council's 2013 Resolution Preserving the Property Known as Whitney Hill Park.

Fairbairn discussed his annual presentation and report on the work that has been ongoing at Whitney Hill with local students who are conducting science experiments with Fairbairn and their science teachers.

Robert Kimberk spoke about his concern with how healthy the habitat was at Whitney Hill. Kimberk would be interested in a program to vaccinate the raccoons who live in the woods which he thinks would enhance the overall health of the woods.

Hayward was asked about the basic responsibilities for maintenance at Whitney Hill. He explained that the DPW is responsible for the maintenance at Whitney Hill that is in the best interest of public safety. The general policy is to only prune or remove trees that are posing a risk to public safety. Trees that are not presenting a concern are left to manage themselves which has helped to sustain this natural environment. He also explained that there is a trash can at either end of the woods that gets emptied on a regular basis

Some residents at the informational meeting were interested in a clean- up day and Hayward said that trash bags could be obtained from the DPW. Hayward also suggested that residents were welcome to go and pick up trash on their own any time they wanted.

Fairbairn said he would like to have some social studies students volunteer in exchange for class credits to create a questionnaire that would go out to the residents for making suggestions about Whitney Hill.

Rose spoke of being in favor of a Clean Up Day. She also inquired if anything could be done to mitigate the erosion at Whitney Hill. She mentioned that in the future maybe Community Preservation Act funding could be used to support efforts to do so.

Fairbairn offered his email address to residents who were present who had any additional ideas or concepts that they wanted to discuss any time after the meeting was over.

Motion: Rose made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:51 PM. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote was reached adjourning the meeting at 10:51 PM.