



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Conservation Commission
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MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, April 7 2021, 7:00 PM, Remote Meeting on Zoom

Conservation Commission Members Present: Leo Martin, Maria Rose, Jamie O'Connell, Patrick Fairbairn, Charles C. Bering

Absent:

Also Present: Laura Laich, Hugh Hahn, James Briand, Meredith Field, Marci Loeber, Mary Mackinnon, Amy Cruz, Valerie Moore, Ray Cruz, Marilynne Roach, Jacob Mirsky, Sonia, K. T. Perrera, Donna Pennino, Andre Aeppil, Janet Buck, Will Twombly, Susan LaDue, Donna Penino, Morris Trichon, Arleyn Lever, Stan Sadkowski, Katie Snyder, Jim Reordan, Leonie Gordon, Phil Temples, Al Gordon, Dante Angelucci, Father Bill, Meredith Avery, Danielle Mellett, Angie Kounellis

Staff Present: Laurel Schwab, Conservation Agent, Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

Martin chaired the meeting.

- 1. Public Hearing-Notice of Intent- 0 Arlington St** - to construct a 2-story commercial building and parking lot on property known as the Williams Pond parcel; Max Hatziliades, applicant and owner

Schwab and Martin shared an update with members of the Commission that a formal letter was filed by the applicant seeking a continuance of this public hearing scheduled for this CC meeting. The Town has decided to hire a 3rd party consultant to assist them in the process of reviewing this Notice of Intent. Epsilon had been hired previously to delineate the parcel on this site in the last couple of years. Fairbairn suggested that the Town consider

hiring Patrick Garner, the very reputable wetland scientist who has great familiarity with the biology of the site as well as the issues regarding redevelopment of wetlands and state and local ordinances.

After a discussion among CC members, it was decided that Schwab would speak with Steve Magoon about the possibility of hiring Epsilon as the 3rd party consultant with Patrick Garner as a subconsultant. Schwab will discuss the matter with Magoon in time for an update at the meeting next month.

2. **Public Hearing- Certificate of Compliance-580 Pleasant St-** to close out an expired order issued in 2003 for riverbank plantings. Work allowed in the order was never carried out and a C of C was never requested; Laura Laich, Applicant, Marci Loeber, Owner

Laich recalled that at the meeting held in March 2021 she told the Commission there was work proposed in a 2003 Order of Conditions on this property that was never completed by the former owner. Schwab contacted Mass. DEP and was told the appropriate action in this instance was to have the new owner file a request for a Certificate of Compliance *with an appropriate statement of non-completion*.

As noted at the March 3rd meeting by Laich, the new owner has incorporated plans to address the proposed work from the 2003 order into the Notice of Intent now being reviewed in the following agenda item for this meeting.

After a brief discussion a motion was made by Rose.

Motion: Rose made a motion to allow the issuance of a Certificate of Compliance with the appropriate statement of incompleteness. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was taken to accept the motion made by Rose.

3. **Public Hearing- Notice of Intent- 580 Pleasant St.- Continued from March 3rd meeting-** To renovate existing 2-story building for new lab and R&D office space, including the addition of patio and parking space, an access path at the rear of the parcel, and stormwater improvements; Laura Laich, Applicant, Hugh Hahn, Applicant, Marci Loeber, Owner along with Mathew Snell, Attorney for Applicant.

Laich outlined the following specifics of the proposal that had been modified in order to address concerns raised by members of the CC during the March meeting.

Alternate parking lot layouts were considered to further reduce impervious area, but were deemed less workable than the previously proposed layout.

The removal of the invasive species in the riverbank planting area will now include a plan for 3 years of monitoring. Cedar and White Pine trees will be added, along with additional plants for increasing the diversity of species on the site. The choices for diversity in the species list will include plants that do best potentially mixing among various invasive species.

The public path will most likely include an easement acquisition as a public space as it traverses through high priority parcels, from the north bank behind the skating rink, and to the Stop and Shop which is private property.

The regulatory compliance question about whether the grass area at the south of the parcel counts as “degraded area” was discussed, with Laich describing the regulations as classifying former landfill areas as degraded. Since the entire site was part of a former landfill, the site counts as degraded even though there is currently grass growing. This was satisfactory to the Commission in terms of allowing the public path to be built.

Commission Discussion

O’Connell asked if this was just terrestrial invasive species. Laich said they will create a plan that can treat what is there once that has been officially assessed. O’Connell asked if they would put in some shadow parking and Hahn said the owners would be willing to do that for the Planning Department. Rose said there should be some signage that is visible, opposite from Piermont Place. Fairbairn and Bering were both happy with the plans.

Martin was happy with the shadow parking and thanked members of the team for all the changes, and the reduction of impervious space.

There were no public comments.

Motion: Rose made a motion to close the hearing and approve the project with the supplemental material that was submitted. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was taken approving the motion made by Rose.

4. **Public Hearing- Amendment to Notice of Intent- DCR-** Test Plot Implementation for Charles River Basin Riverbank Vegetation Management Plan, requesting minor amendments to NOI originally submitted in March 2020; Danielle Mellett (DCR), Applicant, Priscilla Geigis (DCR), Owner

Jim Reardon was present to review the plans with the Commission. He explained that on March 4, 2020, an administrative hold was put on the issuance of the DCR Test Plot Plans in order to address some amendments to the plans.

Since March of 2020, a topographic study was conducted updating the jurisdictional boundaries of the plan, and the proposal for planting was changed to late spring. A slight change was made to the impact areas of the temporary test plot site, leading to a 500 square foot increase. A plastic mesh fence had been included in the plans in order to reduce the impact of chain-link fencing on the area.

Rose inquired about the fencing and Fairbairn joined in, adding that the fencing would help deter herbivores as well as guide the pedestrians. He also mentioned that because the project area was a prime vista point with a high level of human traffic, the project design should use appropriate plants as a kind of living fence to help confine people within the non-vegetated zone of concentrated trampling.

Public Comments

Morris Trichon asked what herbicide would be used, and Reardon said he was unsure at this time, but it would be as simple as possible to minimize any hazardous effects.

Motion: Bering made a motion to close the hearing on the Amendments to Plans for the Order of Conditions. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous roll call was taken that agreed with the motion made by Bering.

5. **Public Hearing- Notice of Intent- 57 Coolidge Ave-** To redevelop the site including a mix of office and research & development/lab-life sciences space including a new, publicly accessible open space, an enhanced stream corridor, and streetscape improvements; VHB, Applicant, National Development, Owner

Katie Snyder appeared to review the proposal of the 3-acre parcel. She explained that the site was formerly known as the Mt. Auburn Sports Club. She explained that so far there had been several meetings that included the abutters and the Planning Department of the town.

The site was purchased in July of 2020 with the intention to build new life science office space with an above ground parking garage. The plans also include proposals to make improvement to the stream corridor and the Coolidge Ave streetscape.

There was a site walk with the developer team, Conservation Agent, and Conservation Chair in early fall of 2020, and a pre-application presentation was given to the Conservation Commission in October 2020. In addition to the three community meetings held, a Developers Conference was held in January 2021.

As a result of all the preliminary meetings and discussion about the work, parking was pared down by 62 spaces, and a proposed public path was added on Coolidge Ave., with an entry to allow access that would accommodate bikes.

The proposed work in the stream corridor is restoration and removing substantial impervious area on both sides of the stream, which would make space for diverse landscaping, in a fenced in area around the property, that connects with the shared use space, to a bike path through the property, that acts as a fire access to the building.

Snyder noted that the landscape architects did a great job planning the tree canopy over a period of 3 years.

Snyder explained the stormwater management components of the plan. The soil erosion and sediment control rate is at 94% TSS Removal with Phosphorus at 91% Removal.

Commission Discussion

Fairbairn said impacts of the tree canopy (e.g. winter shadow on condo units to the east) are an issue as are rabbits and small species on the south edge who call this home. He also pointed out there could be issues that result in disturbance of the sediment to watch out for. Fairbairn said that overall these are improvements to the existing conditions, particularly expanding and connecting the open space.

Bering said he was concerned about the stormwater pipes at the northern border of the stream and wondered whether this plan would be able to accommodate extreme storms. The developer responded that the stream is flashy, so it does tend to carry a quick storm surge but also a quick dissipation because there's no obstruction downstream.

Rose said she was happy with the phosphorus removal and the reduction in impervious space. She pointed out the bank disturbance that would take place during the removal of the pipe, as it traverses over the bank. Rose inquired about plans they had in place to deal with the stormwater system under the parking garage. She suggested they check with the manufacturers to get the best operating instructions, and also work those plans into an O&M plan in perpetuity for all future new owners.

O'Connell asked if there was a detail for the mesh netting and if it is biodegradable. She asked about the shadow parking area being planted or not. Rose said she would recommend they request an extension on their Order to give themselves time to evaluate the need for the shadow parking, so they don't have to come back for another NOI if they decide they need them.

O'Connell asked about a lighting plan. Katie said the lighting plan intends to highlight safety but not create too much light disturbance for wildlife or abutters.

Martin commended the project team for the great job they did by staying out of the no build zone on the DCR and Northside of the stream where there is now less encroachment than was there before.

Public Comments

Al Gordon said he worked with the developers and had received a comprehensive response from National Development which was an appreciated and promising step.

Morris Trichon is the contact for the condominium owners. He remarked that some of the slides were not surprising. He inquired why material had not been shared with members of the CC before it was brought up by the Condominium Associate. He also inquired about the name Avanti which appeared on the signs on the drawings. He asked if that was the name of the biotech firm, which manufactures Lipides, which would bring in other environmental issues. Snyder responded that Avanti was just a hypothetical name they put on the plans, so this turned out to not be an issue to discuss.

Snyder promised a written response to the issues raised this evening and said it would go to all members of the CC.

Libby Shaw- President of Trees for Watertown- said that conditions for the trees in Watertown are eroding as a result of the consequences of mass development. She mentioned the wildlife habitat in Sawins Pond that is thriving both above and below the ground. She asked that the project team please preserve the trees, and to be aware of the habitat that resides there at all times. She asked if they had done an official assessment of the significant trees on the site.

Martin and O'Connell echoed concern for the trees. They asked for an arborist report to be submitted.

Members of the CC discussed whether they could condition at this point.

Motion: Fairbairn made a motion to continue the hearing. O’Connell seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was reached.

6. Agent Report

- a. CPA update- O’Connell reported that the CPA draft plan should be out in the next week or two. She encouraged everyone to participate and to send feedback in to the Lanae Handy, Coordinator for the CPC.
- b. Climate and Energy Plan- Schwab reported that KLA had begun work on the climate plan. It was also reported they are working on a community engagement strategy and discussing best practices of how to publicize public engagement efforts.
- c. Pollinator update- DPW is currently testing soil samples for pH. while Dennis Duff is picking out items on the planting list to add into the design. They are looking forward to planting the DPW Pollinator Garden in May.
- d. Ongoing Orders of Conditions- N/A
- e. Arsenal Park phase B- They are waiting on the final Stormwater Report and they are getting geared up to file the Notice of Intent.

7. Minutes- March 3, 2021- The minutes were continued until the May meeting.