TOWN OF WATERTOWN

Conservation Commission

Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Leo Martin, Chairperson
Maria P. Rose, Vice Chair
Charles C. Bering, Member
Patrick W. Fairbairn, Member
Jamie O'Connell, Member
Colleen Egan, Member

Telephone (617) 972-6426
Facsimile (617) 926-7778
www.watertown-ma.gov
Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, September 9, 2020, 7:00 PM, Remote Meeting by Zoom and Dial In

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

Also Present: Laura Laich, Hugh Hahn, Craig Finn, Joe Gaiko, Michael Wourms

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

Martin chaired the meeting and read the following.

The Town of Watertown (Conservation Commission) will hold a meeting on September 9, 2020 with the meeting starting time of 7:00 pm. In accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, section 20, relating to the 2020 Covid-19 emergency and to avoid group congregation, this meeting had remote opportunities for participation with public access provided by emailing the agent at lschwab@watertown-ma.gov.

Martin called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm reminded the group they had voted to accept electronic signatures at the last meeting and also to poll all votes taking place in Zoom meeting format.

1. **Confirmatory vote on electronic signatures-** Schwab explained that the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds had requested a motion be made by the Conservation Commission that allows her to be the signatory on behalf of the Conservation Commission for the duration of the need for electronic signatures on documents due to the pandemic.

   Motion: A motion was made by Rose to allow Schwab to act as the signatory for all decisions made by the Conservation Commission that are filed with the Registry of Deeds. O'Connell seconded the motion.

   A roll call was taken and all agreed with the motion made by Rose.

2. **Notice of Intent- 650 Pleasant Street (continued from July meeting)**

Laura Laich from VHB introduced herself as part of the team presenting the supplementary material requested during the first part of the hearing that took place in July. She outlined the list of items she was present to review.

- **Supplemental memo describing the project**
- **Stormwater Report**
- **Report of the Wetlands Delineation**
- **Revised NOI**

Laich reported that the back portion of the site, which includes an existing surface parking lot, is the only part of the site that falls within the Riverfront Area zone. She pointed out two small areas areas where pavement removal will take place and explained the proposed stormwater management upgrades. There is currently no phosphorus treatment on the site, only two catch basins. She reported that VHB suggests adding a tree box filter adjacent to the catch basin in the southeast corner of the site to increase phosphorous control, and asked the CC for feedback on that concept. There was general agreement that that addition was a good idea.

Craig Finn clarified that the back side of the site drains into a catch basin with a water quality unit. The small parking lot area on the eastern side of the site drains into a catch basin to a large drain pipe that goes out into Pleasant St.

O'Connell said that the supplemental material was an improvement. She brought up the fact that they must figure out whether the CC should regulate this project under Section IV or Section V of the Wetlands Protection Act. The difference has to do with whether that portion of the site was developed before or after 1996, when there was a regulatory change.

O'Connell said the Notice of Intent (NOI) did not clarify for the CC whether this qualifies as a previously developed site. Laich explained this is an old site and the original building was dated to 1962, and so this has been in this condition a few decades. O'Connell asked if they knew for certain when the parking lot was constructed, because in her research she has seen aerials from the early 1990s that show it as wooded area, and then much more recent aerials that show the parking lot. Laich explained VHB did not have any additional documentation, but stated there is no further encroachment of the riverfront area being proposed, nor is there is loss of habitat.

Schwab said the reviewed the office's files, which showed that an NOI for the parking lot construction was filed and carried out in 1997. O'Connell said that in that case, general performance standards would apply, and they may need to amend the narrative of the project to reflect that.

Hugh Hahn explained that the aerial photographs of the site were from 1997 which were all they could obtain given the challenges of Covid 19 restricting the ability to conduct research. Hahn explained that this site was a former town landfill. The soil had been heavily remediated and capped, which causes challenges for stormwater infiltration on the site.

O'Connell said that they could add a special condition for TSS calculations that would also explain if they were not able to meet the requirement for the standard, why they weren't able to do so.

Bering said he appreciated the open mindedness of the CC and how they were trying to allow an opportunity to issue an order of conditions by the addition of special conditions to fill in where requirements were not yet met. He stated he was concerned that they were just now hearing now about the capped landfill on the site, which has the potential to release contamination into the environment. Hahn said he could speak to Arranta and see to it that it goes into the record that the site was a capped landfill and provide a summary of the remediation process.

O'Connell said she felt they could permit the project at this meeting.

They conferred with the project team about potential for continuing the public hearing. They agreed that they were becoming more limited by time as the fall approached, and they would like an order of conditions to be issued at this meeting, with special conditions to be added which they would submit to the Conservation office in advance of the October meeting.

O'Connell listed the special conditions as such:

- TSS calculations with an explanation of the levels that were met
- Updated site plan that shows the newly proposed tree box filter
- Updated narrative for the NOI
- Executive summary of history of site as a landfill and associated remediation
- Updated operations and maintenance plan that reflects tree box filter
- Checklist of maintenance completed submitted to the Conservation Commission by the end of each calendar year

Motion: Rose made a motion to close the public hearing and issue an order of conditions that included special conditions. O'Connell seconded the motion.

A roll call was taken and all present agreed with the motion made by Rose.

3. **Minutes- July 8, 2020-** After a review of the minutes a motion was made to accept the minutes.

   Motion: Bering made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 8, 2020 meeting. O'Connell seconded the motion.

A roll call was taken and the motion to accept the minutes of the July 8, 2020 meeting was accepted.

4. **Whitney Hill signage-** This item was continued to the October 8, 2020 meeting.

5. **Mount Auburn Cemetery vernal pool reporting-** Martin explained that Fairbairn created a checklist for the Mt. Auburn Cemetery to utilize to report to the Office of Conservation on a regular basis. Members of the CC expressed a desire to potentially take a site tour of the vernal pool in the future.

6. **Agent Report**
    a. **CPA update-**Rose reported that there was some disagreement on the development of the Community Preservation Plan and that the draft did not meet the expectations of Community Preservation Committee members. The contract of the consultant was terminated and at this time members are regrouping their efforts and discussing what improvements were needed to the draft plan and application. Rose said that she believed members of the CPC decided in August to hire a graphic designer to work on the draft plan. Schwab said the Community Development and Planning Department had full intentions of supporting the CPC and their Coordinator, Lanae Handy, in any way that they could to move forward in light of all recent developments.
    b. **Recap of MACC Environmental Law webinar (Maria Rose)-** Rose asked to continue this discussion to the October 8th meeting.
    c. **Pollinator effort update-** O'Connell explained that a list of plant species had been prepared by Pam Philips and forwarded on to Bob DiRico at DPW. They were now waiting to hear back from him. Martin said he would place a follow up phone call to DiRico to touch base with him about Philips's information.
    d. **Ongoing Orders of Conditions**
        i. **Arsenal Park -** Schwab reported that she had circulated pdf documents with updates on Phase A, which were prepared by CDM Smith. She has been walking the site every Tuesday and reported things are moving along and progress is being made. Schwab mentioned there is a small hill that has been graded and could potentially provide scenic views to the river, but the view is blocked by dense trees and overgrown vegetation on the slope that leads down towards Greenough Boulevard. She reported that CDM Smith had floated the idea of eventually doing some vista pruning in that area, either by them or by the Town. The area in question is outside their current scope of work. Rose expressed she would like Fairbairn to be included in the discussion of what should be pruned and what should not be, based on his experience. Schwab agreed and said she would be sure to include him in any discussions. Schwab suggested this topic could be something discussed at next month's meeting. As for the planned Phase B, Schwab reported that both summer and the pandemic had caused some delays moving forward at this time. The focus groups for various parts of the park

development had been delayed and they were working on getting those smaller meetings organized and scheduled within the next month or so.

ii. **Arsenal Yards-** Schwab said she has been visiting each week and they are getting closer to completion of the building on the northeastern edge of the park. They are now working on the public space elements.

iii. **330 Pleasant-** Schwab reported that she recently walked the site with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the site landscape architect, and site arborist in order to tidy up the boundary of the DCR trail property. The pruning of the eastern part of the site is complete and the western past of the site should be completed within a month. She said they have done a good job making sure to preserve major existing trees and it is meshing well with the DCR property. She said she is very optimistic about the outcome.

Motion: Rose made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 pm. O'Connell seconded the motion.

A poll was taken to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 PM.