



CITY OF WATERTOWN
Conservation Commission
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MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, January 5, 2022, 7:00 PM, Remote Meeting on Zoom

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

Absent: N/A

Also Present: Art Allen, Scott Clarke, Nichole Dunphy, Sara Robertson, Donna Calleja, Nick Watkins, Glenn Howard, Rachel Guilfoyle, Gideon Schreiber

Staff Present: Laurel Schwab, Conservation Agent, Gideon Schreiber, Senior Planner

Martin chaired the meeting.

- 1. Public meeting- (continuance has been requested to Jan. meeting)- Request for Determination of Applicability- Gore Place** -to make improvements to the existing farmstead in the southwest portion of the site, including a new pole barn and threshing barn with associated fenced barnyards, access walking paths, gravel driveway, utility service upgrades and new stormwater management system. Gore Place Society, Applicant; Highpoint Engineering, representative.

Schwab reported that the project team requested a continuance to the February 9, 2022, meeting.

- 2. Public Hearing (continuance has been requested to Jan. meeting)- Notice of Intent- 0 Arlington St (Williams Pond Parcel)** - to construct a 2-story commercial building and

parking lot on property known as the Williams Pond parcel; Max Hatziliades, Applicant and Owner.

Schwab reported that the project team requested a continuance to the February 9, 2022, meeting.

3. **Public Hearing Continued from December 3, 2021**-Arsenal Park located at 551 Rear Arsenal St., a 13.7-acre park situated on the former Arsenal Grounds, for **Phase B** of construction taking place within the 200 ft. Riverfront Area, which generally maintain the existing layout and uses of the park.

Nick Watkins was present along with Glenn Howard and reported that they now have a Mass. DEP number.

Landscape plans are available to review as requested. On 12/22/21 the plans were reviewed by the DPW, and comments were made regarding stormwater that are leading to an increase in the infiltration capacity of the site. Entry plaza options are included in the 90% plans, the planting plan has been updated and sent to members of the CC last week, and the playground options have been updated in collaboration with the manufacturer, connecting in with the picnic area, and existing gazebo.

The DPW voiced concern with the condition of the spray pad that included some concerns about new requirements for the water management system. The conclusion was that it would be costly and time consuming to update it right now, and that in the future, CDM Smith can design and install a new spray park in the future.

Recreation has asked to keep all grills and picnic tables because they are so heavily used. Some addition curb area updates and refinements were made based on DPW comments and feedback, and the community gardens have been updated with comments that were made by the Community Garden Board.

Some court area adjustments were made which included the removal of 4 planting beds, adjusting the fencing to the north, and a sitting area was added adjacent to the new pavilion. A new court shade structure was added with picnic tables that have access on both sides, with some planting beds that add some lushness to the area. Howard explained old fitness equipment will be removed and they have added extra shade seed mix.

Martin pointed out the 90% plans were not provided in time to review at this meeting, so the correct course of action would be to focus on the Notice of Intent questions. Rose asked how they were not related. Martin clarified the CC has care and custody of the park, so the members need to review the 90% plans and to provide comments. The Notice of Intent is more limited in that it involves the proposed work in the 200 ft. riverfront area.

O'Connell asked for a list of outstanding concerns in the 200 ft riverfront area. Watkins explained that there is a slight increase of impervious area, and some restoration will be done on the Charles River Side involving erosion repair on the slope with the planting of native plants with loam, seeding, turf matting on top and shade meadow mix to naturalize the area. O'Connell stated that it sounds great but there are no details about that area contained in the package of materials. Rose replied she had asked about the laydown areas during construction. Howard explained the parking lots would be used for the staging areas and it will be repaved at the very end of the project on the way out. She also inquired who would maintain all the rain gardens. Watkins explained the DPW did not want an overly ornamental array of plants so that they could mow it a couple of times a year and plan on it growing back with a natural appearance, the same of what took place in Phase A plans, with all maintenance being addressed by DPW. Rose asked for an O & M Plan for rain gardens showing all the requirements for the stormwater as well.

Bering clarified that the maintenance plans will all be conditioned into the project's Order of Conditions. Fairbairn said he agreed with everything being said but he would like to see the total square footage of green space in the design. The special details of the conditions are as follows.

- Details of the narrative on restoration
- O & M Plan for rain gardens
- Impervious areas for Phase A and Phase B

Motion: A motion was made by Rose to approve the NOI with special conditions. O'Connell Seconded the motion.

A roll call was taken, and all agreed.

Martin explained the Conservation Commission has care and custody of The Arsenal Park Design, which is at 90% design, and once the CC votes, the proposal goes to the City

Council. Martin said they have not seen the plans since March. Martin said the CC needs to review the plans and he would need to see them first, and he would like to hold another meeting just to discuss the 90% plans.

Howard explained they are trying to get to bid by February and if the plans are approved in time, they can order play equipment at a certain cost, and that would buy some time because it takes 6 months for the purchase to go through. Schreiber explained the city cannot move forward with purchases that are not approved. Schwab explained that it has been her understanding that the plans have been going through an administrative track in Planning and that Martin has been designated to participate in meetings to monitor the development of the park throughout the process. O'Connell thanked Schwab for explaining and giving the context to help her understand that the plans have been being monitored through the administrative track to keep them aligned with the requests and comments that have been made by the CC. Martin said they have not seen the plans since March and Fairbairn suggested holding a separate meeting in the next couple of weeks.

Motion: Bering made a motion to approve the playground equipment in the plans and that the plan would be reviewed by members of the CC at a meeting in 2 weeks. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Members of the CC were polled, and they all approved the playground equipment, and agreed they would review the 90% plans at a special meeting held on 1/19/22.

Rose brought up the entrance as an area to discuss. Guilfoyle said the entrance is in concept at this time, and the idea is to pre-weatherize the columns on site and add a 6-inch buffer of crushed stone on the ground, so that all water will flow into the stone and not on the walkway.

Martin asked if they could add a remedy for the community gardens area to have trash containers that would prevent rodent infestations, as had occurred in the past.

Martin asked if the exercise equipment had been removed from the plans as it was a liability. Watkins said that it was taken out during the 25% review for cost reasons. Martin said he was disappointed and hoped they may be able to add that back in with CPA funds later.

Fairbairn commented that rather than see a flag flying at the entrance of this natural park in the care and custody of the CC, that a large shade tree be added, and the impervious space be reduced to reflect the true mission of the CC and its contribution to the residents of the city. Schreiber pointed it this would be an area used frequently for drop off so there would be a need for some impervious space for that purpose. Guilfoyle commented when she played softball, they would frequently use the flag to pledge allegiance or sing the Star-Spangled Banner, and maybe moving the flagpole to the area near the field would be suitable to make room for a tree. Rose said a flowering tree would be nice, and one without a large and complex rooting system that would push up the sidewalk in the future.

Schwab agreed to investigate scheduling a special meeting to review the 90% plans.

4. Agent Report

Schwab updated members of the CC that Gore Place sought to continue the public hearing to update the plans and move the proposed work out of the buffer zone, and to receive approval from the fire department. She said they also wanted to schedule a site visit before the next meeting, and she would send out a poll in the next day or so to schedule that.

- a. CPA – O’Connell updated members that the CPC would begin reviewing the applications of the projects that elected to move forward, and she clarified that a couple had dropped out. The members of the CPC will review the 5 projects that are moving forward and would start seeing presentations by the applicants who would appear to explain why they should receive funding from CPA over the months of February and March.
- b. Climate and Energy Plan- Schwab updated the CC that an input meeting was held on December 7th, and feedback and discussions were exchanged. The consultant is working on the draft plan that would be undergoing internal review and finally a publicly released draft plan would be ready in February.
- c. Pollinators- There was no new update on pollinators.
- d. Ongoing Orders of Conditions- Schwab updated members that the team at 57 Coolidge Street was still sending in weekly reports regarding soil storage on the site. They reported they were just approved to move 1000 pounds of soil per day off the site beginning this upcoming Monday.
- e. Arsenal Park- Was discussed at the meeting
- f. Boston Gas- Some maintenance was scheduled for the South Side of the river, and they submitted the plans for normal routine maintenance to the city.

- g. Whitney Hill- Martin prefaced the email that had been sent by Fairbairn earlier in the week. He said that despite the pandemic, and all the setbacks, Fairbairn was still able to make some progress. Fairbairn explained that he had high hopes of achieving great results with an unpaid labor force. He said that a lot can be learned by changes indicated by studying the woody vegetation, and they were about ½ though inventory of the trees. Fairbairn is trying to get summer volunteers from the high school and secure a way to have a professional supervise a group of students working on the tree inventory and sampling. He will discuss the next phase of what is available with Martin and Schwab over the upcoming months, and he invited anyone who was willing to volunteer to help.

5. Minutes-review and approve minutes from November 3, 2021, meeting

Rose made some comments that were sent to Schwab by email.

Motion: Bering made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Rose seconded the motion.

Poll: A poll was taken, and members agreed to accept the minutes as amended.