



CITY OF WATERTOWN
Conservation Commission
Administration Building
149 Main Street
WATERTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02472

Maria P. Rose, Chair
Leo Martin, Member
Jamie O'Connell, Member
Darya Mattes, Member
Rachel Danford, Member

MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, September 6, 2023, 7:00 PM, Remote Meeting on Zoom

Conservation Commission Members Present: Maria Rose, Leo G. Martin, Darya Mattes, Rachel Danford, and Jamie O'Connell.

Absent: Charles Bering

Also Present: Rebecca Byard, Nancy Hammet, and Glenn Howard

Staff Present: Katie Swan, Conservation Agent, Susan C. Jenness, Assistant

Rose chaired the meeting.

1. Public Hearing: Notice of Intent (Continued to October 4, 2023) -- located off 0 Arlington Street, between 71 Arlington Street and 15 Arlington Street (MA DEP #: 321-0186) - construction of 41,289 square feet (sf) of pervious parking area on the north side of Sawins Pond, extending from the existing paved parking lot, within the 100-foot Buffer Zone of Vegetated wetlands and Inland Bank and locally regulated 150-foot Buffer Zone. Polina Safran, Representative from SWCA, Max Hatziliades, Owner.

Rose noted that she has been working with Katie Swan and Town staff to obtain a 3rd party Licensed Site Professional (LSP) to review the proposed project in light of historical uses (landfill) and past oil and hazardous material releases.

2. Informational Meeting: Geocaching at Whitney Hill - Rebecca Byard

Byard was present to talk with members of the Conservation Commission about her experience getting involved with geocaching. Byard explained that during Covid, her

family discovered geocaching to enjoy safe activities that were fun for the whole family. Byard shared a short video that described a geocaching app that they used and explained that there are rules that are in place for setting up, placement and, maintaining geocaches. Byard noted that there are numerous locations where geocaches could be placed within Whitney Hill that would make great hiding spots, without harming the trees or pose any risks to Whitney Hill Park.

O'Connell suggested the use of maps to pinpoint locations to avoid in the park, such as the plots for scientific studies that were developed by Fairbairn for use with the local high school students. Mattes offered to meet Ms. Byard at Whitney Hill to show her Fairbairn's test plot locations. Rose asked if there was any risk the activity that could become a source of trash, and inquired who would look after the cache if it needed repair or replacement. Byard said her family would monitor and oversee the geocache at Whitney Hill and that she would create a label to post disclaimers and any other warnings commission members would like posted on the label.

Martin noted that the Conservation Commission did not have care and custody of Whitney Hill and that Swan should discuss the idea with staff. Martin suggested Byard could write up a memo in support of geocaching at Whitney Hill. Martin asked about the frequency of the use of geocaches in other area and Rose asked if it would be beneficial to post a notice in the new message boards at Whitney Hill about the activity. Byard explained that secrecy is an essential element of geocaching and advised against advertising.

Motion - Mattes made a motion to allow Rebecca Byard to establish a geocaching location at Whitney Hill provided City staff concurs. Martin seconded the motion.

Roll Call - A roll call was taken, and the members unanimously agreed with the motion made by Mattes.

3. Public Hearing: Request for Extension of Order of Conditions for Arsenal Park Improvements - Phase A (MA DEP #: 321-0169) - Glenn Howard, CDM Smith.

Howard was present to review the current site conditions with members of the Conservation Commission and requested an extension of the OOC for a year. Howard met with Swan to look at the current planting conditions and reported they had to replace about 300 plants, that were mostly perennials due to shade conditions. Overall, he reported they have had a high success rate of plantings on the site.

O'Connell inquired if they should have a three-year period to observe the survival of the plants instead of one year. Howard said things looked good at the site visit and they have plenty of photos to show. Howard said that even without planting replacement, required survival rates have been met. Rose clarified they should have one full growing season before they come back for a request for Certificate of Compliance.

Motion - O'Connell made a motion to allow a one-year extension to the Order of Conditions for Arsenal Park Phase A. Danford seconded the motion.

Roll Call - A roll call was taken, and all members agreed unanimously with the motion made by O'Connell.

4. Commission Discussion: Master List of Special Conditions

Members of the Conservation Commission worked with the longstanding Master List of Special Conditions to make appropriate updates for their application in future permit decisions. Comments in the document from previous Conservation Agent Laurel Schwab and from Swan were discussed, as were suggestions for edits from commission members. The document with the list and comments were screen shared during the discussion.

The review ended with the categories on Water Quality and Wetland Replication and the commission members agreed to continue their work at a future date.

5. CPC Update:

O'Connell reported that all CPC project applications that met eligibility requirements are being readied for official filing. O'Connell described the list of projects being considered for funding this year. The project names are as follows:

- Watertown Historic Records Preservation Project (preservation of historical records in the City Clerk's Office)
- HVAC Upgrade for the Historic Edmund Fowle House and Museum
- Brown House Structural Engineering (a historic preservation structural engineering analysis)
- Scots' Charitable Society Fence Preservation (a historic preservation project at Mt. Auburn Cemetery)

- North Branch Library Site - Rehabilitation Planning Phase (historic preservation, open space project)
- 80 Mount Auburn St Historic Building Safety and Accessibility Redevelopment (historic preservation project at the Belmont Watertown United Methodist church (BWUMC))
- Walker Pond (site planning and environmental analysis at parcel newly purchased by the City of Watertown)

O'Connell cautioned that although all projects had been deemed eligible to submit full applications for funding, this eligibility will ultimately depend on details to be supplied during the project application stage.

O'Connell reported that there will be a celebration for Irving Park at 2 pm on September 16th. Irving Park was awarded CPC funding during last year's project awards and has now been completed.

O'Connell asked Swan if she knew of any ongoing dialog taking place about the plans for Walker Pond. Swan explained plans are in the early stages and just conceptual at this time.

6. Agent Report:

- A. Arsenal Yards (MA DEP#: 321-0165) - Swan met with Nick Watkins about removing silt fences and erosion control straw wattles between 100-500 Forge. Swan authorized removal of silt fences and advised them to maintain the erosion control straw wattles at this time to give time and protection to the seeding that is not taking on the hill. They will continue to watch for stabilization and address the issue of the trees and plants that need to be replaced. Rose asked Swan to request that they specifically treat the bare soil spots on the site.
- B. 580 Pleasant Street (MA DEP: 321-0173) - Swan met with Darian Ahmadi about removing the silt fences and erosion control straw wattles. Swan authorized removal of silt fences and advised them to maintain the erosion control straw wattles at this time to give time and protection to the seeding that is not taking in some areas. They will keep the erosion control straw wattles and check the fill in.

C. GSA - Swan reported the USACE recently completed the second 5-year report for the GSA site, and she received a digital copy from the project manager. Swan informed members she took a site walk back in April. Rose asked if the clogged drains had been improved since the last site walk in 2018. Swan explained that the maintenance team goes out every year and clarified that DCR does the maintenance for the site. Rose noted in 2018 that there was a complaint of trash on the site and concerns with the retaining wall from the condominium. Rose asked Swan to let her know about future site visits.

7. Acceptance of Minutes:

Review and acceptance of Minutes from July 12, 2023, Conservation Commission meeting.

Motion - Martin made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. O'Connell seconded the motion made by Martin.

Roll Call - A roll call was taken that was unanimous.

Motion - A motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 was made by O'Connell. Danford seconded the motion.

Roll Call - A roll was taken that was unanimous and the meeting was adjourned.