



TOWN OF WATERTOWN
Conservation Commission
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MINUTES

Meeting Date: Wednesday, January 6, 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: N/A

Also present: Alan Westman, Steve Winnick, Andy Mann, Jim Borrebach, Nick Watkins, Glenn Howard, Rachel Guilfoil, David Schwarzman, Megan O'Connell, Jeffrey Dirth, Richard Quinby, Michael Wourms, Joe Gaiko

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

Martin chaired the meeting.

1. Informational Update- Arsenal Park Phase B

Glenn Howard was present to introduce the updates to Arsenal Park. He introduced Nick Watkins and Rachel Guilfoil. Nick would review the amphitheatre area and Rachel Guilfoil the playground.

Howard said that the latest submission had been sent to the commission earlier that day.

Guilfoil reviewed the modifications that had been integrated into the plans after the review and comments made at the December 3, 2020 Conservation Commission meeting. She explained that emphasis had been placed on creating a whimsical riverfront theme that included an increase in natural materials and a reduction of synthetic materials.

Watkins reviewed three sets of scenarios for the amphitheater with the focus on an adventurous forest area that you can hike up, as well as stairs for parents to climb up. There were three different variations of seating and planting themes.

Together, the two areas consist of an educational nature theme, utilizing signage and sculptures that play off the wildlife and species of the nearby riverfront habitat.

Commission Comments

Rose commented that she thought the plans were fabulous and said that they would know more once cost estimates came in what parts of the plan might need to be reduced. She liked the unstructured play themes and said she wished she had more time to review the plans prior to the meeting.

O'Connell said the plans looked great and said it was clear that CDM Smith had heard what they were asking for in the last meeting for more a more naturalized upper playground and more wooded space below.

Fairbairn said he was happy to see less synthetic material. He cautioned not to have the area be too programmed with equipment. He agreed with Rose he liked the plan taking advantage of the natural amenities like the amphitheater and letting children create what to play with for themselves.

Bering agreed with Fairbairn and said he really liked what was being done in the amphitheater. He was in favor of the ideas for use of the space.

Martin said he also liked the amphitheater and said he looked forward to the cost estimate coming in so that they could determine how costs could be reduced if needed.

Public Comments

Megan O'Connell said that given the closing of so many indoor theatres at this time, she wondered why this area was not slated for outdoor entertainment. Martin explained that due to its proximity to the street, the outdoor theatre never took off before, so they decided to re-purpose it. He also clarified that there will be an area in the Phase A part of the park that can be used for performances.

Rose asked about the tunnel that had been in prior plan that had artificial turf. Guilfoil explained that they decided to change it to a mound and a planted buffer instead of the synthetic tunnel.

Mark Krackiewicz asked about the berm area and Watkins said it is now a planter, but that they kept the spirit of the berm, so it will now have shrubs incorporated with some play elements.

Three potential designs for the park entrance area were then described. Howard pointed out that the three variations around the main entrance to the park allowed different amounts of check in space for people to gather.

Rose commented that she would like to think about asking the tree warden to be involved in the tree planting aspect of the space and the maintenance of the plantings.

Meghan O'Connell commented that she was concerned whether the selected trees were the best for the paved environment. Watkins said that trees were selected that could be planted into correct-sized tree pits to avoid such issues. She also commented she was concerned about the maintenance by the town as well. Martin said Bob Dirico from the DPW would be responsible for that.

O'Connell said the tree plantings seemed great and it was nice that more impervious space had been changed to natural. She asked about the stormwater overflow and if it would come out to the garden. Howard explained that they are installing a large infiltration system. She stated that she preferred the plan with the most vegetation and asked for them to include a lot of pollinator friendly species.

Fairbairn said he was happy with the designs and to focus on the more freeform design with the most natural elements, while also emphasizing low maintenance costs.

Bering said he would like to see any gaming tables incorporated into the playground area instead of the entrance area.

Martin said he would be inclined to choose Scenario C as previewed by Watkins with more plantings, green space, and less pavement.

Krackiewicz said he liked C and did not like the concrete blocks in Scenario A.

Howard said he would like to ask the Commission to make a vote tonight to accept scenario C. Most of the group said they did not have enough time to thoroughly review the plans. Schwab said she had not had the chance to talk with the planning department yet, and would also like to talk with Bob Dirico at the DPW to get his input.

2. Notice of Intent (continued)- 23 Elm Street

Steve Winnick appeared for 23 Elm St. to introduce the proposed redevelopment of 23 Elm St. He said he had had 2 meetings with Martin, Rose, and Schwab to discuss the issues that had been raised at last month's meeting. He introduced Jim Borreback to review the existing conditions plans. The amended plans were reviewed.

Rose said the stormwater would be reviewed by the DPW and that they would need an okay on the 3 infiltration systems which would change the drawings and she was not comfortable without that.

Winnick said that there were some open issues with the DPW on which there would be more decisions that may affect the plans, but he was hoping for a final vote at this meeting with the understanding that any updates to plans or maintenance procedures would be filed with the Commission.

Wortman discussed the architectural aspects of the plans and explained the problem of moving the building back from the no build zone to adhere to the programming for parking and loading.

Martin brought up the subject of the Hartz Mason building that encroached minimally upon the 50-foot no build zone.

Bering said he was comfortable because this proposed plan was consistent with the Hartz Mason project in terms of percent encroachment into the 50-foot no build zone.

Fairbairn said the wetlands ordinance supports permeable surfaces inside the 50-foot no build zone, and asked why some impermeable pavers had been proposed for this area. He said they did a great job on providing the rest of the no-build area with vegetation. Wortman explained that the drive aisle needs to remain impervious with proximity to trash and bike area where they would also need to be conscientious of wintertime and needing to worry about snow and salting.

O'Connell reviewed the resource lines. She asked to confirm the ORAD calculations and whether they included the median high-water levels, the 100 ft. wetland zone from the bank, and from the wetland line and whether some points on the site had previously been developed. Schwab said that they had updated the narrative for the project that was just sent out that morning. O'Connell asked about the planting plans and Fairbairn had not reviewed it thoroughly enough yet to comment. After reviewing the plans, he suggested hemlock was not a good choice and asked to shift that to other species, which Rose suggested would be a

good choice to protect wildlife. Fairbairn also agreed that Conservation seed mix was a good choice. Borrebach agreed that they could update the tree species as suggested.

Martin thanked the CC for their questions and said he learned a lot through their questioning.

Meghan O'Connell asked to zoom in on the planting list. She pointed out she loves peonies that are on the list but said that they would need to be staked up each year by the developers.

They discussed moving forward with the Order of Conditions with all the pending decisions that were still outstanding.

Motion: Bering made a motion to close the hearing. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous poll was reached to close the hearing.

Motion: Rose made a motion to accept the NOI on 23 Elm St. with future amendments to be filed and incorporated into the special conditions. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Poll: A unanimous vote was reached to accept Rose's motion accepting the Notice of Intent with future amendments to be filed and incorporated into the special conditions.

3. Request for Certificate of Compliance- 650 Pleasant Street

Richard Quinby was present to review the conditions on 650 Pleasant St site. He said he had sent in all documents for compliance and an as built plan. He reviewed the current conditions of the site with the commission.

Rose explained that a certificate of compliance is not automatically issued once construction is complete. All the conditions in the Order of Conditions need to be reviewed by Staff and demonstrated by the Applicant to be met. She explained that grass has not been established and the trees / shrubs have not had sufficient seasons to mature yet. A discussion was held, and it was determined that allowing a certificate of compliance was not timely. Quinby agreed to withdraw the request. Members of the Commission apologized he waited so long through the meeting to only withdraw his request as untimely.

4. Discussion: Proposed BB&N turf fields on Grove Street

Martin explained to members of the commission that BB&N School had announced plans to install artificial turf at their newly acquired Grove St property. He explained the dangers of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), especially when installed next to wetlands where it can mix with groundwater. He said this issue came up in WE3C meetings too. He

said that as an environmental group he was seeking ways for them to express their opinion in opposition to installation of artificial turf.

Fairbairn mentioned former Conservation Commission Chair, Marylouise Pallotta McDermott had opined on behalf of the commission when there was discussion of artificial turf at Victory Field so there was already precedent set. Bering also mentioned DPW would be interested due to stormwater runoff.

Martin agreed to start a letter to be sent on behalf of the Commission once it is reviewed by members of the board in the next week. He said he would coordinate with Schwab.

5. Agent Report

- a. CPA update and Con Com representation on CPC- Rose reported that January would be her last meeting as the CC member on CPC. The Conservation Commission will discuss choosing a new member to represent them in CPC matters. She asked members to think about whether they would like to take her spot as she departs after fulfilling her two-year appointment.
- b. Update on Watertown climate and energy plan- Schwab reported that the RFP had been released and submissions would be due at the end of the month.

Motion: Rose made a motion to adjourn. O'Connell seconded the motion.

Poll: unanimous poll was reached to adjourn.