

**MINUTES
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

**1 JUNKINS AVENUE
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CONFERENCE ROOM "A"**

3:30 P.M.

NOVEMBER 10, 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Steve Miller; Vice Chairman James Horrigan; Members, Allison Tanner, Barbara McMillan, Mary Ann Blanchard, Catherine Ennis; Alternate Elissa Hill Stone

MEMBERS ABSENT: Brian Wazlaw

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Britz, Environmental Planner

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I. WORK SESSION ON UPCOMING CITY DES WETLAND PERMIT

Mr. Peter Rice, City engineer for the sewer and water division was present to speak to the Commission. He stated that he was before them purely for informational purposes and would be back before them with a full application next month. The project he explained was related to the ongoing sewer separation program. He explained that a lot of the downtown area had combined sewer, taking both stormwater and sanitary water through the same pipes. In big rain events, the pipes get overwhelmed and spill raw sewage into the South Mill Pond. They are currently separating the stormwater flow from the sewer flow. He told the Commission that in order to accomplish that, they needed another outlet into the South Mill Pond with just stormwater.

Mr. Rice introduced Mr. Dave Allen, Deputy Director of Public Works, Mr. Phil MacDonald, project manager and Mr. Ben Dwyer, project engineer, both from Underwood Engineering, Inc. and Bob Brokop, wetlands expert.

Mr. MacDonald explained that there were two CSO's currently along Parrott Avenue. The one they are working on is CSO 10B. He said that all of the stormwater from that section of the City comes down into a combined sewer with a 48" pipe at the end of Parrott Avenue. On light rain falls of less than an inch there are no issues but with extended rain events, there is too much flow in the pipes. It overwhelms the sewer and that is a relief point. He pointed out that this has been a long recognized issue that the City began to address in 2001. He added that this was a Citywide comprehensive sewer separation project that separates the drainage from the sewer.

Mr. MacDonald showed the Commission on a map the area that was being improved. He said that there is one project under construction on Miller Street and two more projects following that. This project was the one that was the key piece in the extension. He pointed out that right now, all of the drainage from the Middle School goes into the sewer so there are plans to upgrade there

as well. He added that all of the projects were mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Ms. Blanchard asked what the outflow structure would look like. Mr. MacDonald explained that it would be a 36" pipe that would conform to the slope with rocks around it.

Ms. Blanchard asked how the parking lot next to the library and the middle school would be affected in the event of extreme rains. Mr. MacDonald said that was why they were proposing a 36" pipe. He added that it was not just the size of the pipe but the hydrolic radiant inside. Chairman Miller asked if it would help to drain the area more effectively. Mr. MacDonald replied yes and added that the school would integrate some additional grading.

Ms. Stone asked if they planned to disassemble 10A and 10B. Mr. Rice stated that they were currently being monitored. He explained that the program was not a complete separation. He added that they no longer have average years and the storms are increasing in intensity. He said it was hard to predict how successful they will be until they do it and measure it. He explained that it was a process and they have been working on it for ten years now and will work on it for another ten years. He emphasized that it was very challenging work.

Ms. Blanchard stated that she was concerned about the salt that would go into the Mill Pond. Mr. Brokop answered that the Mill Pond was tidal and so was already salty. Mr. Rice added that the stormwater permits that are coming out now do consider salt. They will require monitoring salt application. He said that it was definitely a big issue.

Ms. McMillan asked who would be doing the construction. Mr. Rice said that has not been determined yet. They were still trying to decide how to structure the project but their plan was to match the Middle School schedule.

Ms. Blanchard asked if any thought had been given to safety with regards to tampering and mischief with the outflow area. Mr. Rice said Ms. Blanchard brought up a good point which is a problem. He explained that they make rubber gates for pipes but assured her that they have given it some thought.

Vice Chairman Horrigan commented that when the existing 10B pipe was installed, he had thought that the sandbar that developed at the outfall would decrease but instead it was getting larger. Mr. Rice stated that he has noticed that as well. Vice Chairman Horrigan wondered if something was not working. Mr. Rice thought it was a result of a couple large storms last year that resulted in their highest discharge ever from that location.

Chairman Miller asked if all of the work that has been done on the system was available online. Mr. Allen stated that they have slides that have been presented to the City Council as quarterly updates. Chairman Miller thought it would be important for the citizens to see the improvements to the system.

Mr. MacDonald thanked the Commission for their time and informed them that they would be submitting a formal application next month.

II. OLD BUSINESS

A. Approval of minutes – October 13, 2010

Ms. McMillan asked for a change on Page 4 to clarify a statement she made concerning the stonewalls along the shoreline.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously (7-0) to approve the minutes as amended.

III. STATE WETLAND BUREAU PERMIT APPLICATIONS

1. Permit By Notification Application
191 Wentworth House Road
Dennis Graves & Jeffrey Graves, owners
Assessor Map 201, Lot 14 & 15

Mr. Zach Taylor, project planner for Riverside and Pickering Marine Contractors was present to speak to the application. He stated that they were proposing to replace some shoreland structures at BG's Boathouse. He explained that there was an existing timber bulkhead that was dilapidated and was undermining the soil behind the bulkhead which was right next to the building's foundation. In order to get to the timber bulkhead, the existing decks would need to be taken up and then replaced. Mr. Taylor said there would be no change in the footprint and everything would be replaced in kind. To prevent erosion, they would have a floating boom that would encompass the entire project area.

Ms. Tanner asked if the wood was pressure treated. Mr. Taylor replied yes. Ms. Tanner asked what would happen with the old deck. Mr. Taylor said it would be placed in a dumpster and disposed of, probably at Aggregate Recycling Company (ARC) in Eliot.

Ms. Blanchard asked when they anticipated doing the work. Mr. Taylor said that they hoped to start as soon as they had the permits and planned to have the seawall portion of the project done by the end of the year.

Ms. McMillan asked how long they planned to be under construction. Mr. Taylor stated that they hoped to have it done in a couple weeks but the seawall portion would take a week. The priority was to get the wall completed first.

Ms. McMillan asked how the floating silt boom worked. Mr. Taylor explained that it was a heavy orange vinyl which has a floatation section on the top with a radius of about 7 feet. He said that it would be always touching the substrate. There would be a chain with a weight that allowed it to float up with the tide. Chairman Miller asked if it allowed water to pass through it. Mr. Taylor said that it would to some extent.

Vice Chairman Horrigan asked how they would deal with the old fill. Mr. Taylor said that they did not know exactly what would be coming out so they would have to assess it as it comes out.

If it was clean, they would find a place for it but if it was not then it would have to go to a place like ARC. Vice Chairman Horrigan asked how far down they would be going. Mr. Taylor said that they had to get down to the toe, and then cut back five or six feet to create a relatively stable slope.

Ms. Blanchard asked how old the current bulkhead was. Mr. Taylor stated that he was not sure but it was older than thirty years.

Ms. Stone asked if they would be driving right on the shore to do the work. Mr. Taylor explained that most of the work would be with a barge and crane. He said that once the deck was removed, they would have access from the uplands.

Ms. McMillan stated that the least amount of time this was under construction the better.

Chairman Miller indicated that it was not necessary to have an official vote for a permit by notification application; however, he said he would need to know how the Commission wished to move on it.

Ms. Blanchard made a motion to recommend the signing of the application by the Chairman. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tanner. The motion passed by a unanimous (7-0) vote.

IV. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPLICATIONS

- A. 191 Wentworth House Road
Dennis Graves & Jeffrey Graves, owners
Assessor Map 201, Lot 14 & 15

Mr. Zach Taylor, project planner for Riverside and Pickering Marine Contractors was present to speak to the application.

Mr. Britz stated that this was the same project as what the Commission just heard presented however, they were proposing to build a roof over the deck and a wall which would be permanent structures. He said that a variance was required so the Commission could only approve the application from the deck downward at this point.

Ms. Blanchard said that she had a problem with letting the application go forward when the Commission was relying on another board to let it move forward. She did not want to slow the project down so she wondered if a letter to the appropriate boards would help.

Chairman Miller stated that whatever recommendation is made to the Planning Board, it should not include the roof structure and the wall and that the approval was for the deck portion and below.

Vice Chairman Horrigan asked about the proposed wall. Mr. Taylor explained that there was an existing handrail that would be replaced with a solid wall.

Vice Chairman Horrigan thought there could be a small issue with the roof. He pointed out that a permanent roof would have water runoff. Chairman Miller responded by saying that the runoff could be concentrated on the spill line. He added that those would be questions to deal with at a later date.

Ms. Tanner made a motion to recommend approval of the application from the deck downward. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ennis. There was no additional discussion.

The motion to recommend approval of the application from the deck downward passed by a unanimous (7-0) vote.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

1. City Council Referral – proposal for Creek Farm loop trail

Mr. Britz stated that an effort was underway by Creek Farm which is owned by the Forest Society to join efforts with two other abutting property owners, the City of Portsmouth and the State of New Hampshire which owns the Wentworth Coolidge Mansion to put together a loop trail. The City Council has referred it to the Conservation Commission to review it and see if they would support it. The trail would be built with volunteers and the trail would start at the Creek Farm property where there was parking. There would also be a trail head at the Wentworth Coolidge Mansion where there was another parking area. Mr. Britz said that it would be a pretty easy trail and would not go through any wetlands. He thought it would be a benefit to partner with the Forest Society for another reason as well – the PULA study would identify other areas for trails and the Forest Society's volunteer core could possibly be helpful in building additional trails on City property.

Chairman Miller commented that it was an interesting parcel with historical features, vernal pools, and rocky outcrops.

Ms. Blanchard thought that it was important for the Forest Society to be thinking of the larger piece. She did have concern about the extra use in these areas but she felt the more it was used the better it was respected. It also discouraged the "settlers" population. Ms. Tanner agreed but she added that she would not like to see dogs on the site. Mr. Britz stated that he was almost certain that dogs would not be allowed because the Forest Society had the same concerns.

Vice Chairman Horrigan brought up two other issues to think about – one was that some abutters want their dogs to be able to run loose on the property and second, there has been a lot of pressure to allow hunting on the property. He also added that there was some concern about increased volume of people. He added that he was somewhat fuzzy as to where the trail would be and until they came up with a detailed plan, he did not see how they could come up with a recommendation. Mr. Britz said that would be the next step. Vice Chairman Horrigan also stated that there was uneasiness about adding additional parking at the Chapel which was located nearby.

Chairman Miller thought this was a great opportunity to explore the idea. It was a chance to do it with two other partners and resolve some of the issues of how to move forward.

Ms. McMillan pointed out that when checking that particular parcel in the PULA study, Mr. West did not check walking trails as a recreational value. She felt they should talk with Mr. West to find out why he did not do that. She added that invasive species might be an issue also. Mr. Britz said that these were the types of issues that needed to be discussed.

The Commission was in agreement that they would like to support the concept and to be partners in the conversation on how this might develop.

In additional business, Chairman Miller informed the Commission that a talk would be held on November 17 at the Library on invasive species. It would begin at 7 p.m.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

At 4:45 p.m., it was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Good
Conservation Commission Recording Secretary

These minutes were approved at the Conservation Commission meeting on January 19, 2011.