

**MINUTES
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

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

3:30 P.M.

FEBRUARY 9, 2011

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Britz, Environmental Planner

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I. NEW BUSINESS

A. Election of officers – Chairman, Vice Chairman

Chairman Miller and Vice Chairman Horrigan were re-elected unanimously (7-0) to their respective positions for another year. Ms. Blanchard thanked them both for serving.

II. OLD BUSINESS

1. Approval of minutes – January 19, 2011

Chairman Miller asked that two changes be made to the minutes concerning his comments regarding a culvert and a non-functional wetland.

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

III. STATE WETLAND BUREAU PERMIT APPLICATIONS

A. Standard Dredge and Fill Application
Rt. 1A Bridge over Sagamore Creek
City of Portsmouth DPW, owner
Assessor Map 223, Lot N/A

Mr. Dave McNamara of Fay Spofford and Thorndike, Inc. and Lee Carboneau of Normandeau Associates, Inc. were present to speak to the application. Mr. McNamara stated that the existing bridge was a steel grate bridge and was on the State's red list. He said that some interim repairs were done in the spring of 2010 to maintain it but now they would like to do a full replacement of the bridge. The intent was to extend the sidewalk on Route 1A over the bridge to the

intersection with Route 1B. The current width of the bridge was 32 ½ feet wide. The new bridge width would be 42 inches. The bridge would also have two bike paths on either side, four foot travel lanes, and a five foot full sidewalk on the left side. Mr. McNamara also said that all of the widening was proposed to take place to the east which put it into the footprint of the original bridge.

Ms. Blanchard asked if the proposed bridge would be any higher than the existing bridge. Mr. McNamara said that it would not be any higher but it would have a higher clearance at the center point.

Ms. Blanchard asked if the weight bearing amounts would be back up to standard. Mr. McNamara replied yes, adding that the new bridge would be designed to current standards. He pointed out that the steel grating would be replaced with a solid deck.

Ms. Carboneau stated that she researched the natural resource impacts of the project. She said that the permanent impacts were limited to the four new piers. The new piers would be about the same size as the existing piers. She also explained that the bridge abutments would not encroach any further down into the wetlands. There would be some temporary impacts that would be associated with the work zone. Ms. Carboneau pointed out the red areas on the map that indicated the temporary impacts and explained in detail those impacts. She added that during construction, the traffic would be rerouted and she showed where that would be on the map.

Mr. Britz asked if there would be any impacts or work done on private property. Ms. Carboneau replied no. Mr. McNamara added that they would be building in an expanded right of way.

Ms. Blanchard asked if there would be any remediation for winter snow removal and salt since it would have a paved surface. Ms. Carboneau said that there was a drainage plan. Mr. McNamara added that there was a high point on the bridge and the run off would be channeled off of the bridge. There would be no scuppers to discharge directly into the water. He said that they would not change much of the drainage pattern.

Vice Chairman Horrigan commented that the present bridge had a scenic vista. He asked if the new bridge would preserve the same vista. Mr. McNamara said that the existing bridge was historic so they were using a similar girder system. From the river, the bridge would look very similar. Vice Chairman Horrigan asked about the view from the road. Mr. McNamara explained that the rails would be the same height so the view would not be blocked.

Vice Chairman Horrigan asked if the pedestrian sidewalks and bike paths would be separate. Mr. McNamara said that there was a five foot wide raised sidewalk on the left side. On both sides of the road, there would be five foot bike lanes. He also explained that the sidewalk would extend all the way to the Route 1B intersection.

Vice Chairman Horrigan pointed out that local teenagers swim off of the bridge. He wondered if this would pose any hazards to them. Chairman Miller stated that he shared the same concern. He said that it was important that any debris such as steel that falls into the water must be

retrieved or it could cause serious injury to someone jumping from the bridge. Mr. McNamara agreed and said that they would build that request into the contract.

Ms. Blanchard wanted to clarify the fact that the height of the bridge would not be changing. Mr. McNamara said that the bridge height would not be changing; however, there would be more room, from the water when passing under the bridge.

Ms. Blanchard asked how deep the channel was. Mr. McNamara said that at low tide it was about 15 feet. The southwesterly corner was the deepest part of the river.

Mr. Wazlaw asked the estimated time period of the bridge closing. Mr. McNamara said that it would be closed between 12 and 18 months.

Ms. McMillan had questions as to where the retaining wall would be located. Mr. McNamara showed the location on the map. He added that the rip rap would not change.

Ms. McMillan asked if there would be some disturbed areas. Ms. Carboneau said that they would do some re-planting. She explained that all areas on either side of the retaining wall would be replanted and reseeded.

Ms. McMillan asked if there would be fill going in on either side. Ms. Carboneau confirmed that there would be no fill in the wetlands except for the piers.

Hearing no other questions, Chairman Miller asked for a motion.

Mr. Wazlaw made a motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau. The motion was seconded by Ms. Tanner. There was no additional discussion.

The motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau passed by a unanimous (7-0) vote.

- B. Standard Dredge and Fill Application
Along Goose Bay Drive and Corporate Drive
Pease Development Authority, owner
Assessor Map 303, Lots 6 & 8, Assessor Map 305, Lot 3

Mr. Jared Sheehan from the Department of Public Works was present to speak to the application. He stated that the Public Works Department was working with Swamp Inc. to remove sediment from roadside ditches along Goose Bay Drive and Corporate Drive. The area included 560 feet along the south side of Goose Bay Drive and 715 feet on the east side of Corporate Drive. He said that for the past forty plus years the road side ditches have not been maintained so they were looking to clean them out and reinstate two plunge pools.

Mr. Britz informed the Commission that he has been working with Mr. Sheehan on this proposal. He also said that the Hodgdon Brook group was interested in it too. What has happened over the years was that the wetlands have expanded beyond the channel areas so they were looking for ways to do a wetland restoration project. He said that they came up with this dredging plan that minimizes the amount of dredging but allows the water to flow. There were some invasive species that would be removed with the project. He pointed out that there were some native plants in the channels as well. He thought this was the most simple and straightforward way to restore the function to it without removing the wetlands that are already there. Mr. Britz added that Lonza would help to pay for the project.

Chairman Miller stated that it was his understanding after reading the proposal that the main center of the channel would be dredged but they would leave as many plants as possible on either side. Mr. Sheehan said that was correct. Mr. Britz added that they would be dredging the channel that was there now for a natural flow.

Mr. Wazlaw asked where the water would eventually flow to. Mr. Britz said it would flow into the wetland behind Martins Point which eventually would feed into Hodgdon Brook.

Vice Chairman Horrigan asked about the plunge pools. Mr. Sheehan explained that the plunge pools would dissipate the energy of the stormwater coming into the area. Vice Chairman Horrigan asked if they collected sediment. Mr. Sheehan said yes.

At this point in the meeting, there was detailed discussion concerning the testing of the samples. Vice Chairman Horrigan asked if the highlighted items in the proposal were items of concern. Mr. Sheehan said that the highlights indicated beyond the detection limits. Vice Chairman Horrigan expressed a concern about items getting into Hodgdon Brook. Mr. Sheehan said that was why they would be testing. Vice Chairman Horrigan said that given the nature of the site, which used to be a strategic air command base, he had concerns. Mr. Britz explained that testing was done to determine if the material coming out was hazardous. Vice Chairman Horrigan asked if they tested in the ditch only. Mr. Britz replied yes, they only tested the areas that they were removing. Vice Chairman Horrigan reiterated his concerns given the nature of the entire site. Mr. Britz stated that they wanted to make sure that they disposed of the material properly. Vice Chairman Horrigan commented that he thought they needed a management plan. Mr. Sheehan said that they could resample it.

Ms. Tanner asked what they would do with the spoils. Mr. Sheehan said that they would bring it over to a plant at Pease where there was a drying bed and once it was dry, it would be disposed of.

Ms. Stone stated that she noticed that the in roads to the culverts of the treatment plant and Corporate Drive are presently above the bottom streams and so she did not know how this proposal would help the water flow under the streets. Mr. Sheehan responded by saying that the elevation of Goose Bay Drive was a problem but he thought this was the best option. Mr. Britz agreed that there was not much slope but they were hoping that this initial proposal would help the situation. Ms. Stone said that she was not seeing that at all.

Mr. Wazlaw asked if there was a clean out period for the plunge pools. Mr. Sheehan said that there was not one currently but they would have to monitor it. Mr. Wazlaw asked how they are cleaned out. Mr. Sheehan said they were cleaned out with either a back hoe or a vac truck. Mr. Wazlaw said that this was a real concern and felt they should have a best practices management plan.

Ms. Blanchard asked if it would be feasible to include a timetable for cleaning out the plunge pools. Mr. Britz thought that an annual or semi-annual review of them was appropriate. Ms. Blanchard asked what the process was for checking them. Mr. Britz said that they would check the depth of the sediment and the catch basin surrounds. He pointed out that a lot of the current sediment was from the closure of the base. Chairman Miller added that monitoring the plunge pools would help to see the volume of water coming through.

Ms. McMillan had a concern about the leakage of oil from the waste water plant a couple years ago. Mr. Britz recalled it as well and said he would check into it. Ms. McMillan said she would research it as well.

Ms. McMillan said that there was a silt fence from years ago that has never been taken out. It was all along Corporate Drive. She agreed that this was a low cost solution to the problem but that if Lonza did plan to develop the area, it would be nice to consider the whole area that is flooded as a potential treatment area in the future.

Hearing no other questions, Chairman Miller asked for a motion.

Ms. Blanchard made a motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau with the following additional recommendation:

- 1) That there be a semi annual inspection of the plunge pools to insure that they remain clear of debris and if necessary, remove any debris found.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Wazlaw. There was no additional discussion.

The motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau with the following additional recommendation passed by a unanimous (7-0) vote:

- 1) That there be a semi annual inspection of the plunge pools to insure that they remain clear of debris and if necessary, remove any debris found.

- C. Minimum Impact Expedited Application
4 Sagamore Grove
Craig and Mollie Sieve, owners
Assessor Map 201, Lot 4

Chairman Miller pointed out that there was a State and local application for this property so he asked the applicants to present all of their information for both applications and then the Commission would vote separately on the two applications.

Mr. Erik Saari of Altus Engineering was present to speak to the application. He stated that the lot was non-conforming but a recent lot line adjustment has made it more conforming. Currently there was a house and several outbuildings on the lot. The proposal was to demolish all of the structures and the septic and move everything back on the lot. There would be a new house, a new pervious driveway, and a new septic system. The existing house and septic system are currently within the 50 foot buffer. Mr. Saari also said that four rain gardens would be installed on the property to handle stormwater runoff. All of the walkways would be of a pervious surface as well.

Ms. Tanner asked the difference in square footage between the impervious surface that would be removed and the new pervious surfaces. Mr. Saari said that they were reducing the impervious surfaces by 950 square feet. He added that the pervious surface would be some sort of asphalt or pavers.

Chairman Miller asked how the rain gardens would be piped. Mr. Saari explained that they would not be piping anything. Everything would be graded to drain into the rain gardens. He pointed out that there was one catch basin on the property currently and they planned to reuse it. Chairman Miller asked where the catch basin was located. Mr. Saari said that it was on the walkway down to the dock.

Mr. Wazlaw asked if the degree of the slope would be increasing. Mr. Saari replied no and added that they would try to match the current slope as closely as possible.

Ms. Blanchard stated that the septic system design was not a standard system because of its location. She asked Mr. Saari to explain the proposed system to them. Mr. Saari said that it was a multi-tank system and would be located to the east of the garage. He then explained in further detail how it worked.

Vice Chairman Horrigan asked about the ledge on the property. Mr. Saari confirmed that there was ledge and they would try to say away from it. They might have to hammer some out but there would be no blasting.

Vice Chairman Horrigan asked about the floating dock. Mr. Saari confirmed that it was a component of the dock that always sits there and was even floating at low tide.

Ms. McMillan asked if all of the trees on the water side and trees on the road side would remain. Mr. Saari replied yes. He explained that they would not be removing many trees. He pointed out a 7" pine tree and a stump that would be removed on the submitted plans. Ms. McMillan asked if they would have natural vegetation. Mr. Saari replied yes as it would cut down on the amount of mowing.

Vice Chairman Horrigan commented that the applicant has come in with a nice plan that had a lot of nice conservation and natural vegetation touches as well as underground utilities. He said that he appreciated them improving the site.

Hearing no other questions, Chairman Miller stated that they would vote first on the Minimum Impact Expedited application.

Ms. Tanner made a motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau. The motion was seconded by Ms. Blanchard. There was no discussion.

The motion to recommend approval of the application to the State Wetlands Bureau passed by a unanimous (7-0) vote.

IV. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPLICATIONS

1. 4 Sagamore Grove
Craig and Mollie Sieve, owners
Assessor Map 201, Lot 4

After hearing the presentation, Chairman Miller asked for a motion concerning the conditional use permit.

Mr. Wazlaw made a motion to recommend approval of the application to the Planning Board. The motion was seconded by Ms. McMillan. There was no discussion.

The motion to recommend approval of the application to the Planning Board passed by a unanimous (7-0) vote.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Set meeting date to discuss next steps in PULA process

Chairman Miller stated that a meeting date needed to be set to discuss the next steps in the PULA process. It was decided to meet on Wednesday, March 2, 2011 at 3:30 p.m.

Ms. Blanchard suggested that a letter be sent to Nancy Johnson thanking her for her comments regarding the PULA report. She also suggested that Ms. Johnson's comments be discussed at the March 2 meeting.

Ms. Blanchard also said that it might be a good idea to discuss the fact that there was no charter authority for the tree committee. Ms. Tanner pointed out that there was no tree ordinance any more and that the current Blue Ribbon Trees and Greenery Committee could be dissolved at any time. She felt there should be some sort of protection concerning this. She also pointed out that the City did not have an arborist anymore either.

Mr. Wazlaw asked if they could make a recommendation to the Charter Commission that a tree commission be formed. Ms. Blanchard added that she thought this was a conversation that they should have. Chairman Miller said that it certainly related to PULA and stewardship and management. Vice Chairman Horrigan told Mr. Britz that he read a proposal around this topic done that was by an intern at City Hall for the City Manager. Mr. Britz did not have any knowledge of the proposal but he told Vice Chairman Horrigan that he would look into it.

IV. 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 March 9, 2011.