

Memo



TO: Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Peter Britz, Environmental Planner
DATE: May 6, 2022
SUBJ: May 11, 2022 Conservation Commission Meeting

333 Borthwick Avenue

This application is to construct an addition onto the Portsmouth Regional Hospital which will have an impact to a stormwater wetland pond. The applicant is proposing to reduce the size of the pond where the construction is proposed but increase the volume of the pond overall.

1. The land is reasonably suited to the use activity or alteration.

The Portsmouth Regional Hospital has wetlands on the adjacent property and across the street. These are the wetlands which have the buffer that is being encroached upon. While this project does include impacts in wetlands the creation of wetlands and proposed planting should offset the impact to this stormwater wetland.

2. There is no alternative location outside the wetland buffer that is feasible and reasonable for the proposed use, activity or alteration.

This site is very constrained by wetlands. While the proposed project is to impact within a wetland buffer the wetlands where the buffer originates from is across Borthwick Avenue and along the Liberty Mutual parking lot. This wetland is not of sufficient size to be jurisdictional and functions as a stormwater wetland. Given the size of the wetland is being expanded to accommodate the project and new wetland plantings are proposed this project is reasonable in this location. While it is likely the existing vegetation will eventually spread to the new pond area the applicant should propose a more robust planting mix to enhance the value of the wetland.

3. There will be no adverse impact on the wetland functional values of the site or surrounding properties.

The value of this wetland is primarily for stormwater retention. The proposed project should not impact the wetland values of surrounding wetlands as the functions should remain similar to how they exist today, especially if the planting plan is enhanced.

4. Alteration of the natural vegetative state or managed woodland will occur only to the extent necessary to achieve construction goals.

Given there is a direct wetland impact and temporary disturbances of the pond and buffer the key to managing this site over the long-term is an improved planting plan and management of the pond to insure it is functioning as intended to treat stormwater. To that end, the applicant should include a management plan for the pond to insure the expansion is successful over the long-term and that it is functioning as intended.

5. The proposal is the alternative with the least adverse impact to areas and environments under the jurisdiction of this section.

The proposed design does account for the filling of a portion of the pond by expanding the pond. Given the constraints of this site this appears to be the best alternative for this site.

6. Any area within the vegetated buffer strip will be returned to a natural state to the extent feasible.

The applicant has proposed a conservation seed mix and fescue/bluegrass seed mix for the disturbed areas. This should be enhanced with specific plantings for this site and include recommendations for long-term maintenance

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the project with two stipulations:

1. That the pond and buffer upland areas adjacent to the pond are planted with a more robust seed mix suitable for this site.
2. That a maintenance plan is included for the long-term management of the pond and disturbed buffer areas.

329 Heritage Avenue

The City is planning to replace the Heritage Avenue Pump Station to improve pump station reliability, accessibility, and safety.

1. The proposed construction is in the public interest.

The Heritage Avenue Pump Station has reached the end of its useful life and is proposed for replacement along with the diesel generator located at the site. Maintaining the City's wastewater system is in the public interest.

2. Design, construction, and maintenance methods will utilize best management practices to minimize any detrimental impact of such use upon the wetland and will include restoration of the site as nearly as possible to its original grade, condition and vegetated state.

The plan to replace the station moves the driveway to the far side of the proposed new equipment on the site and includes a stormwater treatment swale to treat any runoff from the proposed driveway. Given the entire site is prior fill the proposed restoration of the disturbed area, native shrub plantings and treatment swale should minimize any impacts in the wetland buffer.

3. No alternative feasible route exists which does not cross or alter a wetland or have a less detrimental impact on a wetland.

The location of this infrastructure is not feasible to move without greater impacts and cost. The upgrades proposed should not have a detrimental impact on the adjacent wetland areas.

4. Alteration of the natural vegetative state or managed woodland will occur only to the extent necessary to achieve construction goals.

The applicant has proposed restoring the existing site with a wetland seed mix and native shrub plantings which should minimize any impacts to the adjacent wetland.

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the project as presented.

460 FW Hartford Drive

This application is to construct a cedar dog fence within the 100 foot wetland buffer. The fenced area is within an existing lawn at the rear of the property at 460 FW Hartford Drive. While the Zoning Ordinance does provide an exemption for fences in the buffer that are supported with hand driven 3" fence posts this project seeks to install wooden fencing which is slightly larger.

1. The land is reasonably suited to the use activity or alteration.

The proposed fence posts will be hand dug and except for the gates there will be no footings installed, minimizing the footprint.

2. There is no alternative location outside the wetland buffer that is feasible and reasonable for the proposed use, activity or alteration.

The entire backyard is within the wetland buffer so this is the most reasonable location for the fence.

3. There will be no adverse impact on the wetland functional values of the site or surrounding properties.
Given that the fence is outside of the wetland, will surround a lawn area, and will allow the movement of stormwater this project should not have an adverse impact on the wetland functions of the adjacent wetland areas.

4. Alteration of the natural vegetative state or managed woodland will occur only to the extent necessary to achieve construction goals.

The construction of this fence will not impact any of the natural vegetation on the site.

5. The proposal is the alternative with the least adverse impact to areas and environments under the jurisdiction of this section.

The proposed fence is being hand installed and should not create an adverse impact.

6. Any area within the vegetated buffer strip will be returned to a natural state to the extent feasible.

This project contemplates a fence within a lawn area.

Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of the project as presented.