

Memo



TO: Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Peter Britz, Planning & Sustainability Director
Kate Homet, Associate Environmental Planner
DATE: August 4, 2023
SUBJ: August 9, 2023 Conservation Commission Meeting

**67 Ridges Court
Melissa & Jeffrey Foy
LU-22-199**

This application proposes the construction of a new garage addition with living space above, a bump out of the existing rear deck and roof, a re-configuration of the existing driveway utilizing pervious pavers, installation of three rain gardens, and construction of stone steps and a stone patio. All existing retaining walls are to remain. Approximately 68% of the lot is within the City's 100 ft wetland buffer and the project proposes a decrease of 479 sf of impervious surface across the lot. Within the buffer, the applicant is proposing 2,010 sf of permanent impacts and 1,056 sf of temporary impacts. The impacts would be offset by the various buffer plantings to be planted within the 25' vegetated buffer as well as the installation of the rain gardens to help control and filter stormwater runoff from the property as well as other areas upslope from the street.

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

Currently the area that will receive the addition is impervious asphalt. The new addition will not impact the amount of impervious on the site and will increase the infiltration of stormwater with the conversion of the driveway from impervious to a new porous driveway and the adjacent rain garden system which will also help mitigate roof runoff.

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

Given that a majority of the property is within the buffer, there is no other reasonable location for the garage addition. It will be placed in an area that is already impervious surface within the buffer and will be removing a large portion of the current impervious asphalt in favor of a porous driveway.

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

This project is within the 100' buffer of a tidal wetland. The wetland edge currently includes salt marsh species which are to be further buffered with the applicant's landscaping plan which includes additional salt marsh grasses along with both native and non-native plants to further protect the resource. The applicant is also proposing to remove invasive burning bush species.

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

This project is not proposing any construction within the 25' vegetative buffer but will be enhancing the buffer with various plantings which will add an additional 5 feet of buffering to the wetland edge.

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

This application proposes a new attached garage with a new porous driveway, the expansion of the rear deck and roof, the installation of new stone steps, a stone patio, and three rain gardens. According to the applicant, this project will result in a net loss of approximately 479 sf of impervious surface across the property, which should create a positive impact on the wetland resource. The applicant has shown a mitigation plan that will work to offset the impacts of the new addition by capturing and filtering stormwater before it reaches the salt marsh species and wetland resource.

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

As stated above, new buffer plantings are to be added to the vegetative buffer strip which should help the buffer continue to protect the tidal wetland resource.

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

1. In accordance with Section 10.1018.40 of the Zoning Ordinance, applicant shall install permanent wetland boundary markers during project construction. These can be purchased through the City of Portsmouth Planning and Sustainability Department.