

Conservation Commission Meeting

September 22, 2021

Members present: Brad Jones, Bob Keating, Bill Kenny, Allison Knab, Kyle Saltonstall

Non-members present: Mark Connors, Town Planner; Tom Jarvela; Roger LaPlante; Steve Riker, Ambit Engineering; Kim Woods; other participants called in remotely

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m.

Minutes: The August minutes had not been distributed and will be reviewed in October

Mailbox: No mail

8 Oxbow Farm Road

- Steve Riker of Ambit Engineering was present to review a Major Impact Wetland Permit Application being filed for 8 Oxbow Farm Road. The project involves a tidal docking structure to be constructed on Squamscott River frontage, with an overall structure length of 80 feet. The structure would stand on six piles within the tidal wetland. The overall tidal wetland impact would be 445 square feet.
- The work would be performed from a crane barge at low tide, using a vibratory hammer to drive in the piles.
- The materials are primarily CCA treated lumber, but the lumber is treated off site and is not water soluble. The gangway and float will be removed seasonally.
- Mr. Riker discussed various delineations considered including the federal channel in the river and the mean high and low water marks.
- Riverside and Pickering will construct the dock; they ideally intend to install it in November and it should take 3-4 days to install
- Mr. Saltonstall motioned, Mr. Keating seconded a motion to write a letter expressing no objection to the project. Mr. Jones abstained from the vote out of concern about another docking structure on the river; Ms. Knab and Mr. Kenny voted aye. The letter would go to DES and the Planning Board. This will be reviewed at the October 6th Planning Board meeting

Aberdeen West Cooperative Solar Array

- The Aberdeen West Cooperative has received grant funding designated for low-income homeowners working on alternative energy projects. The project would install a 96 kW ground mount solar array in the northeast corner of the property (Lovell Road) with a 25-year commission.
- It was found that there were small wetland sections of the open space on the property; the plan was designed to avoid them. The solar arrays would represent approximately 155 feet by 52 feet of space on a 29-acre parcel. Most of the open space is field. A plan approved in 1988 indicated that "there should be no further development on this site. Open space and/or common land will continue to be used for conservation, park, or recreation purposes in perpetuity, and shall not be disposed of by sale or otherwise except to any organization established for the purpose of owning and maintaining such open space."
- Jeannie Oliver of the Energy Clinic and Mark West of West Environmental called in to discuss the project. Kim Woods, the facilities manager of the cooperative, was also present to answer questions.
- The CC discussed whether solar panels were consistent with conservation purposes. Mr. Saltonstall said he believed it was in line with our mission and that we need to be thoughtful about how we obtain energy

in the future. Ms. Knab agreed with general support for solar arrays. Mr. Keating expressed concern about taking land meant to be open space for perpetuity and changing its use. Mr. Jones stated his dislike for the appearance of solar arrays.

- Roger LaPlante, an abutter, spoke against the project, saying he believes the solar plan goes against the original approval. He questioned whether the cooperative could install roof panels; Ms. Oliver said they were cost prohibitive in low to moderate income housing. The project has included funding for aesthetic mitigation and could do plantings around the solar panels. Ms. Oliver mentioned there was a second abutter with objections; Ms. Woods plans to reach out to the two abutters.
- Ms. Oliver stated that they believe the solar panels are consistent with the plan approval, but if the Planning Board does not agree then they will ask the Board to waive the condition
- Noting the conflicting views of the Commission, Ms. Knab motioned that the Commission write a letter to the Planning Board stating that we are generally supportive of solar energy projects, but are concerned with the precedent of taking conservation land out of open space, and that the Planning Board should generally consider whether solar projects are consistent with future open space plans. Mr. Kenny seconded the motion, all voted in favor.

Other

- Tom Jarvela, High Street, wanted to discuss the Conservation Commission's role in promoting sustainability. The Commission and Mr. Jarvela briefly touched on recycling, composting, and the idea of a swap shop. The Commission suggested reaching out to the DPW department to discuss recycling initiatives. Mr. Saltonstall also suggested he attend a future CC meeting and consider joining.
- Mr. Connors noted that the draft Stratham Sourcewater Protection Plan has been received from the RPC. He is looking for any feedback before the PB approves it. He plans to send it to the Commission.
- Mr. Connors noted the PB is currently conducting a transportation survey and he would appreciate members participating. The CC offered also to post it on social media.

At 8:31, Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. Kenny seconded a motion to enter nonpublic session to discuss possible land purchases. All voted in favor.

At 8:53 p.m. Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. Saltonstall seconded a motion to exit nonpublic session and seal the minutes. All voted in favor.

At 8:54 Mr. Keating motioned, Mr. Kenny seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Allison Knab