

Conservation Commission Meeting

March 27, 2024

Members present: Brad Jones, Bob Keating, Allison Knab, Bill McCarthy, Kyle Saltonstall, Chris West

Non-members present: Mark Connors, Town Planner; Seth Hickey, Recreation Director; CMS Principal Drew Bairstow; Madeleine Dilonno, RPC; John and Susan Connors, Bruce Kerr, residents

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

Minutes:

- Mr. Jones motioned, Mr. Keating seconded, approved of the public and nonpublic February 2024 minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

Mailbox

- There were no mailbox items

Trail Projects

Mr. Hickey provided information on a trail day being held April 13th and the proposed projects. TMAC supports closing trails off Dead Fish Trail toward Long Hill that are very wet. A new trail would be constructed that would connect Long Hill to Scamman Road Connector. Mr. McCarthy, as a member of TMAC, also provided background. The Commission asked questions about the plan and expressed their support for the work.

Land Use Project: Treat Farm Road

John and Susan Connors of 3 Treat Farm Road discussed a shed they would like to construct on their property that would fall within the wetland buffer. The proposal is for a shed approximately 8' x 20-25' in size. They would plan to clear invasive bittersweet as part of siting the shed and mitigating the project. RPC said they did not have any comments on the proposal. The Commission asked about other potential locations; other sites on their property would also fall within the setback, or be in their sightline, or their neighbor's sightline. Mr. Connors said he planned to build the shed on piers or three-quarter stone. The Commission expressed concern about what would be stored in the shed and whether there was potential for oil/gas leaks into the buffer. Although they did not feel it would have a massive impact, they also felt that buffers exist for a reason and this would be a violation, and that there was not a hardship demonstrated. Ms. West, Mr. Keating, and Mr. McCarthy voted against supporting the variance; Mr. Saltonstall and Mr. Jones voted in support. Ms. Knab abstained. The Commission will submit a letter to the ZBA expressing their concerns and what they would want to see done to protect the wetlands if the variance is granted.

Land Use Project: Disc Golf Course at CMS

Mr. Bairstow presented information on a proposed nine-hole disc golf course at Cooperative Middle School. It would be alongside the school in an area that abuts/overlaps some conservation land and is near the existing ropes course. A few of the holes are near a wet area (not delineated) and there are several small trees that would be removed to create the runway. Mr. Bairstow said the School District staff would be doing the removals. Mr. Connors suggested filling out a form for DES regarding the creation of new trails. Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. Saltonstall seconded a motion to write a letter to DES supporting the creation of a nine-hole disc golf course at CMS. All voted in favor.

Land Use Project: 200 Domain Drive

Mr. Crimmins presented an application for work at 200 Domain Drive that would include encroachments into the wetland buffer and setback areas. The proposal includes a driveway, patio, building addition, and pedestrian pathway. A previous application would have resulted in 2000 square feet of direct wetland impacts; the updated plan would impact the buffer rather than the wetlands themselves. The proposal would place the pathway between the wetlands and shrink the impervious surface of the driveway. It would include rain gardens and native plantings. The new vestibule entries would add impervious surface in the buffer zone. Mr. Connors asked about a stormwater management plan and was told one would be included. The Commission noted that the plan was a large improvement over the previous one. Mr. Keating motioned, Mr. Jones seconded a motion to write a letter to the ZBA expressing support for the revised plan. Ms. Knab asked that the letter note that we would prefer a plan that did not have buffer impacts, Mr. Keating seconded the amendment to the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Town and Other Business

- Mr. Connors reported that the Energy Commission is looking at different municipal sites to consider solar panels. Mr. McCarthy reminded the Commission that a previous effort at the Fire Department was rejected by the PUC. Mr. Connors said the Commission would be kept abreast of the progress.
- Ms. Knab provided an update on the Stuart Farm grant applications. The application with NOAA received less funding than requested and would require a commitment on the remaining funding if accepted; SELT is not inclined to do this. SELT has submitted an application for Congressionally Directed Spending funds and spoken Executive Councilor Janet Stevens and state officials about the potential of unspent state ARPA funds.
- Grant paperwork on the Ross Brothers property has been submitted and would next go to Governor and Council. Bruce Kerr of High Street asked what would happen with the property; the Commission told him it would remain as is with trails accessed in the park system.
- A development is being proposed off Bunker Hill Avenue – it would be a six lot conventional subdivision.
- Mr. Connors had planned to discuss the Open Space and Connectivity Plan but given the length of the meeting said we could have a duel meeting with the Steering Committee in the future.
- The Rockingham County Conservation District is holding a Local Working Group meeting on April 3 from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. to discuss conservation initiatives important in the area. Mr. Keating, Mr. Connors, and Ms. Knab expressed interest in attending

Clean Up Day, May 11 2024

The Commission discussed logistics for clean-up day. We need to locate the blue bags; Ms. Knab said she would create a flier. Mr. Connors will coordinate signage.

Elections

- Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. Keating seconded a motion to elect Mr. McCaffrey chair. The motion passed unanimously
- Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. Saltonstall seconded a motion to elect Ms. West vice chair. The motion passed unanimously.

- The position of secretary will continue to rotate between members.

At 8:33 p.m. Ms. Knab motioned, Mr. Saltonstall seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Allison Knab

DRAFT