




CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

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Memo

TO: Conservation Commission Members
FROM: Peter Britz, Environmental Planner 
DATE: August 5, 2016
SUBJ: August 10, 2016 Conservation Commission Meeting

350 Little Harbor Road

This application is to demolish an existing single family residence, a free standing garage and a barn in order to construct a new single family residence with attached garage and portico. The application states there is 28 square feet of disturbance in the wetland and 19,927 square feet of disturbance in the inland wetland buffer.

According to *Article 10 Section 10.1017.50* the applicant must satisfy the following conditions for approval of this project.

- 1. The land is reasonably suited to the use activity or alteration.* The application states that the footprint of the existing barn and garage within the buffer total 2,135 square feet and the proposed structure located in the buffer totals 1,651 square feet for a reduction of 484 square feet. The application does have grading work proposed in the buffer, it has a retaining wall and the owner has stated that the foundation for the Barn is not going to be removed. While this area was previously disturbed this application proposed a great deal of impact in the buffer that should be carefully reviewed. For instance will the grading change the direction of surface water flow what is the nature of the wetland that will be impacted, how much vegetation is being cleared in the 25 foot no cut buffer and what impact will leaving the foundation to the barn have on the wetland and wetland buffer area?
- 2. There is no alternative location outside the wetland buffer that is feasible and reasonable for the proposed use, activity or alteration.* By looking at the site plan it appears as if the location and size of the structure and accessways could be modified to reduce impact in the buffer. In particular, there is a retaining wall that appears to be less than ten feet from the edge of the wetland. How will that structure and the construction of that structure impact the wetland? Could the accessway that is supported by that retaining wall be relocated or removed to allow for greater buffer planting between the proposed house and development?
- 3. There will be no adverse impact on the wetland functional values of the site or surrounding properties.* The applicant has tried to demonstrate that the project proposed in the wetland buffer is in a previously disturbed area and that they are reducing impacts through their construction. While they have shown some reduction in structure it is not clear that there will not be adverse impacts from the proposed project.
- 4. Alteration of the natural vegetative state or managed woodland will occur only to the extent necessary to achieve construction goals.* There is a great deal of grading and landscape disturbance proposed on the site. This is a formerly disturbed site that is being rehabilitated with the goal of overall improvement as stated by the applicant. Care should be taken to provide as much natural buffer planting and impervious surface as possible so a natural vegetative state can be maintained.

5. *The proposal is the alternative with the least adverse impact to areas and environments under the jurisdiction of this section.* It is not clear at this time that the proposed alternative is the least impacting alternative in this area. More information about the wetland would be helpful in understanding the impact to the wetland. A better buffer from the wetland would provide an better opportunity to protect this resource, a smaller or reconfigured footprint of the house could result in less structure in the buffer and reconfigured accessways on the site could provide for an overall reduction in impervious surface and provide room to provide an enhanced wetland buffer, especially in the first 25 feet from the wetland.

Conclusion: A site walk at this property is scheduled for August 8th where some of the questions raised above can be addressed. If designed properly the applicant has the opportunity to provide a net improvement to the site.