

**MINUTES
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

1 JUNKINS AVENUE
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CONFERENCE ROOM "A"**

3:30 p.m.

September 11, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Steve Miller; Vice Chairman MaryAnn Blanchard; Members; Allison Tanner, Barbara McMillan, Samantha Collins, Adrienne Harrison; Alternate, Jessica Blasko

MEMBERS ABSENT: N/A

ALSO PRESENT: Peter Britz, Environmental Planner/Sustainability Coordinator

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I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 14, 2019

Ms. Tanner pointed out a grammatical error on page 2.

Chairman Miller commented that "detailed drainage" on page 2 should be "details of the drainage." Chairman Miller pointed out a grammatical error on page 1.

Ms. McMillan moved to approve the minutes from the August 12, 2019 Conservation Commission Meeting as amended, seconded by Ms. Tanner. The motion passed by a 6-1-0 vote.

Ms. Collins abstained because she was absent from the August meeting.

II. CONDITIONAL USE APPLICATIONS

1. 20 Taft Road
Shannon Harrington & James St. Pierre, Owners
Assessor Map 266 Lot 91

Request to Postpone

Mr. Britz clarified that the applicant will submit new information for the next meeting.

Vice Chairman Blanchard moved to postpone the application to the October 9, 2019 Conservation Commission Meeting, seconded by Ms. Harrison. The motion passed unanimously by a 7-0 vote.

III. WORK SESSIONS

A. 105 Bartlett Street

Portsmouth Lumber and Hardware, LLC
Assessor Map 164, Lots 1 & 2, Assessor Map 157, Lot 2

Patrick Crimmins with Tighe and Bond, Jeff Johnson, Dan Pinciario, and Ed Hayes were present to speak to the project. Mr. Crimmins commented that they were there to walk through the initial concept plan. The subdivision has been finalized. More land has been acquired and there will be an easement for a road out to Maplewood Ave. More land was added to the development site itself as well. The proposal is to take down the existing building with Great Rhythm Brewery and the doggy daycare in it. There will be three 4-story buildings with 232 units between them. There will also be 5 row houses with 40 units. There will be a total of 272 units in all. The plan meets the minimum for parking on the site through surface parking and underground parking. There will be 355 spaces total. The cul- de-sac from the original design was removed and all of the buildings were pulled further into the site. There will be a private two-way driveway out to Maplewood Ave. for residents only. The storm water management design would not be changing. The 0-50 foot set back from the pond will be dedicated community space for the City of Portsmouth. It will be used for the future North Mill Pond Trail. The buildings are situated outside the required view corridors. There is a preliminary plan for grading and drainage for the road that matches what was previously approved. The development itself has the same storm water management systems that were previously approved. They are currently looking at site constraints and ground water now. TAC gave feedback to look at alternatives to treat storm water impacts like porous pavement. There will be a robust environmental program on the site. The plan will have more details once there is a better understanding of the ground water and soils. The site is a traditional urban fill site. It is extensively disturbed already. The project will be of a benefit to the site because a lot will be cleaned up with the project.

Mr. Britz clarified that the City's role in this would be the trail. The first 25 feet would be a no touch buffer. 25-50 feet would be where the trail would go. The City has done conceptual designs and the next stages would be permitting and design. Chairman Miller questioned if the trail would start at the development off the Bypass. Mr. Britz responded that was correct but that was not in the scope of this project. Mr. Crimmins commented that Halverson Design has been working with the City on the trail and they have engaged Robbi Woodburn. There will be coordination between both teams.

Ms. Tanner commented that the benefit of having a trail does not outweigh the intensification this development would put on the edge of pond. It is not a good trade off. This project would put a lot of people and traffic on a road that is not heavily trafficked now. It should be back out of the 100-foot buffer. It is not going to be beneficial for the pond as it is.

Vice Chairman Blanchard commented that she was concerned about the massive amount of excavation needed and the proximity to the North Mill Pond. It needs to be deep because of heavy structures. The amount of subsurface work needed is concerning. Mr. Crimmins responded that they were still working through the environmental design.

Chairman Miller commented that storm water treatment is important. They will know more after the environmental assessments are complete. Chairman Miller encouraged innovative thinking

on how to treat water. The roundhouse and the actual turntable could present some surprises for the construction company based on what was stored there.

Vice Chairman Blanchard was concerned about placing the buildings 50 feet back because of the forecast for increased storm water and rising sea levels. Mr. Crimmins responded that it would be graded, so that first floor elevations will be at 17.5. The site sits at elevation 12 now. Vice Chairman Blanchard questioned what would happen to the underground parking. Mr. Crimmins responded that it's unoccupied space. If it floods it would need to be pumped out.

Ms. Harrison commented that she was concerned about providing space for resources as the sea level rises. A lot of wildlife will be pinched, as the buffer is lost.

Ms. McMillan questioned if the trail line would go in front of or in back of the salt piles. Mr. Britz responded that the trail was just conceptual, but it will probably just be in back. Mr. Crimmins added that would be part of the City's design. They are providing an easement, so the City can connect if needed. Ms. McMillan questioned how there was less permanent disturbance in the new plan. Ms. McMillan questioned if they were counting the roundhouse as impervious area. Mr. Crimmins responded that they would be removing a lot of the rails and buildings. It is an improvement because they would be cleaning that up. Ms. McMillan responded that it was so close to the buffer. That is not a huge gift because there is existing vegetation there and it has been previously disturbed. It would be a benefit to restore the area with vegetation and habitat. There is no real restoration in this plan. It is just the path and that's not a huge benefit either.

Vice Chairman Blanchard questioned how many people would be in the 272 units and how that related to the parking. Mr. Crimmins responded that it was 1.5 spaces per unit. Vice Chairman Blanchard commented that she was concerned about air quality and traffic. Mr. Crimmins responded that the development was previously reviewed for the subdivision. It was peer reviewed for traffic and approved. They will be taking down Great Rhythm and the doggy daycare and putting in residential units. The trip generations will be reduced.

Chairman Miller commented that this was hard, but the Commission should keep focus on the environmental feedback. Other Boards will cover the density and traffic.

Ms. Tanner commented that this level of intensification next to the pond is not good for the pond.

Vice Chairman Blanchard questioned when the soil work would be available. Mr. Crimmins responded that they were hoping to get the data back next month. Vice Chairman Blanchard questioned how far down they would dig for the buildings. Mr. Crimmins responded that the basement level would be at elevation 7. Mr. Johnson added that they could bring the data at the next meeting. Vice Chairman Blanchard commented that they should think about what construction technology would be used to mitigate the impact to the pond. The water quality is a huge concern. Mr. Crimmins responded that was a good comment.

Chairman Miller commented that the new parking garage had similar construction concerns. Mr. Crimmins responded that he worked on that project too.

Ms. McMillan questioned how much of a change in impervious surface there was between the plans. Mr. Crimmins responded that they would have that number for next time.

Chairman Miller commented that vegetation would be of interest to the Commission especially with landscaping and restoring as much function as possible.

Ms. Harrison was concerned about the amount of lighting associated with the project. Because it is so close to the pond, it would impact wildlife. It would be good to see the lighting plan. Mr. Crimmins confirmed they would bring the lighting comment back to the planning team. Ms. Harrison commented that she would like to see next iteration continue to pull away from the buffer. The buffer is a big concern.

Ms. Blasko noted that they should think about the snow removal and provide details for that. Mr. Crimmins responded that they would have a snow management plan. Ms. Harrison added that they should keep snow out of the buffer.

Ms. McMillan agreed that they should move it back away from the buffer. A detailed landscape plan for the buffer will be needed. Ms. McMillan questioned what the front of the building facing the pond would look like and questioned if there would be doors and paths on that side. Mr. Johnson responded that the units start 5 feet up and they would likely have a community path. Ms. McMillan commented that if there were access in front of the building then it wouldn't be a true buffer. This is a really intense development. Mr. Britz commented that there is restoration planned for the first 50 feet. There will be a living shoreline, restoration on the bank, and the upper part will have native plantings. That would be part of the City's design. The 0-50 will be plantings and width of the trail. The City gets 0-50 and the trail will go in the 25-50. The buildings will go up to the 50. Ms. McMillan did not support the buildings going right up to the 50.

Vice Chairman Blanchard questioned if Bartlett St. would be the address for the buildings. Mr. Crimmins responded that it would be a new road. Mr. Crimmins noted that the residents would have a private drive out to Maplewood Ave. They will put up signage and gates. Ricci trucks and emergency vehicles can access the road. The response time for emergency is much shorter coming through Maplewood.

Ms. Tanner commented that the snow management should include what they would put down with ice on roads.

Vice Chairman Blanchard commented that the egress for the buildings should be away from the pond side if possible. They should keep activity away from the buffer as much as possible.

Ms. McMillan commented that another site visit would be beneficial because they stopped at the cul-de-sac last time. Mr. Britz confirmed that they could set that up.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Tanner questioned if they were still going to meet to talk about the open space plan. Mr. Britz responded that they would have a meeting once the draft for the open space plan was available for review. Chairman Miller added that he hoped to review the PULA study at that meeting to identify what properties should be left alone.

Ms. Harrison noted that so many projects have a lot of parking and wondered if they had a role to encourage creative parking solutions. The location of the project that was just presented is so close to the new parking garage. There may be an opportunity for people to make use of that. There is a lot of bike friendly stuff going on as well. There could be some bike friendly units. Mr. Britz commented that the project could request to reduce parking and get a CUP. They need to show they have enough parking to not create a problem. They are trying to limit cars in the downtown. Ms. Tanner noted that a solution to that is to decrease the intensity. Chairman Miller commented that they come up against those issues often and it is frustrating. The answer to a lot of that is changing the Ordinance. Ms. Tanner noted that they needed to stand firm. It's too intense. Chairman Miller commented that it was hard to draw the line because that thought could apply to most of what the Commission sees. Vice Chairman Blanchard commented that what is there is not healthy. The soil and bank of pond could be remediated more successfully than what was presented. Chairman Miller commented that this Commission does a great job and helps to get improvement on most projects. Vice Chairman Blanchard commented that it would be helpful to reread the Ordinance and work with Mr. Britz and Ms. Walker to make improvements. Air quality is an issue. It is in the public's best interest most of the time to not develop the land.

Ms. McMillan noted that there are tree ordinances in some towns. Mr. Britz noted that this project has lots of areas where they can recommend adding trees

Ms. Harrison noted that on Monday September 16, 2019 the City Council would be reviewing a Styrofoam and single use plastic ban, and encouraged Commission Members to go speak on the issue if they wanted to.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman Blanchard moved to adjourn the meeting at 4:57 p.m., seconded by Ms. McMillan. The motion passed unanimously by a 7-0 vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Frey,
Conservation Commission Recording Secretary