

**REGULAR MEETING
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
1 JUNKINS AVENUE
PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
SCHOOL DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE ROOM**

4:00 P.M.

August 14, 2024

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Barbara McMillan; Members: Alice Carey, Lynn Vaccaro, Jessica Blasko, Stewart Sheppard, Alternate: Brian Gibb, Talia Sperduto

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chair Samantha Collins, Adam Fitzpatrick, Alice Carey

ALSO PRESENT: Kate Homet; Associate Environmental Planner

[9:08] Acting Chair McMillan opened the meeting and noted that the Chair would be absent and that the two alternate members would be voting.

I. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. July 10, 2024

[9:45] Acting Chair McMillan noted that she had one edit for page 8 of the minutes in the last paragraph, “they applicants” should be replaced with “the applicants”.

B. Gibb made a motion to approve the minutes with the amendment. S. Sheppard seconded the motion. J. Blasko announced she would abstain from the vote as she did not attend the July meeting. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

II. WETLAND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPLICATIONS (OLD BUSINESS)

1. 100 Durgin Lane
Oak Street Real Estate Capital, Owner
Assessor Map 239 Lot 18

[12:12] Brett Benson, Andrew Hayes, Nick Aceto, Patrick Crimmins and Neil Hansen came to present this application. Mr. Benson and the team proceeded to go through a PowerPoint presentation on relevant updates to the project, changes as a result of the previous conservation commission meeting and an overall summary.

[31:10] Acting Chair McMillan noted that the applicants had shared many changes that were not reflected in the most recent submission and wondered if the applicants intended for this to be more of a work session compared to looking for an approval. Mr. Benson responded that the goal was to receive feedback today and if not approval, then be in a better position to move on at the next meeting with approval. Mr. Hayes noted that they are looking for final approval later after they received feedback today.

[32:44] J. Blasko asked for clarification on the proposed planting details, such as plant size. Mr. Aceto responded with the typical sizes used by his team. J. Blasko noted that the more larger, mature trees that are planted, the better. A conversation continued about the snow storage on site, and the sustainability aspect of the project and how it could fit within the upcoming City's climate action plan.

[35:45] Acting Chair McMillan asked about lighting plans within the wetland buffer. Mr. Aceto pointed out the photometric plan and noted they would only put in zoning-required minimum life safety lighting with no additional lighting within the wetland buffers and described the lighting within the community spaces. Acting Chair McMillan mentioned her appreciation of all the changes that the applicants had produced and noted that the Commission will still need to see updated drawings and plans indicating all the updates. Mr. Aceto and Acting Chair McMillan then discussed the planting plan and updates needed, along with the plans for the boardwalk and observation deck looking over the rain garden.

[40:26] T. Sperduto asked for clarification on the proposed access road and whether it was necessary for fire access. She noted some changes that could occur to bring the road closer to the buildings and further from the wetland. A discussion continued about the feasibility of moving and/or removing the proposed access road.

[44:37] B. Gibb noted that this was a significant material issue that the applicants should look further into before coming back to the Commission. Mr. Crimmins noted the significant grading challenges and the stormwater impacts that may be an issue if the road were to be moved. He noted that if they wanted to keep a low impact stormwater element in that corner, the rain garden would have to shift into the wetland buffer to make it work which could create grading impacts in the wetland buffer in that area.

[46:48] S. Sheppard noted that the Commission would like to see two options, one with the road moved and what is currently proposed so that they can observe the differences in impacts. J. Blasko asked if the applicants had considered pervious materials for the access road and if it could be labeled for emergency access only. P. Crimmins responded that it was not considered for permeable materials because the raingarden achieves the stormwater goals and eliminates any maintenance concerns that would come with porous asphalt. Acting Chair McMillan seconded Ms. Blasko's point with the pervious drive and emergency access only.

[49:29] Acting Chair McMillan asked for more information on why a rain garden was not feasible within the roundabout open space. Mr. Crimmins noted that all of the impervious surface from that turnaround was being treated and the filtration device had been updated to meet this after the previously proposed raingarden had been removed from the plans. A concern of the

applicants was the storage of snow that may get pushed into a rain garden were it to be placed within the roundabout. A discussion continued about snow removal and City plowing ability. B. Gibb noted the desirability of having the access road be pervious and solely for emergency use, he asked whether that was amenable to the applicants. My. Hayes responded with the importance of the road for their team and any burdens associated with removing the road or restricting it. L. Vaccaro asked about the importance of the road and a discussion continued about the location of the road, the impermeability of the proposed parking within the buffer areas on that side of the site and the difficulties associated with developing this site and condensing it any further. S. Sheppard reminded the applicants of the importance of buffers and wetlands, including the reduction of heat island effect, flood storage and the protection of this proposed neighborhood from climate impacts. J. Blasko reiterated S. Sheppard's point and noted the proposed density of the project and the creation of a greater impact to the area than what currently exists. A discussion continued on the traffic and existing vs. proposed impacts to the site. Acting Chair McMillan noted that she would like to see more density of plantings within the trees being proposed and a plan for monitoring planting establishment and success. She mentioned the priorities listed by Commission members for seeing this application through which included rearranging of the access road and possibly moving it back or making it permeable and non-residential access, seeing updated plan sets which should include the removal of the sidewalk, the addition of the proposed fencing, the final location of the boardwalk, the information proposed for the boardwalk sign and a maintenance plan for the plantings. A discussion continued about the importance of looking at alternatives for the access road/driveway.

[1:04:20] J. Blasko made a motion to postpone the application until the September meeting. S. Sheppard seconded the motion. B. Gibb discussed with the applicants the importance of coming back with more information on the specifics of why something is achievable or not so that the Commissioners have a chance to review viability of potential changes as well. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

III. WETLAND CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPLICATIONS (NEW BUSINESS)

- 1. REQUEST TO POSTPONE**
913 Sagamore Avenue
Hogswave LLC, Owner
Assessor Map 223 Lot 27

[11:05] Acting Chair McMillan announced that the applicant for 913 Sagamore had requested a postponement. J. Blasko made a motion to postpone this application until the September meeting. S. Sheppard seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

[1:06:23] T. Sperduto excused herself from the meeting.

IV. STATE WETLAND BUREAU APPLICATIONS (NEW BUSINESS)

- 1. Dredge and Fill – Major Impact**
90 Maplewood Avenue
City of Portsmouth, Owner

Assessor Map 125 Lot 19 and Map 124 Lot 2

[1:06:27] Daniel Rochette and Jake Stoddard of Underwood Engineers came to present this state application and noted that it had previously come before the Commission as a Wetland Conditional Use Permit back in April. Mr. Rochette provided an overview of the project and went over how the conditions previously put on by the Commission had been addressed.

[1:13:50] Acting Chair McMillan asked if the state application included a five-year monitoring period for plant establishment. Mr. Rochette noted that there was no note on the plan stating this but it would come back as a standard condition of approval from NHDES. Acting Chair McMillan brought up a note on Sheet 17 on the Erosion and Sediment Controls plan and asked for clarification on if the details were examples or what would be used. Mr. Rochette responded that they are standard details of what could be used but would be up to the contractor who bids on the project and is ultimately selected.

[1:17:10] L. Vaccaro asked what the connection was between this project and the Maplewood Avenue bridge project. Mr. Rochette responded that this project was specifically just for the outfall and marsh restoration. Any reference to the bridge project within this application is due to the close proximity of the outfall to the bridge, and NHDES allowed the applicants to use the same hydrological and vulnerability assessments as that project had. A status on the bridge project was given.

[1:19:00] J. Blasko made a motion to recommend approval to NHDES with the following condition:

1. A five-year monitoring plan is required to ensure success of this project, the associated plantings, and any necessary maintenance.

B. Gibb seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

2. **REQUEST TO POSTPONE**
Dredge and Fill – Minor Impact
913 Sagamore Avenue
Hogswave LLC, Owner
Assessor Map 223 Lot 27

[11:37] Acting Chair McMillan announced that there was a request to postpone the NHDES permit as well. J. Blasko made a motion to postpone this application until the September meeting. B. Gibb seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously (6-0).

V. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Grants

[1:22:20] Ms. Homet discussed two upcoming grant projects that had just been awarded to the City regarding buffer revitalization for both freshwater and coastal wetlands.

2. Wetland Boundary Marker Update

[1:26:37] Ms. Homet announced that wetland boundary marker sales had broken even compared to the initial purchase order cost.

3. Conservation Easement Update

[1:27:36] Commissioners discussed the project proposal by SELT to purchase a conservation easement over a property in Portsmouth. Upcoming meetings and opportunities for support by the Commission were discussed.

4. Lonza Volunteer Day

[1:58:59] Ms. Homet discussed an upcoming volunteer opportunity for Lonza employees that Commissioners were also invited to attend. This opportunity includes trail clearing and cleanup at the Great Bog.

5. SCA New Hampshire Project

[1:53:13] Ms. Homet and Davis Brush (NH SCA) presented a potential upcoming Student Conservation Association project at the Great Bog for a footbridge to cross the wet area at the bottom of the trailhead to promote trail use and passive recreation.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.