

GROTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

Chairman John Smigelski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with Peter Morrison (Vice Chairman), Bruce Easom, Marshall Giguere and Mary Metzger present. Rena Swezey arrived at 7:45 p.m. from the Earth Removal-Stormwater Advisory Committee meeting. Susan Black was absent. Conservation Administrator Takashi Tada was present.

Chairman Smigelski announced that the public hearing scheduled on the agenda at 7:00 would be rescheduled to October 14, 2014. Taking up General Business, the Commission reviewed draft meeting minutes from August 26 and September 9, 2014. M. Giguere and B. Easom suggested minor corrections to the minutes from September 9th.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by M. Giguere, it was

VOTED: to approve the 8/26/2014 meeting minutes as written. The vote was unanimous.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by B. Easom, it was

VOTED: to approve the 9/9/2014 meeting minutes, as amended. The vote was unanimous.

Under General Business, the Commission signed an invoice from the Lowell Sun in the amount of \$223.13 for publication of legal notices in August 2014. The Commission also agreed to renew its membership in the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) at the increased level of \$100, per NRWA's request. The previous membership level was \$50.

Moving on to an item under Open Session, T. Tada provided copies of the letter from Attorney Bob Collins requesting Municipal Certification of the Conservation Restriction for the former Woodle property on Tavern Road (Assessors Map 124, Parcel 21.7; now owned by Jost). B. Easom pointed out that this property is only accessible to the public by boat. Commissioners took no action as they needed more time to review.

7:20 p.m. – Public Meeting: Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA), Trail Re-Route, Ripley Forest and Wharton Plantation, Groton Trails Committee

Paul Funch, Chairman of the Trails Committee, presented the RDA to reroute a portion of the existing trail connecting Wharton Plantation (property of NEFF) and Harrison S. Ripley Forest (property of Conservation Commission). A section of the existing trail on Wharton Plantation follows the toe of an esker along the edge of a marsh wetland. This section floods during the spring. At the landowner's request, the Trails Committee proposes to reroute the trail onto the ridge of the esker. Trails Committee member Olin Lathrop described the proposed route at the Commission's last meeting on September 9th; members of the Commission walked the new route on September 6th.

M. Metzger expressed concern about potential erosion from mountain bike use on the new trail. Mr. Funch said he believed the slopes on either end of the esker were gentle enough to remain stable under bicycle use. Pierre Comtois of Nashoba Publishing asked to confirm that the new trail would connect to existing trails; Mr. Funch responded yes.

Upon a motion by M. Giguere, seconded by P. Morrison, it was

VOTED: to issue a Negative #3 Determination for the proposed trail reroute, subject to the following two (2) conditions:

1. Trail width not to exceed 10 feet.
2. Trail to be located as shown on the plan.

The vote was unanimous.

7:30 – Presentation: Stormwater Treatment, Todd Wacome, Wynwood Construction

Todd Wacome of Wynwood Construction gave a slide presentation of stormwater treatment innovation that his company has pioneered in Massachusetts. The innovation involves the use of an inverted cone filter within a conventional deep sump catch basin. It is listed on the Massachusetts Stormwater Technology Evaluation Project (MASTEP) database of approved innovations. Unlike conventional deep sump catch basins, the inverted cone filter is capable of removing a majority of fine sediments from stormwater runoff during major storms with high volumes/flow rates. Mr. Wacome said the life expectancy of the filter is 15 years or more. The Commission thanked Mr. Wacome for the presentation.

Moving on to Land Management, Mr. Funch of the Trails Committee raised a question about removal of dead/damaged trees around the field on McLains Woods Road. The dead trees include one ash and a few hornbeams and birches. Mr. Funch, who mows the field, asked for permission to cut and remove the trees.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by B. Easom, it was

VOTED: to authorize Paul Funch to clear the dead/damaged trees from the McLains Woods Road field and create brush piles, as needed.

The vote was unanimous.

8:07 p.m. – Cont'd Public Hearing: Notice of Intent (NOI), Septic System Upgrade, 96 Mill Street, DEP #169-1113

Matt Waterman of LandTech Consultants presented the septic system repair project at 96 Mill Street on behalf of the owner, Erin Blodgett. The plan has been revised due to the presence of a private well on abutting property. The proposed septic system will be built at a higher elevation in its originally proposed location and will now require retaining walls along the side lengths. Wetland field data sheets were provided electronically to T. Tada previously.

P. Morrison asked when they plan to do the work. Mr. Waterman said they would start as soon as possible; the existing system has failed Title V inspection and the owners have already had one Purchase & Sale agreement fall through because of this. M. Metzger asked about the grading and tree clearing that would be required. Mr. Waterman said the grade of slope down to the road right-of-way would be 3:1, and two mature trees within the work area would be removed as shown on the plan. B. Easom asked if the erosion controls could be extended to wrap around the northeastern corner of the work area. Mr. Waterman revised the plan to show extension of the silt fence along the northern property line; he will provide a clean copy of the plan for the file.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by B. Easom, it was

VOTED: to close the Public Hearing for 96 Mill Street, DEP #169-1113.

The vote was unanimous.

Moving on to other Land Management issues, T. Tada mentioned that the field at the corner of Hidden Valley Road and New Pond Road (Assessors Parcel 132-66) was mowed by someone unbeknownst to the Commission. This parcel is in rare species habitat and the mowing should be done outside of the turtle active season. The Commission asked T. Tada to send a letter to residents of the Groton Woods subdivision making them aware of the rare species habitat issue and asking them to seek permission prior to mowing. T. Tada also brought up the regular mowing of the Smith Street portion of Eliades Conservation Area. Quintin Shea provided a cost estimate for mowing of the fields at Smith Street and Crosswinds II. The Commission previously authorized up to \$500 for Crosswinds II mowing, but has not discussed Smith Street. Commissioners walked the site on Saturday, 9/20/14.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by B. Easom, it was

VOTED: to authorize expenditure of up to \$300 from the land management account for mowing of Smith Street portion of Eliades property.

The vote was unanimous.

M. Metzger provided another update of the Property Inventory. She submitted reports on the following Conservation Commission properties:

- Flat Pond: Parcel 203-48 (13± acres); parcel encircles Flat Pond and has access from Townsend Road and Lakin Street. Beautiful wet meadow in NE corner with healthy native plant community.
 - Issue: Assessors maps incorrect?
- Milton Starr Land: Parcel 203-27 (11± acres); Red Maple swamp drained by an intermittent stream that feeds the Squannacook River. Access via easement off Townsend Road, or via abandoned railroad bed along SW property line.
 - Issue: Some invasive bittersweet near Townsend Road. Easement off Townsend Road is impassable (overgrown). M. Metzger found a large man-made hole on the easement. B. Easom and M. Giguere will investigate and locate with GPS.

On the topic of Land Management - Invasive Species, M. Metzger updated the Commission on the invasive species program held at the Groton Public Library on September 13th. Seven people attended the educational workshop conducted by M. Metzger and S. Black. M. Metzger said the New England Wildflower Society (NEWFS) and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MassWildlife) have excellent identification guides available. Workshop attendees reported some concern about Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

Moving on to an update of the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Working Group, P. Morrison said he attended the MACC meeting in Shelburne on September 26th. He asked if the Spectra Energy proposal could be considered part of an alternatives analysis for the Tennessee Gas Pipeline proposal. The answer from MACC was no. Many of the attendees at the MACC meeting were unaware of the Spectra Energy proposal, and P. Morrison had the impression that the Town of Groton was much better informed than other towns in western Massachusetts, thanks in part to the Pipeline Working Group. The consensus opinion of the Working Group is that it opposes the Tennessee Gas Pipeline proposal outright; while the Spectra Energy proposal represents a much less objectionable alternative that merits further consideration. The Commission directed T. Tada to submit a copy of its opposition letter (written by M. Giguere) to FERC as a formal comment.

There being no further business, upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by B. Easom, it was

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

The vote was unanimous.

Notes taken by

Takashi Tada
Conservation Administrator

Exhibits on file at Conservation Commission Office:

1. RDA, Proposed Trail, Wharton Plantation and Ripley Forest (Trails Committee)
2. NOI, Septic System, 96 Mill Street, DEP #169-1113 (E. Blodgett)
3. Property Inventory Reports

Approved 10/28/2014