

GROTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 24, 2015

Chairman John Smigelski called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with Susan Black (Clerk), Rena Swezey, and Mary Metzger present. Bruce Easom participated remotely by speakerphone from 7:30 p.m. until approximately 8:15 p.m. Peter Morrison (Vice Chairman) and Marshall Giguere were absent. Conservation Administrator Takashi Tada was present. S. Black read the public meeting/hearing notices at the indicated times.

7:00 p.m. – Discussion: Protecting Riparian Buffers, Mark Archambault, NRWA

Mark Archambault of the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) and Carly Shumway of the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC) gave a slide presentation on the importance of healthy river buffers for water quality and wildlife. The latest scientific studies show a decline in stream water quality associated with impervious coverage of 5% or greater, within 300 feet of streams. And every \$1 spent on riparian buffer conservation results in \$27 saved on water treatment. On the flip side, it is much more costly and difficult to restore riparian buffer areas that have been degraded.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, the Merrimack River watershed is the most threatened in the nation due to loss of forested land (i.e., development) and an increase in pollutants/pathogens carried by stormwater runoff. Phosphates in particular are a concern because most of the region's older water treatment facilities do not provide tertiary removal of phosphates. Within the Merrimack watershed, MRWC and NRWA have targeted the Squannacook River as a priority due to its relatively low level of development (less than 5% impervious surface). The presenters urged towns to establish policies and regulations that help to reduce and/or maintain impervious cover below the 5% threshold, such as a "No Build" bylaw (Groton already has a 50' No Disturbance Zone under its Wetlands Protection Bylaw). MRWC and NRWA have resources available to towns, including a useful zoning tool to help in the land use planning process.

B. Easom joined the meeting remotely by speakerphone at 7:35 p.m. Chairman Smigelski announced that all votes during remote participation shall be made by roll call.

7:35 p.m. – Public Hearing (cont'd): NOI, 211 Whiley Road (Scalley), MassDEP #169-1130

Owner/applicant: Tim & Stephanie Scalley

Representatives: Don Black; Jack Visniewski of Cornerstone Land Consultants

Site Walk: 9/12/2015

No one was present to represent the project. The public hearing had been continued to allow the applicants to seek approval from the Board of Health to utilize the existing well on the property.

Upon a motion by R. Swezey, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to continue the public hearing for 211 Whiley Road, MassDEP #169-1130, to 12/8/2015. The vote was unanimous (5-0) by roll call.

Moving on to General Business – Meeting Minutes, the Commission reviewed draft meeting minutes from 9/15/2015.

Upon a motion by M. Metzger, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to approve the meeting minutes from 9/15/2015 as written. The vote was unanimous (5-0) by roll call.

On the topic of General Business – Land Protection Updates, T. Tada said he had yet to hear back from Clifford Robison on the donation of the North Woodlot Nominee Trust land (Parcel 251-72). The revised draft deed was sent via Certified Mail and was picked up by the Robisons on 11/9/2015. Regarding the 0.14 acre Gustin-Woodle parcel on Lost Lake (Parcel 124-22), Attorney Robert Collins requested that this discussion be postponed to the next meeting on 12/28/2015.

Moving on to General Business – CPC Update, B. Easom reported that the state match was finally announced and it is more than anticipated. There should be enough money available to fund all of the proposed requests this year.

7:45 p.m. – Public Hearing (cont'd): NOI, Proposed Driveway, Groton School, MassDEP #169-1131.

Applicant/owner: Groton School

Representatives: Robert Collins, attorney; Steve Garvin, engineer of Samiotes Consultants

Site Walk: 11/7/2015

The applicants submitted a written request to continue the public hearing to 12/8/2015.

Upon a motion by R. Swezey, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to continue the hearing for Groton School driveway, MassDEP #169-1131, to 12/8/2015. The vote was unanimous (5-0) by roll call.

Moving on to other General Business, M. Metzger said she was willing to take on the task of planning and organizing the next Conservation Summit, most likely in February 2016. The first such event was organized by the Groton Conservation Trust (GCT) and held on 2/11/2015. She has already enlisted the support of Darcy Donald of Groton Turtle Conservation & Rescue, and Susan Hughes of GCT. Ms. Hughes has already offered the use of the new media classroom at Lawrence Academy as a meeting venue. The tentative date is 2/3/2016, with a snow date of

2/10/2016. M. Metzger said one idea is to show a video about a community coming together to remove invasive *Phragmites* plants from Marion Lake on Long Island, NY. She asked if the Commission would authorize her to coordinate the Conservation Summit and reimburse her for cost to purchase the Marion Lake DVD.

Upon a motion by S. Black, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to authorize Mary Metzger to plan the next Conservation Summit and be reimbursed for the cost of the DVD. The vote was unanimous (5-0) by roll call.

Taking up the issue of the upcoming vacancy, the Commission met with interested candidate Eileen McHugh of 207 Hollis Street. Ms. McHugh is a landscape architect who previously served on the Commission in the late 1990's before moving to Townsend. She is interested in getting involved again after moving back to Groton. She said she would need a refresher in wetlands protection, but she continues to work as a landscape architect/planner for the University of Connecticut in Storrs, CT. Chairman Smigelski asked if she was willing to consider the use of herbicides to control invasive plants under the appropriate circumstances. Ms. McHugh said she was open to considering the use of herbicides, and has used Roundup (glyphosate) in the past.

Upon a motion by R. Swezey, seconded by M. Metzger, it was

VOTED: to recommend the appointment of Eileen McHugh to fill the seat on the Conservation Commission being vacated by M. Metzger. The vote was unanimous (5-0) by roll call.

T. Tada will forward the recommendation in a memo to the Board of Selectmen.

On the subject of Baddacook Field invasive plant management, T. Tada provided copies of the updated management recommendations from Jeff Taylor of Vegetation Control Service (VCS). Mr. Taylor's updated proposal includes more detail about the best time of year to apply herbicides to control Black Swallow-wort. His cost estimate of \$3,100 for the initial treatment of broadleaf-selective herbicides (triclopyr and aminopyralid) remains unchanged from the earlier proposal submitted in June 2015. The costs for any follow-up activities would depend on the relative success of the initial, early season treatment. M. Metzger said she liked the more comprehensive approach laid out in the proposal.

Upon a motion by S. Black, seconded by R. Swezey, it was

VOTED: to accept the vegetation management proposal submitted by Jeff Taylor of VCS to control invasive plants at Baddacook Field, in the amount of \$3,100. The vote was unanimous (5-0) by roll call.

Moving on to Property Inventory updates, M. Metzger emphasized the importance of continuing to update the Conservation Commission's property inventory in a methodical manner. She said it should be an ongoing process that can be accomplished over the long term by walking one or two properties at the end of each group of project-related site walks.

8:10 p.m. – Public Meeting: RDA, Eagle Project, Bertozzi Conservation Area (Christopher Brown, Troop 1)

Applicant: Chris Brown, Scout Troop 1, West Groton

Owner: Groton Conservation Commission

Site Walk: 7/11/2015

Chris Brown of Troop 1 in West Groton presented his Eagle Project proposal to install temporary fencing and netting along a portion (approximately 30 linear feet) of the Squannacook River bank to help reduce erosion due to both natural and anthropogenic causes. The fencing (typical of sand dune restoration) will help to keep hikers and their pets off the severely eroding portions of river bank in the popular picnicking area. The jute netting will help stabilize the bank and encourage the growth/spread of existing native shrubs and groundcover in the area. Mr. Brown will put up signs along the trail and at the project site to inform hikers of the restoration and encourage them to stay on the trail. He will also fix the plexiglass on the kiosk at the beginning of the trail. Mr. Brown did not submit a site plan of the work.

S. Black asked about the follow-up monitoring/maintenance required for this project. Mr. Brown said he would check on the site annually for the first few years. T. Tada recommended that Mr. Brown prepare a site plan showing the configuration of the existing river bank and the locations of proposed fencing, netting, and signs. This is a basic requirement of the RDA and will help the Commission evaluate the project more effectively. Mr. Brown said he would prepare a site plan.

Upon a motion by R. Swezey, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to continue the public meeting for Chris Brown's Eagle Project to 12/8/2015.
The vote was unanimous (4-0).

B. Easom's remote participation ended prior to the above vote due to phone disconnection.

8:35 p.m. – Public Hearing (cont'd): NOI, 60 Valley Road (Johnson), MassDEP #169-1125

Applicant/owner: Paul Johnson

Site Walk: 6/6/2015

The applicant submitted an email request to continue the public hearing.

Upon a motion by R. Swezey, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to continue the public hearing for 60 Valley Road, MassDEP #169-1125, to 12/8/2015. The vote was unanimous (4-0).

8:40 p.m. – Discussion: Proposed Plan Modification, 128 Main Street (Groton Inn), MassDEP #169-1109

John Amaral of 128 Main Street LLC, and engineer Rob Oliva of David E. Ross Associates Inc., presented the proposed plan modifications for redevelopment of the former Groton Inn. The proposed modifications call for a larger main building (the Inn) and a separate 100-seat restaurant. All of the other separate, rental unit buildings behind the Inn have been eliminated. The overall impervious area would decrease slightly from the approved plan, and the locations of the stormwater catch basins would change due to the revised parking lot configuration. There would be no change to the approved stormwater detention pond within the 100' buffer zone. The applicants requested acceptance of these modifications as a minor change under the existing Order of Conditions.

M. Metzger asked about the remediation of the former waste/debris disposal area. Mr. Amaral reported that they spent over \$300,000 to complete the soil remediation per MassDEP requirements. M. Metzger also asked about removal of invasive plants in the buffer zone. Mr. Amaral said it was not a requirement of the OOC, but they would be performing regular maintenance of the lawn area behind the Inn and would monitor/maintain the meadow area adjacent to the buffer zone to preserve the views of Gibbet Hill.

Upon a motion by R. Swezey, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to accept the proposed plan modifications as a minor change to the Order of Conditions for the Groton Inn, 128 Main Street, MassDEP #169-1109. The vote was unanimous (4-0).

There being no further business, upon a motion by R. Swezey, seconded by S. Black, it was

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. The vote was unanimous (4-0).

Notes taken by

Takashi Tada
Conservation Administrator

Exhibits on file at Conservation Commission Office:

1. NOI, 211 Whiley Road, MassDEP #169-1130
2. Meeting Minutes, 9/15/2015
3. NOI, Groton School Proposed Driveway, MassDEP #169-1131
4. RDA, Eagle Project at Bertozzi, Chris Brown
5. NOI, 60 Valley Road, MassDEP #169-1125
6. Revised Plans, 128 Main Street (Groton Inn), MassDEP #169-1109

Approved 12/8/2015