

GROTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 26, 2016

John Smigelski (Chairman) called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with Susan Black (Clerk), Eileen McHugh, Marshall Giguere, and Bruce Easom present. Peter Morrison (Vice Chairman) and Olin Lathrop were absent. Conservation Administrator Takashi Tada was present. S. Black read the public hearing/meeting notices at the indicated times.

7:00 p.m. – Discussion: Extension Permit Request, 110 Boston Road, Groton Community School, MassDEP #169-1013

Applicant/owner: Groton Community School

Representatives: John Amaral, Trustee; Stan Dillis, Ducharme & Dillis Civil Design Group

Site Walk: 4/23/2016

John Amaral submitted a request for three year extension of the Order of Conditions (OOC), MassDEP #169-1013, for additions to the Groton Community School building. They are hoping to start the work this year. No changes to the approved plans are proposed. The OOC currently expires on 6/26/2016.

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

VOTED: to extend the OOC for Groton Community School, 110 Boston Road, MassDEP #169-1013, for a period of three years to expire on 6/26/2019. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

Taking up General Business – Meeting Minutes, the Commission reviewed draft meeting minutes from 4/12/2016. S. Black and M. Giguere suggested revisions to the minutes. T. Tada will revise the minutes as suggested and provide copies for review at the next meeting.

7:05 p.m. – Public Hearing: NOI, Baddacook Pond Weed Management, MassDEP # not issued

Applicant: Board of Selectmen

Representatives: Great Pond Advisory Committee (GPAC); Ted Fiust, Aquatic Vision LLC (by phone)

Site Walk: 4/23/2016

Jim Luening, Chairman of the GPAC, gave a slide presentation on current and proposed invasive aquatic weed management activities at Baddacook Pond. Baddacook Pond is Groton's largest natural pond (76 acres) and is an important resource for recreation, wildlife habitat, and drinking water supply protection. The predominant invasive aquatic weed in the pond is Fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) with a lesser degree of Variable Milfoil (*Myriophyllum heterophyllum*) also present. Approximately 35 acres of the pond are infested with invasive weeds. The pond is

45 feet deep, but the weeds grow down to depths of 15 feet. The Board of Selectmen submitted a NOI in 2015 for proposed herbicide treatment of the weeds; however, the Groton Water Commissioners were opposed to the use of herbicides in the pond, which is located within both the Zone 1 and Zone 2 water supply protection areas of the Baddacook Well. The previous NOI was eventually withdrawn by the Selectmen. This new NOI proposes to use a combination of mechanical harvesting, Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH), and Surface Assisted Suction Harvesting (SASH) to reduce the weed biomass in selected areas of the pond. The first phase will be a viability study in a handful of selected areas of the pond (up to 20 acres) to see if these techniques can be effective in Baddacook Pond, to determine the harvest rate, and to develop a cost estimate for using these techniques in the whole pond. The harvested weeds would be transported by the DPW to the Town's composting facility.

Mr. Luening said the proposal includes the use of three offloading areas around the pond:

1. Baddacook Pond Boat Ramp (MA Dept. of Fish & Game)
 - He has talked to Pat Huckery, MA Dept. of Fish & Game, about using the boat ramp as a staging and offloading area.
2. Baddacook Field/Shattuck Homestead Conservation Area (Town)
 - The old beach area is proposed as an offloading site, with truck access via the old cart road.
3. Baddacook Well Site (Town)
 - The Groton Water Commissioners have authorized the use of the area behind Baddacook Well as an offloading site for the viability study only.

S. Black asked how deep the Fanwort roots grow. Ted Fiust said the roots of Fanwort are shallow, no more than 6" deep. S. Black then asked if the proposed methods have been used successfully in other places. Mr. Fiust said each of the proposed methods have been successful, but have not been used in combination at the same time. Mr. Luening added that Aquatic Vision uses a modified mechanical harvester for this type of project, whereas the Town's harvester would not be compatible. S. Black also asked about visibility in the water after weeds are pulled. Mr. Fiust said the water does get murky as they pull. They would need to let the water clear up and make multiple passes in each area.

E. McHugh asked about the extent of infestation. Mr. Luening said the estimate of 35 acres is based on a visual survey done from a boat on the water surface, by Aquatic Control Technology (ACT) in 2011. Under this new proposal, the divers will survey the weed infestation below the water surface. E. McHugh also asked about the suitability of the proposed offloading sites at the Water Department well and the old beach at Baddacook Field/Shattuck Homestead. The landing area behind the well is flat, grassy and easily accessible by truck, but the water is shallow and Mr. Luening said it might prove difficult for the harvester to get close enough to the land. At Baddacook Field/Shattuck Homestead, the shoreline is steeper and the water is deeper, which is better for the harvester.

M. Giguere commented that the proposed methodology is labor intensive, and the costs of doing it for the whole pond are unknown. It may be overly ambitious. Mr. Luening said the budget for the viability study is \$20,000, and the effort will help to determine the cost of doing the whole pond. M. Giguere asked when is the best time of year to do this? Mr. Luening said earlier in the

season. Mr. Fiust added that it is better to do it earlier, after weeds begin to emerge and water temperatures are above 10 degrees Celsius (50 degrees F). Typically this is after May 15th. M. Giguere then asked if the previous assessment by ACT included measuring the water quality and the depth of sediment at the bottom of the pond. He was concerned that the nutrient loading in the pond would encourage regrowth of the weeds. Alex Woodle of GPAC said previous assessments have included only limited water quality testing. M. Giguere also asked if they planned to use multiple barges to facilitate the weed harvesting and transport. Mr. Fiust said they can use multiple barges if available. He also noted that the removal of biomass during the harvesting will reduce the overall nutrient load in the pond.

B. Easom asked about the legality of transporting the invasive weeds, and if a permit to haul away the invasive weeds would be required. Mr. Luening said a transport permit is not required. B. Easom said he would rather leave the harvested biomass to decompose onsite at Baddacook Field/Shattuck Homestead. S. Black added that it could be used to cover the Black Swallow-wort plants in the field; but on the other hand it could also smother the native grasses and impede the planned herbicide spraying to control the Swallow-wort. E. McHugh said the idea of keeping the harvested material onsite, rather than transporting it, was worthy of consideration. B. Easom also asked about monitoring for turtles on the collection barges and the risk of injury to turtles if they are sucked into the hose. Mr. Luening said a person on the barge would be monitoring for any turtles. Mr. Fiust added that they use a Venturi pump system that will not harm turtles, while the rate of biomass suction is low and therefore easy to monitor as it is collected in the barge. B. Easom followed with a question about water quality testing during the proposed work. Mr. Fiust said they would take basic measurements before and after the harvesting. Lastly, B. Easom asked if there would be runoff as the material dries. Mr. Fiust replied yes. M. Giguere said any material left onsite should be dumped in a location not connected to the vernal pools on the property.

Chairman Smigelski asked about the volume of biomass they expect to harvest per acre. Mr. Fiust said he did not know yet, but the optimal rate of harvesting is about one truckload (12-15 cubic yards) per hour. Bill Strickland of GPAC had previously estimated 40 tons per acre, based on his experience operating the Town's mechanical harvester. Mr. Fiust indicated that the biomass will shrink rapidly once it is out of the water, and there won't be a big mountain of weeds to deal with. He said the barge volume is 5' x 20' x 3' (or 100 cubic feet).

Claire Macy, of 716 Martins Pond Road, asked if the weeds will come back right away. Mr. Luening responded that the weeds would grow back eventually.

Darcy Donald, of 32 Floyd Hill Road, asked if any native plants would be harvested along with the Fanwort and, if so, would they grow back? Mr. Fiust said yes, some native plants growing among the invasives would be pulled out inevitably. It is impossible to predict if/when things will grow back, and he said managing the aquatic vegetation is an ongoing process similar to landscaping your yard. Ms. Donald said she understands the benefit of doing this earlier in the season, but the timing coincides with the nesting season for Blanding's turtles, a species listed as Threatened in Massachusetts. She also wondered if the path at Baddacook Field/Shattuck is wide enough for a dump truck. Chairman Smigelski said the path is wide enough for a standard dump truck, which is no more than 8.5' wide.

The Commission requires a file number from MassDEP and a determination letter from NHESP before closing the public hearing. Mr. Luening agreed to a continuation.

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

VOTED: to continue the public hearing for Baddacook Pond NOI until 5/10/2016. The vote was unanimous (5 in favor).

7:55 p.m. – Public Hearing: NOI, Septic System Repair, 2 Bishop Road, MassDEP #not issued

Applicant: Lagasse Trucking

Owner: Jonathan McSweeney

Representative: Stan Dillis and Jack Maloney, Ducharme & Dillis Civil Design Group

Site Walk: 4/9/2016

MassDEP has not issued a file number for this NOI.

Upon a motion by M. Giguere, seconded by E. McHugh, it was

VOTED: to continue the public hearing for 2 Bishop Way, MassDEP # not issued, to 5/10/2016. The vote was unanimous (5 in favor).

7:56 p.m. – Public Hearing (cont'd): NOI, Sewer Connection, 116 Boston Road (Janes),

MassDEP # not issued

Applicant/owner: Dorothy Janes & Shane Grant

Representative: David Erickson, attorney

MassDEP has not issued a file number for this NOI.

Upon a motion by M. Giguere, seconded by E. McHugh, it was

VOTED: to continue the public hearing for 116 Boston Road, MassDEP # not issued, to 5/10/2016. The vote was unanimous (5 in favor).

8:00 p.m. – Discussion: CR Boundary Encroachment, 27 Crystal Springs Lane (Narayan)

Commissioners reviewed a copy of the CR boundary line survey prepared by Ducharme & Dillis. The survey plan confirms the suspected encroachment into the Conservation Restriction area by a 30-foot long section of the perimeter fence for the swimming pool, and the back portion of the play structure area. Commissioners agreed that the homeowners need to move the fence and play area to honor the CR boundary.

E. McHugh asked if the Commission should ask the homeowners to pay for the survey, which cost \$500. Commissioners decided not to ask for payment at this time, as the relocation of fence

and play area will be costly as it is. M. Giguere also noted that the missing CR boundary marker (wooden post) will require replacement by the surveyor.

Upon a motion by M. Giguere, seconded by B. Easom, it was

VOTED: to send a letter to the homeowners requesting removal of the encroaching items within 90 days of notification, with the possibility that they may be asked to cover the cost of resetting the boundary marker. The vote was unanimous (5 in favor). T. Tada will prepare the letter.

8:10 p.m. – Discussion: Riparian Buffer Restoration, Alex Krofta, MRWC/NRWA

Alex Krofta, restoration scientist for the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC) and Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) presented preliminary plans for riparian buffer restoration projects at the H&V facility and Bertozzi Conservation Area, both in West Groton along the Squannacook River.

The plan at Bertozzi would involve more plantings than originally proposed by Al Futterman of NRWA. It would also add coir logs (wattles) installed in certain areas of the bank where the most severe erosion is occurring. Native plantings would include grass plugs and a variety of shrubs from New England Wetland Plants, Inc. Alex said they would likely plant between 10-20 shrubs at Bertozzi.

The plan at H&V's facility is to revegetate a strip above the riverbank, around the perimeter of the truck turnaround and trailer parking area. The area is unpaved (gravel).

The Commissioners recommended filing separate RDA's for the two restoration projects. Mr. Krofta agreed to file the RDA applications.

(S. Black left the meeting at 8:30 p.m.)

Mr. Krofta said the H&V plan is still being developed in conjunction with Kathy Puff and others at the facility. It is possible that the final planting plan will be more extensive. He hoped to submit the RDA's tomorrow in order to be on the Commission's next meeting agenda.

On the topic of Land Management updates, T. Tada provided an update on Surrenden Farm. The farmer, Roy MacGregor, agreed to submit a bid to The Bobolink Project (Mass Audubon) to set aside roughly 11 acres of the upper hay field for the duration of the Bobolink breeding season (May 1 – August 1). Mass Audubon will notify selected farmers by May 1st.

E. McHugh provided an update on the Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee. The ERSWAC will meet on May 3rd to review the proposed field change at 120 Boston Road.

B. Easom provided an update on the Community Preservation Committee. CPC projects for consideration at Annual Town Meeting include the Prescott School, the Middle School track, historic monuments, and funding for the Housing Coordinator position.

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

VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. The vote was unanimous.

Notes taken by Takashi Tada
Conservation Administrator

Exhibits on file at Conservation Commission Office:

1. Extension Permit, 110 Boston Road, MassDEP #169-1013
2. NOI, Baddacook Pond Weed Management, MassDEP # not issued
3. NOI, 2 Bishop Way, MassDEP # not issued
4. NOI, 116 Boston Road, MassDEP # not issued
5. Surrenden Farm Resource Management Plan (draft)
6. Crystal Spring Conservation Restriction Boundary Survey
7. Meeting Minutes, 4/12/2016

Approved 5/24/2016