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Conservation Commission
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Groton Conservation Commission
Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, July 14, 2020 @ 6:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

BROADCAST ON ZOOM AND THE GROTON CHANNEL
PURSUANT TO GOVERNOR'S EXECUTIVE ORDER
CONCERNING THE OPEN MEETING LAW
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82480898186>
(WEBINAR ID: 824 8089 8186)

Present: Larry Hurley, Chair; Bruce Easom, Vice-Chair; Alison Hamilton, Clerk; Peter Morrison; John Smigelski; Eileen McHugh; Olin Lathrop.

Others Present: Nikolis Gualco, Conservation Administrator

Chair Hurley called the meeting to order at 6:33PM.

APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS*

6:30PM – RDA, 11 Roxanne Road, for the construction of an above-ground pool (S. Christianson).

Applicant: Stephen Christianson

S. Christianson explained the project, which involves the construction of a 21 foot above ground pool. The pool and its associated grading is located approx. 70 feet (at the closest) to a small wetland that feeds into a larger wetland system behind the house. The area of the proposed pool is an existing lawn.

E. McHugh asked where the pool's discharge water would be drained. Christianson reported that he plans to drain the pool into the front yard, which is outside of the wetlands buffer zone.

O. Lathrop commented that there was an area of exposed soil that was observed during the site walk. He asked what the applicant's plans were for dealing with this. Christianson replied that he plans to hire a contractor to stabilize and re-seed the bare patch. Lathrop continued by asking if he was willing to install straw wattles until the area was stable to which Christianson replied "yes."

Upon a motion by O. Lathrop, seconded by B. Easom, it was:

VOTED to issue a Negative "3" Determination of Applicability under the conditions that:

1.) erosion controls be placed below the area of dead lawn (the bare spot) until the area is fully stabilized and seeded AND 2.) the pool shall be drained into front yard area away from the wetlands.

The motion passed by a roll call vote: (YES: E. McHugh, O. Lathrop, B. Easom, A. Hamilton, P. Morrison, J. Smigelski, L. Hurley).

6:40PM – RDA, Hayes Woods Conservation Area, for the construction of a trail bridge (D. Pitkin, Groton Conservation Trust).

Representative: Paul Funch, Trial Committee

P. Funch presented the RDA, which was for a trail bridge that was installed without prior approval by the Conservation Commission. The bridge crosses a small intermittent stream and is located along an existing foot path.

P. Funch was asked if the trail bridge could accommodate horse travel, to which Funch replied that he was concerned it may be too narrow.

L. Smigelski (of 154 Mill Street) commented that the bridge is located on a portion of the property that horses do not regularly traverse due to unsafe riding conditions on account of numerous wet and rocky areas.

O. Lathrop expressed concern about the cinder blocks he observed under the bridge and he expressed his wish to have the applicant remove the blocks.

B. Easom said he wanted to clarify that the bridge was not intended for horses by having the applicant install a sign stating "No Horses." He also wants to see the cinder blocks removed.

Upon a motion by O. Lathrop, seconded by B. Easom, it was:

VOTED to issue a Negative "2" Determination of Applicability under the condition that:

1.) the cinder blocks under the bridge (in the intermittent stream channel) be removed.

Additionally, the Commission recommended to the landowner the following:

1.) install a board along the side of the bridge to keep people from slipping off;

2.) install a "No Horses" sign;

3.) the bridge shouldn't be in contact with ground as this may accelerate rotting of the wood.

The motion passed by a roll call vote: (YES: E. McHugh, O. Lathrop, B. Easom, A. Hamilton, P. Morrison, J. Smigelski, L. Hurley

6:50PM – RDA, Sorhaug Woods, for the stabilization of an existing trail (P. Funch, Groton Trails Committee).

Applicant: Paul Funch, Groton Trails Committee

P. Funch explained the project, which involves the stabilization of a heavily used (by horses, mountain bikes, and foot) section of trail. The trail is currently extremely muddy and suffering from erosion during rain storms. Funch proposes "smoothing out" approx. 120 feet of the trail using hand tools and then installing a geo-textile tri-grid netting (comprised of recyclable polypropylene) over top it. The netting will add structure to the trail bed while allowing for water drainage. Atop the netting will be two-inches of 1 ½ stone. This method is relatively new and has been used on a handful of trails across the Commonwealth. Funch and fellow Trails Committee member O. Lathrop observed a presentation on the methodology at a recent trails conference. Funch concluded that the trail could be a good test site for the netting and should help improve conditions immensely.

E. McHugh expressed concern about the crushed stone sliding off to the side over time and she asked Funch to clarify the profile of the trail. Funch explained that the area is very flat and that he wasn't concerned about the stones moving.

Upon a motion by O. Lathrop, seconded by B. Easom, it was:

VOTED to issue a Negative "3" Determination of Applicability under the condition that the trail be built according to the plan described in the RDA.

The motion passed by a roll call vote: (YES: E. McHugh, O. Lathrop, B. Easom, A. Hamilton, P. Morrison, J. Smigelski, L. Hurley

7:00PM – RDA, Sorhaug Woods, for the construction of two new loop trails (P. Funch, Groton Trails Committee).
Applicant: Paul Funch, Groton Trails Committee

P. Funch explained that while the RDA is for two trails, he is only asking permission for the wetland crossing for a single new trail that would connect an existing trail to a new trail being constructed on the newly acquired Priest Family Conservation Area.

Upon a motion by O. Lathrop, seconded by E. McHugh, it was:
VOTED to issue a Negative “2” Determination of Applicability for the proposed Chestnut Hill loop trail but not for the second loop trail shown on the RDA.

At this time B. Easom brought up a point of order and stated that the Commission does not approve new trails via the Wetlands Protection Act/Bylaw permitting procedures. He stated that the Commission was simply approving the jurisdictional areas of the proposed trail in this motion. The process of approving the trail is a separate issue. At this, Lathrop amended his motion.

Upon a motion by O. Lathrop, seconded by E. McHugh, it was:
VOTED to issue a Negative “2” Determination of Applicability for the wetland crossing for the Chestnut Hill Trail (shown on the RDA as the red trail).
The motion passed by a roll call vote: (YES: E. McHugh, O. Lathrop, B. Easom, A. Hamilton, P. Morrison, J. Smigelski, L. Hurley

Upon a motion by B. Easom, seconded by E. McHugh, it was:
VOTED to accept the proposed trail (shown as the red trail on the RDA).
The motion passed by a roll call vote: (YES: E. McHugh, O. Lathrop, B. Easom, A. Hamilton, P. Morrison, J. Smigelski, L. Hurley

7:10PM – RDA, 28 Redskin Trail, for the removal of approx. 34 trees (C. Bryne).
Applicant: Chuck Bryne

C. Bryne presented the RDA, which was for the removal of approx. 34 trees on a residential lot within 100 feet of Lost Lake. Bryne shared that the trees presented a threat to the efforts he is undertaking to re-develop the lot – Bryne reported that there is a vacant cabin and he plans to raze the structure and replace it with a single-family house.

J. Smigelski commented that he would like to see more of a plan for the whole picture before approving the removal of so many trees.

A. Hamilton asked about his plan. Bryne referenced a NOI from 2007 where the Commission issued a Order of Conditions for the re-development of the lot. He said this was a good reference for what his plans were but that he intended to make the house a little bigger by adding a second two car garage. Hamilton continued and asked if he had an arborist look at he trees to which Bryne replied that a neighbor of Redskin Trail who has a commercial tree company reviewed the trees with him. Hamilton then asked if all of the proposed trees were considered hazardous or in poor health to which Bryne replied “no” but that his plans for the house would necessitate their removal eventually.

P. Morrison stated is was OK with the tree removal but wants to see a plan first before allowing the tree clearing.

O. Lathrop commented that his is uncomfortable because the larger plan is not included.

B. Easom thinks that the Commission should wait until a footprint of the proposed house is provided and then approve the tree removal as necessary.

E. McHugh commented that the Commission usually requires the re-planting of trees that are removed in the buffer zone and that this is impossible without a plan showing the house.

At this time, L. Hurley called for a straw poll on who think the proposal should rise to the level of a Notice of Intent. **The poll was as follows: (YES: E. McHugh, O. Lathrop, B. Easom, A. Hamilton, P. Morrison, J. Smigelski, L. Hurley)**

******* At this time the Zoom meeting abruptly ended and the Commission was not able to restart *******

The ending was a result of an IT technical issue where two meetings were scheduled for the same time with the Commission meeting “expiring” when the second meeting began at 7:30PM.

The Commissioners joined another Zoom meeting using the Administrator’s Zoom account and agreed to move all remaining agenda items to the next meeting date of July 28, 2020

Minutes Approved: September 8, 2020