



Conservation Commission Meeting

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 at 6:30 PM
Town Hall: Second Floor Meeting Room,
173 Main Street Groton, MA
OPTION TO JOIN REMOTELY

Present: Eileen McHugh, Chair; John Smigelski, Clerk; Olin Lathrop, Bruce Easom, Peter Morrison, Alison Hamilton (6:45PM)

Absent: Larry Hurley, Vice Chair

Others Present: Charlotte Steeves, Conservation Administrator

Eileen McHugh called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS

6:30 PM- Continued Public Hearing from 3/12/24: Notice of Intent: 500 Main St

Applicant: 500 MG LLC; Representative: Greg Roy, Dillis & Roy Civil Design Group

Greg Roy requested a continuance to thoroughly review the comments from the DEP.

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

Voted to continue the public hearing to the next scheduled meeting on April 9, 2024.

The motion passed unanimously. 5-0

6:35 PM- Continued Public Hearing from 3/12/24: Request for Determination of Applicability: 209 Whiley Rd

Applicant: Paul Gron; Architect: Timothy Burke

Timothy Burke returned to the Commission providing the additional information requested during the previous hearing. He proposed installing a silt sock along the pond's edge and gutters on the dwelling, which would be piped underground to two Culteck Dry Chambers, capable of managing a 1-inch storm. T. Burke highlighted that the applicants prefer a natural landscape and plan to stabilize the slopes and plant native plants such as rhododendrons, butterfly weed, and ferns.

A. Hamilton was satisfied with the net benefits being added to the site.

B. Easom stated that he was unsupportive of the proposed encroachment to the resource area. O. Lathrop was in agreement and referred to the Wetland Bylaws and the 50-foot no-touch zone, stating a preference to prohibit any extensions beyond the existing footprint.

E. McHugh expressed concerns about the filing of a Request for Determination of Applicability and the difficulty in establishing conditions. She requested that the contractor provide progress reports. T. Burke assured that the contractor has a long- standing relationship with the applicant and is willing to comply with any necessary conditions.

P. Morrison requested that the Conservation Commission and the Administrator be granted permission to access the site at any time to monitor the progress.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by J. Smigelski, it was:

Voted to issue a Negative 3 Determination under the conditions: 1. Monthly progress reports are submitted along with photographs., 2. Permission is granted for the Conservation Commission and the Administrator to access the property at various times during business hours., 3. The limit of the work is to be clearly marked., and 4. No stockpiling of materials (all materials must be removed after the completion of the project.)

The motion passed. (Yes: PM, AH, JS, EM/ Nay: OL, BE) 4-2

6:40 PM- Request for Determination of Applicability: 99 Pleasant St

Applicant: Town of Groton; Representative: Tom Delaney, Department of Public Works Director and Brian Callahan.

Tom Delaney proposed the installation of an 8-foot chain-link fence along the outside perimeter of the back parking lot located at the police station. The plan includes a sliding gate that retracts alongside the building. The installation would involve securing some posts with concrete, requiring minimal disturbance. This project is deemed necessary as the Dispatch Center is relocating to Pepperell, leaving no one on site to monitor the property.

C. Steeves mentioned that she could not find the original plans. She briefly discussed the Order of Conditions for the parking lot extension filed in 2006, which referred to restrictions such as no snow storage and the use of low organic fertilizers. T. Delaney commented that the majority of the work was conducted in the front of the building.

B. Easom inquired about the management of amphibian passage. T. Delaney suggested removing small sections between fence posts to allow for passage however, he emphasized the importance of installing the fence to the ground to allow for stabilization.

O. Lathrop noted the close proximity of the parking lot to the wetlands and inquired about the possibility of reducing the amount of impervious areas. T. Delaney responded that the idea could be explored.

E. McHugh recommended installing a 12-inch black pipe at the bottom of the fencing to act as a barrier and prevent amphibians from entering the parking lot. She also questioned if there was an opportunity to remove a portion of the pavement to install a rain garden. T. Delaney noted that

there is a limited amount of parking available. B. Callahan pointed out a few potential areas that could be restored.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by J. Smigelski, it was:

Voted to issue a Negative 3 Determination under the conditions: 1. A barrier is installed at the bottom of the fence to prevent amphibians from entering the parking lot.

The motion passed unanimously. 6-0

6:45 PM- Request for Determination of Applicability: Town Sidewalks West Main St, Lowell Rd, Peabody St

Applicant: Town of Groton, Representative: Tom Delaney, Department of Public Works Director and Brian Callahan.

T. Delaney proposed the construction of three sidewalks that are to be part of the Complete Street Projects. The proposed sidewalks are to be along West Main Street, Lowell Road, and Peabody Street. The sidewalks are to be 5 feet wide to allow for efficient snow removal. Erosion controls would be installed and any debris or dirt would be removed and immediately placed into a small pickup truck. After the asphalt is laid down, the disturbed areas would be loamed, and seeded. T. Delaney noted that there is a need for a pipe extension on Lowell Road and rip rap to create stabilization. He also said that a portion of the sidewalk on Peabody Street would not be constructed in the vicinity of the wetlands until a permanent solution is determined.

O. Lathrop questioned the process of dirt removal. T. Delaney stated that there would be no stockpiling; instead, the areas would be excavated and the dirt would be placed directly into a pickup truck. Erosion controls would be installed on both sides to prevent any environmental impacts. O. Lathrop sought assurance that the work would not encroach onto the Patricia Hallet Conservation Area.

E. McHugh inquired about the draft plans marked for review only. T. Delaney responded that the Department of Public Works would be managing the construction and that Nitsch Engineering would not be involved and had only prepared the draft plans.

C. Steeves mentioned that she had discussed with B. Callahan the idea of planting a native wildflower mix instead of the proposed grass.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by J. Smigelski, it was:

Voted to issue a Negative 3 Determination under the conditions: 1. Any seeded area is to be seeded with a native wildflower mix.

The motion passed unanimously. 6-0

T. Delaney informed the Commission that the Town has secured a grant to install a culvert at the bridge on Island Pond Road. He assured the Commission that the plans would allow for continued access for canoes and kayaks. Once received, they would promptly be forwarded to

the Commission. T. Delaney also informed the Commission that the work is to be conducted by Mass DOT.

2. GENERAL BUSINESS

General Updates from Administrator

Fitch's Bridge Rd updates

C. Steeves informed the Commission that the logs and silt fence have been removed from the parcel. T. Delaney has granted permission to utilize a town truck to transport any debris from the site and a burn permit has been obtained for burning any invasive species on the site if necessary. C. Steeves said that a licensed herbicide applicator would not be available on the scheduled restoration day; however, the Invasive Species Committee has provided the best methods to manage the invasive species. C. Steeves said that she would also be meeting with Charlotte Weigel, a member of the Invasive Species Committee next week to visit the site.

Request for Proposal- Survey and Title Search of Gilson CA

C. Steeves provided an update stating that she has requested three estimates. Unfortunately, David E. Ross Associates has declined to submit a proposal. C. Steeves noted that Attorney Bob Collins is involved with the title and would be following up.

GELD Invasive Species Letter

C. Steeves mentioned that she received a letter from Attorney Bob Collins prior to drafting the letter to GELD as requested by the Conservation Commission at the previous meeting. B. Collin's letter outlined ongoing herbicide treatments and the removal of invasive species. Kazanjian Horticultural has signed a contract to manage the property commencing this spring. O. Lathrop requested that notifications be submitted whenever invasive species management is conducted. In response, the Commission instructed the Conservation Administrator to request for notifications.

Committee Updates

Stewardship Quorum

E. McHugh requested that the Conservation Commission reduce the size of the 9 member Stewardship Committee to 7 members to ensure that a quorum can be met.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by O. Lathrop, it was:
Voted to lower the 9 member Stewardship Committee to a 7 member
Stewardship Committee.

The motion passed unanimously. 6-0

J. Smigelski provided an update stating that he is currently awaiting a response from Al Prescott regarding the Westford Sportsmen's Club.

B. Easom informed the Commission that the Sustainability Commission is sponsoring a complimentary tire drop-off event on Saturday, April 6, 2024, from 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM at the Transfer Station. Each Groton household can dispose of up to four automobile tires.

General Discussions/Announcements

Letter of Support Groton Lakes Association

The Commission reviewed and endorsed the letter of support for the Groton Lakes Association to submit to the 319 Nonpoint Source Grant.

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by J. Smigelski, it was:
Voted to provide a letter of support to the Mass DEP grant via the Groton Lakes Association.

The motion passed unanimously. 6-0

Site Walk Discussion

E. McHugh informed the Commission that Mark Haddad has requested that site walks be scheduled for weekdays rather than on Saturdays. The Commission discussed and agreed that Saturdays are the most optimal day for site walks to ensure that landowners are available for discussions.

Discuss Nod Road Vernal Pool

E. McHugh requested that the site be included in the list of site walks once permission is granted from the landowner.

Land Management & Acquisition

E. McHugh informed the Commission that L. Hurley has offered to assist in removing the truck from the Palmer land (Jack and Mary Allen Conservation Area). She also recommended that a survey of the land be conducted. O. Lathrop mentioned that the Conservation Trust has not yet initiated the conservation restriction for the Jack and Mary Allen Conservation Area.

Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by P. Morrison, seconded by B. Easom, it was:
Voted to approve the meeting minutes for March 12, 2024 as amended.
The motion passed unanimously. 6-0

Approve Invoices

Upon a motion by J. Smigelski, seconded by P. Morrison, it was:
Voted to reimburse Olin Lathrop for the MACC Conference attendance fee in the amount of \$150.00.

The motion passed. O. Lathrop- Recused 5-0

Upon a motion by J. Smigelski, seconded by P. Morrison, it was:
Voted to approve and pay the invoice from the Groton Herald in the amount of \$165.00.

The motion passed unanimously. 6-0

3. Open Session for topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of meeting*

4. Executive Session pursuant to MGL Ch. 30A, Sec. 21(6): * “To consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real estate, if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.”

Unnecessary

5. Adjournment

7:50 PM

Upon a motion by J. Smigelski, seconded by A. Hamilton, it was:
Voted to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed unanimously. 6-0

APPROVED: _____ 4/9/2024