

Exeter Conservation Commission
February 20th, 2019
Town Offices Nowak Room
Draft Minutes

Call To Order

1. Introduction of Members Present

Present at tonight's meeting were Bill Campbell, Ginny Raub, Todd Piskovitz, Lindsey White, Lucretia Ward, Alyson Eberhardt, Dave Short, Andy Weeks, Trevor Mattera, Don Clement, and Kristen Murphy. Sally Ward and Carlos Guindon were not present at the meeting. Mr. Campbell called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

2. Public Comment
 - a. There was no public comment.

Action items

1. Review of a NHDES Dredge and Fill Application for 15,425 sq ft. of wetland fill resulting from the construction of a Unitil Distribution & Operations Center at 20 Continental Drive, Tax Map Parcel #46-3 and associated mitigation *Brendan Quigley (GES Inc.)*

Jim Petropulos of Hayner-Swanson spoke about the Unitil project. This is a 10 acre site off of 20 Continental Drive, an L-Shaped lot behind FW Webb in the Garrison Glen Corporate Park. There are 7 usable acres and 4 acres of wetlands. The building's parking and site storage were designed to minimize wetland impacts, but 15,415 square feet of wetlands will be affected. The Conservation Commission had a sitewalk in early December, then heard a presentation at the December 11th meeting, where there was a unanimous vote of no objection for the Conditional Use permit. Now the project is looking for a recommendation to the state of NH on a Dredge and Fill Application.

Mr. Campbell said there are six areas of wetland fill along the edge, plus one in the middle that they're most concerned with. This central area serves to catch the water from the area. Over two acres will be solid/impervious at the site.

Mr. Campbell said he would like to go through the 20 standard questions for a Dredge and Fill permit.

Mr. Quigley addressed each of the questions. 1) The need for the proposed impact: the need for the project has been well established, the location and the use are a good fit. 2) That the alternative proposed by the applicant is the one with the least impact to wetlands: The proposed use requires the large contiguous area. The only way to fit this on the site was to centrally locate. They're not using their frontage on Continental Drive, where there are more wetlands, for the entrance. 3) Type and classification of the wetlands involved: Seasonally saturated forested wetlands, PFO1E, consisting of marginal red Maple forest on dense glacial till soils. Ms. Eberhardt asked whether marginal meant "on the margins of the Little River" or

“low quality”. Mr. Quigley responded that marginal is “marginally wet,” consisting of poorly drained area with an inch or two of soil.

Mr. Quigley addressed 4) The relationship of the proposed wetlands to be impacted relative to nearby wetlands: This area is ultimately part of the Little River wetland complex but different than the shrub thickets and deep organic soils at the Little River. They’re associated but not closely. Mr. Petropulos pointed out that the area is 1,500 feet from Little River.

Mr. Quigley said regarding 5) The rarity of the wetland: The question is asking whether this is a peat bog or salt marsh or some outstanding New Hampshire wetland, but this is quite a common type of wetland. 6) The surface area of the wetlands impacted: 15,425 square feet. 7) The impact on rare, threatened, or endangered species: As part of every project there is a correspondence with the Natural Heritage Bureau and Fish and Game. There is potential for a rare plant or a rare Swamp white oak basin swamp, but neither are present on site. 8) The impact on public commerce, navigation, and recreation: Generally projects of this nature have a positive impact on commerce with the increased tax base and support of local jobs. Supporting the resilience of the power system is critical to public commerce. 9) Extent that the project interferes with the aesthetic interest of the public: This project fits with the rest of the development in this area, which is an industrial park. 10) Interferes with public rights of passage: This is private property in an industrial park. 11) Impact to abutting property owners: they’re not impacting any neighbors. Mr. Petropulos presented a letter from FW Webb in support of the project.

Mr. Quigley said regarding 12) Benefit to health, safety, and wellbeing of the general public: Having a facility that is intended to support and restore the electrical grid is a benefit to public safety. 13) The impact of a proposed project on quantity or quality of surface and groundwater: The drainage systems comply with a set of standards for the AOT permit which will ensure that they will not be affecting the amount or quality of runoff. Ms. Eberhardt asked how they know that, and Mr. Quigley said there is extensive research used by AOT. Ms. Murphy said the town requires all applicants to run a stormwater model on pre and post conditions, looking at water quality and volume and how the curve changes over time. The Conservation Commission doesn’t review that because it’s done by the TRC [Technical Review Committee] and Underwood Engineers. Mr. Clement said under MS4 they have to comply. Ms. Murphy said that they are required as a town to track whether they’re causing an increase in nitrogen. Ms. Eberhardt asked about managing the stormwater system to ensure it’s functioning properly. Mr. Petropulos said there will be regular inspections and post storm event inspections. Ms. Murphy added that there’s an agreement between the town and the landowner to provide reports on complying with the stormwater maintenance procedures.

Mr. Quigley said regarding 14) The potential of a proposed project to cause or increase flooding, erosion, or sedimentation: This is a construction best management question, also reviewed by AOT at the state level for proper erosion control. 15) Redirecting water, current and wave energy: This does not apply. 16) Cumulative impacts: This looks at the size of the wetlands and the result if all abutting owners were to carry out the same impacts. In this case, this is a large wetland system extending beyond Little River and the conservation area, so the relative size of the impacts is small. 17) The impact of the proposed project on the values and function of the total wetland complex: This is about water quality and habitat function, which here is more related to these areas being forested than being wetlands. The more significant

wetland habitats and functions are closer to the river. The habitat is already diminished by proximity to other developments.

Mr. Campbell pointed out that there was a separate Wetlands Function and Value evaluation form filled out by Mr. Quigley. Mr. Quigley added that this is part of a federal method called Highway Methodology, which is required for these applications. It's difficult to apply to small impact areas, since it's designed for the siting of large federal projects such as highways. This evaluation separates out Area G at the center of the site. Mr. Campbell speculated that this central wetland area was actually created by a road or staging area for logging. Mr. Quigley agreed that was possible, and added that the area is dry by early May, which is too short a period to serve as a development area for vernal species.

Mr. Quigley continued with 18) National Register of Historical Landmarks: None; 19) Impact on the value of areas named in acts of Congress or Presidential proclamations: Not applicable; and 20) Redirection of water between watersheds: Nothing of that nature.

Mr. Campbell moved on to the discussion of mitigation, saying that there will be a contribution of \$77,765.81 to the Aquatic Resources Mitigation fund. Mr. Petropulos said there are other mitigation options, such as conservation or preservation, but they're not possible on this site. To create a more meaningful wetland on this site, they'd have to obliterate existing wetlands. They considered local projects, such as grading and engineering improvements to a portion of the golf course. However, they took that idea to the state of NH and they said it was not really appropriate, since it may never be built. Mr. Campbell said there's nothing shovel-ready, but he wondered if they have time to come up with something. Mr. Petropulos said this April is the intended start date, so they would need to react within that time frame.

Mr. Clement asked what triggered mitigation; Mr. Petropulos said any impact over 10,000 square feet. He added that the state builds the Aquatics Resource Mitigation [ARM] fund to find a project hopefully near the area. Ms. Raub pointed out that Exeter received \$150,000 in ARM money when they did the dam removal. Mr. Koff said they should write this check and the state will find a good use for the money. The town can develop an engineering plan for this project for next time. Ms. Murphy said they plan to identify a list of mitigation opportunities and have it vetted by the state so they have something ready the next time.

Mr. Mattera said that ARM does a good job in the region. The money is not just reactive, they could proactively apply for ARM funds if they have projects ready. Ms. Eberhardt said that the grants prioritize a similar type and locality of wetlands as the project the mitigation fee came from. Mr. Mattera said regarding the resiliency project at the golf course, the plans are required to be in place unless you can wrap design into implementation, but Mr. Piskovitz said without design you don't know what it will cost. Mr. Campbell suggested they do the design on their own and apply for funding.

Mr. Campbell said that the options for a motion are to not object to the project as proposed, or to recommend its approval or denial. Ms. White said she would not be voting; Mr. Mattera agreed to vote.

MOTION: Ms. Raub moved that they send a letter to NHDES stating that they do not object to the project as proposed. Mr. Mattera seconded. All were in favor.

2. Annual Planning Dashboard

Mr. Campbell presented a planning dashboard for Conservation Commission projects and asked for comments. Ms. Eberhardt suggested adding a column that connects each item to the Master Plan. Mr. Koff suggested also adding a more intuitive category for each item, such as outreach or trail management.

3. LCHIP Follow Up Meeting

Mr. Campbell said that he, Ms. Murphy, and Ms. Raub talked to Dijit Taylor and George Borne of the LCHIP staff regarding the grant Exeter didn't get, and the staff members were encouraging. He asked if the board wants to apply again this year. Ms. Murphy said they got the feedback that they need to sell the use of the property better. She wondered whether they should resubmit the application this year or build the use track record, for example by following Don Brizledon's suggestion of a Conservation Center at Raynes Farm. Ms. Raub suggested they work up to the deadline and see what happens, but Mr. Campbell said that the deadline is coming up soon and they have to give Ms. Murphy plenty of time to create the application. Ms. Murphy added that activities at Raynes don't occur during the growing season, so there's not much time to refine the use before the application.

Mr. Clement asked if there is a vision on utilization of the barn. Ms. Murphy said that when they updated the Raynes management plan, it was described as an educational center related to agriculture and natural resources, but LCHIP wanted to see evidence of it being used this way, as well as how the public responds. This year, they improved the parking area along the stone wall, so they could show that they made that improvement and made use of it. Mr. Campbell said that the 4th grade talks about NH history, so there could be a field trip there. LCHIP liked the connection with the schools. They wanted more on the history of the area.

Ms. Eberhardt suggested they not reapply this year, but work on increasing the usability of the site. Mr. Koff said there's not a great track record of recent events there. Solving the parking would be a major benefit to the site. He'd like to see other people organizing and getting the word out about events, since the Commission's time is limited. Ms. Murphy said the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee recently had a brainstorming session for activities. Ms. Eberhardt suggested a public survey about the use of Raynes Farm property; public input would create awareness, broaden ideas, and might look good to LCHIP.

Ms. Raub asked if they have funds for minor repairs. Mr. Campbell said there will be \$1,000 in the building maintenance account if the budget passes. Ms. Murphy said there is a culvert that runs under the stone wall which is a problem spot if used as a parking area, and it should be addressed.

Mr. Campbell asked if they would prefer to wait a year to reapply for the LCHIP grant, and the consensus was to wait.

4. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

i. Raynes Farm Use agreement & RFSC meeting

Mr. Campbell said that the Conservation Commission approved the application form at the last meeting, but at the RFSC meeting Don Briselden suggested adding a line saying "Any of these regulations can be waived by the Conservation Commission upon written justification" at the end of section B. Mr. Piskovitz said someone should identify which items can be waived,

not say that any can be waived. Mr. Campbell suggested they leave it like it is and revisit it later. Mr. Koff suggested “certain regulations may be waived.” Mr. Short said it’s a true statement, any of them may be waived, so they should add that.

MOTION: Mr. Short moved to add the suggested line “Any of these regulations can be waived by the Conservation Commission upon written justification” to the application. Ms. Raub seconded. All were in favor.

b. Trails

i. Trail Sign Estimates

Mr. Campbell said the trail signs will be ready soon, and they are renumbering some of the junctions in the woods.

ii. Plantings

Mr. Campbell asked about doing plantings in the Henderson-Swasey Town Forest. Students from the Academy could do planting or other projects. His perception was that red pine and hazelnut did well but the bushes weren’t making it, so he’s leaning towards planting more trees. Mr. Short was concerned whether the seedlings could get ahead or stay ahead of existing brush; he wants to give it a year to see if they can stay ahead. The consensus was that they hold off on plantings for a year.

c. Outreach Events

i. Feb 16 Snowshoe @ Irvine

Mr. Campbell thanked members of the Commission for their efforts on the successful snowshoe event.

ii. SST Clean Up, Early April

Ms. Murphy said that she had reached out to Anne DeMarco at SST regarding a cleanup of the Morrissette property. Ms. DeMarco said that early April would work, and asked for four dates to choose from. The times also need to be determined. Ms. Murphy got Public Works to agree to pick up and dispose of the trash. Several commission members offered to help with the event.

iii. PEA Kids April 26th Tasks

Mr. Campbell asked for suggestions about what the PEA students could do now that they’re not planting, and suggested light trail maintenance like picking up brush. Ms. Eberhardt suggested invasive removal but Mr. Campbell is concerned that Mr. Guindon may not be back in time.

iv. Update on Cottontail Training

Ms. Murphy said that the state had their event for Citizen scientists to look at distribution of the endangered Eastern Cottontail. Several people attended the training, including five people from Exeter.

5. Treasurers Report, Drew Koff

Mr. Campbell presented the Treasurer's Report and said that they didn't spend all of their monies. Mr. Koff added that the remainder is mostly leftover from not having interns. Ms. Murphy said they did a better job of spending the allocated budget than in the past.

MOTION: Mr. Piskovitz moved to accept the Treasurers Report. Ms. Eberhardt seconded. All were in favor.

MOTION: Mr. Koff moved to reimburse himself \$15 in hot chocolate expenses from the Snowshoe Event. Mr. Piskovitz seconded. All were in favor.

6. Approval of Minutes: January 8th meeting

MOTION: Ms. Raub moved to approve the draft minutes for January 8th, 2019 as written. Mr. Short seconded. Mr. Piskovitz abstained and the minutes were approved 6-0-1.

7. Correspondence

- a. A letter from the Exeter Lions Club, regarding a \$100 donation from David Atwood. Mr. Atwood would like it to cover Water and chemical mitigation. Ms. Murphy will follow up with Mr. Atwood and suggest a similar category, such as the water testing program.
- b. A phone call regarding trees down at McDonnell Conservation area. Mr. Piskovitz said he did an inspection in early February and saw extensive beaver activity that he didn't see last year, although no lodge or dam on the river. He didn't see trees across trails. Mr. Short will take a walk out there.
- c. Several notifications of events: a Film Festival at Exeter Inn this weekend. A workshop called Nature Economy, selling the value of conservation lands to the public. A social science workshop on March 14th, "Saving Special Places." A Conservation Roundtable on Feb 26th in Hampton.

8. Other Business

- a. There was no other business considered.

9. Next Meeting

- a. Date Scheduled 3/12/19, Submission Deadline 3/1/19

Mr. Campbell said that the next meeting falls on Election Day, where he will be working all day. He asked that they change it to Wednesday March 13th. There were at least five members of the Commission definitely able to attend.

Non-Public Session

Non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d) for the consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property.

MOTION: Mr. Short moved to go into non-public session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3, II(d) for the consideration of the acquisition, sale, or lease of real or personal property. Ms. Eberhardt seconded. By a roll call vote, all were in favor.

Public session resumed at 9:36 pm. Andrew Koff made a motion to seal the minutes, seconded by Dave Short. All were in favor.

Adjournment

9:36 pm Bill Campbell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Dave Short. All were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Joanna Bartell
Recording Secretary