

Exeter Conservation Commission
August 11, 2020
Virtual Meeting
Draft Minutes

Call to Order

1. Introduction of Members Present (by Roll Call)

Present at tonight's meeting were by roll call, Chair Andrew Koff, Vice-Chair Trevor Mattera Sally Ward, Clerk, Bill Campbell, Carlos Guindon, Ginny Raub, Julie Gilman (Select Board Liaison), Donald Clement, (Alternate) and Kristen Murphy, Natural Resource Planner.

Members present indicated there was no one else present in the room with them during this meeting.

Absent: Dave Short, Treasurer, Alyson Eberhardt, Lindsey White (Alternate), Nick Campion (Alternate), and Kristen Osterwood (Alternate), Daryl Browne, Select Board Alternate Liaison

Mr. Koff called the meeting to order at 7 PM.

Mr. Koff read the meeting preamble indicated that an emergency exists and the provisions of RSA 91-A:2 III (b) are being invoked. As federal, state and local officials have determined gatherings of ten or more people pose a substantial risk to the community and the meeting imperative to the continued operation of Town and government and services which are vital to public, health, safety and confidence. This meeting will be conducted without a quorum physically present in the same location and welcome members of the public accessing the meeting remotely.

2. Public Comment

None.

Action Items

1. Wetland Conditional Use Permit application from Phillips Exeter Academy to construct a new dormitory in the approximate location of the existing Fisher Theater (Tax Map 72/209).

Mark Leighton presented the proposal which includes demolishing the Fisher Theater which he indicated was being used for storage, to build a dormitory. PEA needs a new dormitory. PEA will keep the same number of students but as dorms are improved, code upgrades have caused a reduction in number of available beds. They also plan to convert the smaller dormitories to other uses. After looking at many locations on campus, a location adjacent to two other dormitories seems to make a good community. PEA is doing some fundraising.

Mr. Campbell asked what makes up a dormitory? Mr. Leighton indicated they are planning for doubles but have other options they are looking at.

Corey Belden noted Fisher Theater is currently setback into the wetland buffer area. Plan to follow a similar footprint, not encroaching into the wetland more. The proposed plan is slightly increasing the building area within the setback.

Mr. Belden indicated there will be three stormwater galleries for infiltration, collecting roof runoff and all stormwater for pretreatment and treatment for impervious areas. Using coarse materials for walkway. 1,075' of reduced impervious surface in buffer as result of this project.

Mr. Belden reviewed the criteria for the CUP application. The property is in the R-2 zoning district. They are going to the ZBA to confirm special exception for non-conforming use. Utilities service where the existing building is. Just replacing that building and will not encroach further. Wetland scientist did functional value assessment and determined it would not have its functional value changed. Improving current conditions. No direct impacts to wetlands on site. Treatment will be provided. Will be additional plantings in buffer. All required permits will be obtained. No permits required by DES. Only pollution prevention plan required. Had discussions on snow removal on parking lot. Will comply with snow disposal guidelines. Use salt and de-icing to manage parking areas. PEA typically uses environmentally sensitive de-icing agent. In large scale storms snow will be dropped over a retaining wall. Will not be completely untreated.

Jeff Clifford stated part of the guidelines is to do post melt cleanup. Going to talk to DES about expanding on their guidelines some more.

Mr. Belden noted a 2-3' separation from property line from the retaining wall. Don't anticipate anyone using that for walking.

Mr. Campbell asked if work was done in the wetland area when the science building was in? The area is overgrown and seeing some invasives. Mr. Leighton noted the area has been cleaned up quite a bit. Agreeable to doing more in that area.

Mr. Campbell asked about the three maples on the front side, whether they will be removed? Kyle Zick indicated an arborist looked at them. Two of three have rot and structural issues so we can't keep them.

Mr. Guidon noted he agreed the invasives should be removed. Like what was done around science building when it went in.

Mr. Clement indicated a study was done in this area on watershed and drainage. Don't want to accelerate drainage problems. Effective in eliminating nitrogen?

Mr. Clifford indicated infiltrating water is effective in removing nitrogen. Observations show its not a large watershed. Are much bigger watersheds that contribute to problem. Able to reduce peak runoff rate. Vast improvement of what's there now.

Mr. Campbell asked how the building would be heated? Mr. Leighton indicated it would be geothermal. Steam as a backup source. Air conditioning in academic space. Ms. Taylor noted it would go out front.

Mr. Koff asked for comments about the invasive species. Mr. Hurley indicated there are a lot of invasives along the stream area. Looked at some Bittersweet and Buckthorn. Think a lot of it can be removed. Management plan has to be in place after removal. Ms. Ward noted working on invasives was important. Is a big improvement on what's already there. Mr. Leighton noted they can include that process in the project.

Vice-Chair Mattera indicated he was pleased to see the reduction in impervious surface. Is a proponent of redevelopment sites.

Mr. Koff noted maintenance will be key in this with snow storage. Believe stream restoration is out of our purview here.

Mr. Leighton indicated there will probably be a requirement for Site Plan Review with the Planning Board. Mr. Clifford added the they recently submitted to the Planning Board and covers the management plans. Mr. Clement indicated he would like to reference invasive removal management plan as a condition.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell motioned to recommend approval of the Conditional Use Permit with the condition that the invasive removal management plan be referenced. Ms. Ward seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Koff – aye, Ward – aye, Campbell – aye, Guindon – aye, Raub – aye, Clement – aye, and Mattera - aye Motion passed 7-0-0.

2. Garrison Ln Gravel Pull Out on REDC Conservation Parcel

Ms. Murphy indicated Public Works is responsible for plowing Garrison Lane. In the past they would take advantage of the driveway at the end. Reached out about putting in a gravel drive. There are three living trees and one dying which would be removed. Area is in Conservation Land. Nothing prohibits gravel trail/lot. Did not appear to be wetlands there. Public Works would handle labor and funding.

Mr. Campbell noted it would be a great addition.

Ms. Ward noted tree removal is not a big problem. The only issue may be the one house down there.

Ms. Murphy indicated they have staked out how deep the gravel would go.

Mr. Koff noted there has been a lot of activity there lately. At some point the bridge will need work. There is a chain up but people try to drive through. The trailhead could use a bit more work.

Mr. Guindon agreed and noted the entrance to the trailhead is a wetland. It is possible to put a few boulders at the entrance of that road so people don't drive all the way through.

Mr. Clement noted he sees it more of a turnaround than promoted parking. Still exists as a Class VI road. Take a look at it before try to close it off. Mr. Campbell agreed should check.

Ms. Murphy indicated it was abandoned by Town Meeting a few years ago. Still used as an access way for maintenance. Not sure if should do boulders. Gate would be a bigger expense.

MOTION: Ms. Ward motioned to not object to a gravel area as proposed. Mr. Campbell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Koff – aye, Ward – aye, Campbell – aye, Guindon – aye, Raub – aye, Clement – aye, and Mattera - aye Motion passed 7-0-0.

Mr. Campbell asked if the grassy area was clear. Mr. Koff noted it is fairly dry at the moment. Not sure it needs to be cleared.

3. 2021 Budget Submission

Ms. Murphy noted last year the amount was increased for education and training. The budget is due at the end of the month. Adjustments need to be made before then, if any.

Mr. Campbell asked if there was any reduction due to the pandemic this year? Ms. Murphy noted yes, \$10,639 is what's proposed as were asked to present level funded budget.

Mr. Koff asked if anything should change from 2020? Ms. Murphy noted decreased community services. Anticipate using more educational opportunities? Ms. Ward indicated she didn't think so. Submit what had for 2020. Ms. Murphy noted she only filled in for minutes and interns for now. The rest must be decided on.

Mr. Clement noted the bottom line is what is approved. Can change amounts after budget as long as don't exceed. May need more for maintenance of trails? Mr. Koff recommended shifting some from training into trail maintenance.

Ms. Gilman noted it was still preliminary. There is still time to reconsider. No limit set yet by Select Board.

Vice-Chair Mattera was in favor of shifting the training and education to trail maintenance and leaving the remainder the same. Mr. Guindon agreed.

4. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

Ms. Ward not a few things at Raynes Farm. Looked at cutting a break around the perimeter. Had been cut around cemetery already. Stewardship meeting is in September. Will discuss intention to apply for LCHIP.

Mr. Guindon went out and discovered rogue trails that extended to easement. Worked on getting those closed. Moved encroachment of abutter. Spoke with owner and he will work will us on removing material from boundary. Designed new discs for easement. Indicates that it is an easement. Smith Page is having a loop trail. A volunteer is working on something. Trail looks great. Can access through Academy woods.

Mr. Campbell noted there are two areas that need bridges but not right now because it is so dry.

b. Trails

c. Outreach Events

Ms. Murphy noted the Sky watch event is still in October.

Ms. Ward noted the Tree Committee is working with a group to plant three memorial trees at Park Street Common. Funds have been donated.

Vice-Chair Mattera there is a virtual workshop in Concord on climate resources.

5. Approval of Minutes: July 14, 2020

Edits were recommended.

MOTION: Mr. Campbell motioned to accept the July 14, 2020 minutes as amended. Ms. Ward seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken Koff – aye, Ward – aye, Campbell – aye, Guindon – aye, Raub – aye, Clement – aye, Mattera (abstain). Motion passed 6-0-1.

6. Correspondence

a. Stone Leighton Mowing

Ms. Murphy indicated she heard back from Marstons. Said property was too wet. Field flooded and is a beaver dam. Ms. Murphy indicated neither of the locations she walked were wet but she didn't walk the whole thing. If the Marstons don't want to hay anymore would you want to open it up to someone else or put it off a year?

Mr. Clement noted he didn't see how the field could be too wet. Needs to be managed. Would support trying to find somebody to mow this year.

Ms. Raub asked about the language used on that property. Looked at a community garden there before. Mrs. Marson claims was told she should mow the property. Thin it needs to be mowed this year. Mentioned getting lease agreement.

Ms. Murphy noted the handshake agreement that allowed the Stone family to mow every year, then stopped mowing. Think a lease agreement should be signed. Mr. Guindon noted it didn't look that bad, could go either way on it.

Ms. Ward agreed. Surprised someone said it was too wet because its always been dry.

Mr. Campbell and Mr. Koff agreed it should get mowed. Mr. Clement would like to have someone evaluate the field's condition first. Ms. Murphy indicated she made it clear to the Marstons that if they didn't hay it would get someone else. They said it was dammed up.

Ms. Ward indicated they could be given the opportunity to do again if they're interested and then make the call. Ms. Murphy will reach back out and asked if she could look for others if the Marstons aren't interested.

Ms. Gilman noted there could be a site walk.

Mr. Koff noted forest encroachment on the borders may become an issue in the future.

7. Other Business

8. Next Meeting: Date Scheduled: September 8, 2020, Submission Deadline: August 28, 2020.

Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Campbell moved to adjourn at 9:13 PM. Ms. Ward seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Hoijer, Recording Secretary