

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
September 21, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Byron Quinn, Al Alessi, Lynn Peterson, Lea Kachadorian
MEMBERS ABSENT: Vacancy, Cyndy Kozara, Bethany Powers
OTHERS PRESENT: Bo Gibbs, Daisy Jacobs, Chris Higgins, Jason Drebber, Alden Krawczyk, Phyllis Arata-Meyers, Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

Chair Quinn opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

II. MINUTES

The minutes of July 20, 2016 were approved as submitted.

III. APPLICATIONS

A. T-4696-16 Birch Hill Farm Investments Inc.

The application is for Conditional Use Approval to construct 593 square foot non-residential studio in the Scenic Ridgeline Overlay Zone. The property is located at 255 The Loop Road and is zoned Residential Five Acre / Scenic Ridgeline.

Ms. Jacobs and Mr. Higgins presented the application.

The CC reviewed site plan, photographs and a set of building plans.

The applicant wishes to replace an older single story barn with a slightly larger and more modern structure. The building contains a studio space.

The site is located within the Scenic Ridgeline which requires a recommendation from the CC and a Conditional Use review from the TDRB.

The proposed building (593 square feet) is more than 25% larger than the existing building (420 square feet).

The site would be served by underground electric wires.

There is no road to the building, it is accessed by walking across a meadow.

The former building was built on piers. The proposed building would have a concrete slab with foundation walls which would be placed 15 inches into the ground.

The current structure is placed very close to a small grove of mature pine. Due to the foundation, the location may have to move north slightly to avoid the tree roots.

The structure would have a flat roof and therefore lower profile (- 4.3 feet) than the current building which has a pitched roof.

The flat roof is designed to drain to a pipe located at the center of the building.

The CC questioned whether this is an appropriate design considering the snow load factor.

A Trumbell-Nelson engineer has been consulted on the design.

It was noted the Loop Road has very little traffic.

The building would be hidden by the large pines and would not be visible from the town road.

The building is placed on the south edge of the Scenic Ridgeline area and would not be visible from any northern view points.

After discussion, Mr. Alessi with a second by Mr. Peterson motioned to recommend approval as presented.

The recommendation was decided by a 3-1 vote. Ms. Kachadorian voted against due to structural concerns of the flat roof design.

Additionally, on an informal basis, the applicant asked about relocating the existing building to another site on the property. The owners prefer to use the building as a beach house without water service by transferring the building to the southeast corner of an existing pond.

An issue with the relocation, is the pond as a water bearing element is considered a wetland, which in turn has a 100' buffer zone. A map and photographs of the area were shown.

The southeast area around the pond is not a wetland and a small portion is a sandy beach. There are cattails along the northwest side of the pond.

Placement of the building as requested would require a Conditional Use application for a wetland buffer review.

B. V-3253-16 Woodstock Associates / Change the World Kids

The application is for Conditional Use and Design Review approval to place access path within the riparian buffer. The property is located at 54 River Street and is zoned Community / Design Review / Flood Hazard.

Change the World Kids, Jason Drebber and Alden Krawczyk, presented the application.

The CC reviewed a site plan and a number of photographs.

The proposed path is located within the 100' riparian buffer which requires a Conditional Use permit and review by the CC.

The intent is to provide improved access from the Recreation Center to a small beach along the Ottauquechee River. The current pathway is straight down a steep and rocky bank, making access difficult for most people. There is no intent to provide handicap access.

The current path would be replaced with two switch backs. This would lengthen the path and reduce steepness. There would be very little removal of vegetation, just a few shrubs and lesser plants. No trees would be removed.

No materials would be added to the site. Some rocks may be realigned to support the path. By substantially decreasing the slope, current and potential erosion are reduced.

The applicant has received approval from Todd Menees, the State River Management Engineer. The applicant is hoping to obtain the zoning permit before finalizing approval with the property owner, Woodstock Associates.

The VDRB reviewed Section 403 A.1. Riparian Water Quality and finds that the path meets the Standards for Review. The VDRB asked that the project be reviewed by the CC.

After discussion, Ms. Kachadorian with a second by Mr. Alessi, moved to recommend approval of the project as presented. The motion was approved with a 4-0 vote.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Town/Village Plan Update

The 2016 Town/Village Plan has been reviewed and approved by the Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission. The Town Planner distributed inserts for the newly approved plan. The Planning Commission would like to add a section on Alternative Energy Siting possibly in 2017.

B. Town Zoning Update

The Select Board adopted the residential density calculations which are to be added to

each zoning district in Article III of the Town Zoning Regulations. The PC will send around a list of amendments for 2016 Town Zoning Regulation rewrite. These would be reviewed at the October CC meeting.

C. Wetland and Riparian Permit Updates

The Town Planner noted Mr. Maggi's application to place a large barn/garage in a wetland buffer has been withdrawn. The property has been sold.

The Meadow Ridge Farm LLC application is on hold. The Town Planner read a letter from the State Wetland official, Rebecca Chalmers, that asked the applicant to supply reasons why a gate or other entrance control system does not work. The State asked that the 1100' long driveway, constructed without permit within the wetland buffer, be removed.

The Levin property on Noah Wood Road is currently being regraded with topsoil and grass will be planted to recreate the lawn. The owner had added, without permit, soil material within the 50' riparian buffer from an excavation site located across the road. No trees or shrubs were removed in the process.

D. Four Corners Update

The Town Planner did a quick review of the Four Corners area of Woodstock, Reading, Bridgewater and Plymouth, mainly Curtis Hollow and Mecawee Road properties. The current zoning in the Woodstock portion is a mix of the 28 acre Forestry and Residential Five Acre districts. The intent is to work with the neighboring towns to maintain or enhance wildlife corridor areas.

E. Vacancy

Lina Histrova submitted her resignation from the CC. She is unable to attend meetings due to a conflictive work schedule.

Bo Gibbs noted interest in becoming a member of the CC. She was an original member at the time the CC was formed in April of 1989. She asked what the CC did in addition to making recommendations for Scenic Ridgeline, Riparian Buffer and Wetland/Vernal Pool applications. The CC discussed invasive plant work. A couple of documents produced by Mike Bald, Invasive Plant Specialist, were distributed to the CC. The Four Corners habitat corridor and solar farm/alternative energy sitings were discussed. Ms. Gibbs mentioned a Village Tree Plan compiled by Bob White and Roy Thomas in the mid 1990's. She felt the document should be kept up to date. She stated she would think about submitting her name and will inform the Town Planner.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

The Town Planner showed the CC a map of the 4 clustered vernal pools at the top of

Mt. Peg. The Woodstock Resort Corporation has started a system of mountain bike trails that include and extend beyond those of the existing cross country ski trails. A section of the trails run right along the edge of the vernal pools. In addition, the trails cross an amphibian life zone as the vernal pools are within 1500' of a wetland located just off Hartland Hill Road. An application is expected for review in October.

VI. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for October 19, 2016.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner