

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
DRAFT MINUTES
January 20, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Byron Quinn, Cyndy Kozara, Al Alessi, Lynn Peterson, Bethany Powers
MEMBERS ABSENT: Lea Kachadorian, One Vacancy
OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Maggi, Jan Maggi, Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

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

II. MINUTES

The minutes of December 19, 2015 were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. T-4623-15 Paul & Jan Maggi

Application is for Conditional Use and Wetland Review approval to replace existing 1771 sq. ft. garage with 3400 sq. ft. garage and to change driveway within Conservation Overlay Zone. The property is located at 938 South Road and is zoned Residential Five Acre / Wetland.

Mr. Maggi presented the application.

At the end of the last meeting, the Commission recommended that the site plan be redesigned to reduce the amount of impervious surface and that a drainage system be designed that adequately addresses storm water runoff.

To aid in reduction of the impervious surface the CC suggested three items: 1. the driveway be surfaced with hardpack, 2. a hammerhead (T) cul-de-sac be placed at the top of the driveway to reduce unnecessary asphalt, and 3. placement of grass over gravel surface for areas of lesser use, such as the trailer entrance.

To address the drainage system design issues, the CC suggested the use of rain garden technology and lining the edges of paved surfaces with crushed stone. Reducing impervious surface area is the best method to reduce the need for stormwater treatment.

Mr. Maggi submitted a new site plan that included only one change, the placement of a rain garden to absorb stormwater runoff from the proposed garage. The rain garden design did not have details nor dimensions.

Mr. Maggi started his presentation with a statement indicating that the property's current condition does not appear to have a problem with stormwater runoff or with the neighboring wetland. As a property owner it is his duty to maintain the current state as is and that he should not be forced to improve upon the overall condition of the property.

Mr. Alessi responded that if the property had been developed today all buildings would have met the 100' wetland buffer requirements and all successive work would have been required to so as well.

Mr. Maggi then discussed his research on rain gardens. At the Town Planner's suggestion, he downloaded the Vermont Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) brochure from the Agency of Natural Resources website. He was very impressed with how simple and effective rain gardens can be. He calculated that an 8' x 20' rain garden would handle the storm water generated by the proposed 1672 square foot footprint of the garage. There were no specific dimensions or design for the rain garden. A series of smaller rain gardens may be required to serve the intended purpose due to topography issues.

Currently, there is 3675 sf of existing impervious area which includes the driveway, parking area and barn/garage. The removal of the barn, relocation of the driveway and placement of parking areas at the top of the driveway would be the same square footage as the existing impervious area.

The proposed three bay garage would have a 1672 square feet footprint. Mr. Maggi intends to run all runoff through the proposed rain garden. Eave gutters would collect water which would then be piped underground to the rain garden.

In a discussion of the driveway, Mr. Maggi rejects the Commission's recommendation to use a hardpack surface. He prefers an asphalt surface that would provide for easier maintenance.

After lengthy discussion, the applicant agreed to slope the driveway towards the north and to line the driveway edges with crushed stone to both slow water movement and to filter sediment. Mr. Quinn suggested a slight slope of 1/8th" per foot would provide adequate flow.

The portion of the driveway located within the State's right of way would be built to meet State access standards, although it is not being relocated. The driveway at this section would shed water equally north and south. At this point, the driveway is just feet away from the wetland boundary.

The Town Planner suggested leaving the driveway as is. The proposed plan reduces the lawn area buffer from the wetland. This is especially true for the upper portion of the driveway. This area is steeper and would receive the full impact of the parking area stormwater.

The applicant prefers a safer driveway. Lengthening the driveway decreases the slope. The longer driveway also provides more maneuver room for his RV trailer at the top of the driveway.

The parking area at the top of the driveway was discussed. Mr. Maggi did not want to reduce the asphalt area of the approximately 40' x 45' parking area. The entire parking area would be excavated into the hill side to minus four feet at the front of the garage.

At the December meeting, the Town Planner suggested that as the trailer is used only a few times a year, relocating the trailer bay to the south end of the garage could significantly reduce asphalt. The area directly in front of the trailer bay could be surfaced with a grass over gravel combination that creates a pervious surface (grass) with structural support (gravel) underneath. This concept has worked well at the Billings Farm and Museum.

Mr. Maggi did not want to change the aesthetics of the garage. The trailer requires a wider door, which is currently centered on the design.

Another suggestion made in December was to house the trailer off site when not in use.

Chair Quinn questioned how the trailer would be maneuvered to enter the center bay. The trailer is 28' long and the truck is 20' long. The paved area directly in front of the proposed garage is only 40' long.

Mr. Maggi stated the truck would tow the trailer to a location just north of the center bay. The truck would drive up a short distance up the unpaved driveway that serves the rearmost building. A tractor would then be used to back the trailer into the garage.

The Town Planner questioned how and where the rain garden would be placed. The area proposed for the rain garden is somewhat steep and is not a flat surface like that recommended in the GSI brochure.

At the moment the rain garden is a concept. Details need to be worked out. Mr. Maggi used the GSI brochure to do a rough calculation based on his garage footprint. Due to the location, south of the garage, a series of terraced rain gardens may be needed.

The CC agreed an engineers input would be needed to design and place an appropriate rain garden.

Ms. Kozara reiterated the Conservation Commission's three recommendations made on December 16, 2014: 1. the driveway should have a hardpack surface, 2. a grass over

gravel surface to reduce impervious areas on the upper parking area especially where the RV trailer would move, and 3. a hammerhead (T) cul-de-sac at top of driveway should be used to reduce impervious surface. The applicant has rejected all three recommendations.

After lengthy discussion, Mr. Alessi motioned with a second by Mr. Peterson to recommend the following: 1. the driveway would slope to the north with at least an 1/8" to 12" grade, 2. the edge of the driveway would be lined with crushed stone, and 3. rain gardens sufficient to absorb stormwater runoff from the proposed garage shall be placed. The rain garden design and placement shall be prepared by an engineer.

B. Town Zoning Rewrite

1. Wetland - Unverified Vernal Pools

On Tuesday evening, the Selectboard approved a minor set of amendments to the Wetlands regulations. The amendments clarify the review process and add a number of criteria for review purposes. The amendments become effective 21 days after adoption.

The Planning Commission is currently rewriting the Town Zoning Regulations and would like to accomplish the process by June. If the CC has additional changes or areas of concern, they should inform the PC as soon as possible.

The Town Planner noted the Center for Eco Studies which conducted a vernal pool identification workshop last May has found +/- 23 additional vernal pools in Woodstock. The pools have not yet been verified, which is a costly process. Instead, the unverified vernal pools will be added to the Critical Areas Inventory map. Language would be added which would include review of these areas. The property owner could ask for an exemption should the vernal pools be proven not to be vernal pools either via the CC's observations or a professional delineator.

2. Riparian Buffer

A new State model bylaw entitled River Corridors is being finalized. The bylaw would review development within the natural meander area of a river or stream. The State has provided mapping of the meander area for the larger rivers and streams. The bylaw would also review proposed development within the riparian buffer.

A process for reviewing grandfathered uses such as existing structures within the overlay zones will be added. A mathematical calculation is being created to determine how much a structure could be expanded or renovated. This should help address local concerns of work within these pre-developed buffer areas. This is a larger concern in the Village than in the Town.

3. Stormwater

At the end of 2015, the State released a new Stormwater model bylaw. The bylaw adds the issue of compressed soils which occur during the construction process. Once compressed via heavy equipment maneuvers, the soil loses its imperviousness and does not drain as well. The PC has asked that Article 600 Stormwater remain essentially as is.

The inclusion of the new elements such as the soil compression issue will be discussed.

4. River Corridor

The River Corridor was included in the Riparian Buffer section,above.

C. Discuss Planter Boxes in a Riparian Buffer

Ms. Kozara showed the CC a number of photographs of large planter boxes that had been placed within the riparian buffer. In 2014, the owners of a Cross Street property adjacent to the Kedron Brook received a permit to add a stairway and patio in the riparian buffer. The area has been a lawn for many years.

The key issue is the owners placing an item that was not discussed at time of permit review. The planter boxes should have been included in the permitted use.

The Town Planner noted agricultural uses are exempt, although one would not think a planter box to be agriculture.

The Town Planner will discuss the issue with the VDRB, as they are the body to determine exactly what is allowed in the buffer area.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for February 17, 2016.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Submitted by:

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner