

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

MEMBERS PRESENT: Al Alessi, Lea Kachadorian, Bethany Powers, Cyndy Kozara, Lynn Peterson, Lina Hristova
MEMBERS ABSENT: Byron Quinn
OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

Vice-Chair Alessi opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

II. MINUTES

The minutes of February 17, 2016 were approved as submitted.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. V-3218-16 Martin Copenhaver

The application is for Conditional Use Approval to place stonework in riparian buffer. The property is located at 19 The Green and is Residential Low Density / Design Review.

Mr. McCullough, contractor, presented the application.

The Conservation Commission reviewed numerous photographs and a site plan showing the proposed work.

The owner wishes to finish work on the rear lawn area. A few years ago, a major renovation of the home took place. During the recent Design Review Board approval of facade and stone wall work it was discovered the owner wishes to place a stone patio as well.

The 120 square feet (10' x 12') stone patio would be placed in the lower area of the rear lawn. The patio would be composed of large flag stones with spacing between stones to help increase the percolation rate. Grass would be planted between the stone. The patio would be placed over 10" of crushed stone to help drainage.

A set of stone stairs approximately 14' long and 3.5' wide would be placed into the bank to access the patio.

An 8' - 9' tall stone and mortar wall forms the river bank and is the delineation point for the floodway and floodplain. A similar wall runs approximately 700' along the river bank, from this property to the Woodstock Historical Society's property.

The Town Planner noted the riparian buffer is measured from the top of the river bank. On this specific property, the 100' buffer includes the entire parcel and even extends over the on-street parking spaces in front of the home.

The proposed stone work would be under the 5% disturbance allowed in a riparian buffer. Proposed coverage of lawn area would be less than 200 square feet. The entire back yard is a lawn area bordered by stone walls, measuring 41' wide and 100' long.

A list of riparian plants is proposed by Robin Hall, landscaper, that would enhance the on site vegetation. No vegetation with the exception of the lawn below the proposed stone work would be removed.

Ms. Kozara asked how the Planning Commission proposes to react to the continued placement of stone patios and impervious areas within the riparian buffer. In recent years there has been a good number of stone patios placed within riparian zone.

After additional discussion, Mr. Peterson with a second by Ms. Kachadorian moved to recommend approval as presented. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

B. Town Zoning Rewrite

The Town Planner stated the Town Zoning rewrite has been placed on hold. An emergency adoption of the Town Plan has preempted the zoning due to the need to place Village Center designation language in the plan before September 1, 2016. The VC designation was originally approved in 2006 and renewed in 2011. As of July 1, 2015, another requirement for plan adoption is to have a Flood Resiliency Chapter. Both of these need to be written and adopted by September to enable continuation of the Village Center Designation.

The Planning Commission would also like to add language on Solar Siting in the Town Plan. This may prove to be overly ambitious as the plan requirements for solar siting have not yet been approved by the State Legislature, as of today a bill addressing this is pending. The current bill advocates for a strong positive view of solar siting within the plan. The Town needs to advocate solar placement in certain locations versus the current school of thought that places restrictions on solar (not in wetlands, not in agricultural fields, not visible, no adverse impacts on neighbors, etc.). Selecting, reviewing and verifying publicly supported solar locations is a long and complicated process.

Back to zoning, the Town Planner had hoped to have riparian reviews included with river corridor and flood hazard reviews. However, flood hazard reviews are controlled by the Federal government and difficult to change. The riparian buffer will therefore retain it's

local review status. The one issue, more important to the Village, is allowing a certain amount of flexibility in the review process.

A 2015 State model bylaw, merges Flood Hazard regulations with River Corridor standards. The PC is rewriting this to reflect local needs. A draft has been started but not yet completed.

C. Upcoming Applications

1. Snow Dump State Wetland

The State Agency of Natural Resources has approved a wetland permit for the proposed Village snow dump to be located off of Bailey Meadows, north of the East End. The state permit allows work within the buffer area but not within the wetland itself.

The wetland in question is a rare hill side seep. The proposed use would be directly west of the wetland and would drain towards the river away from the wetland.

The Town would use the buffer area for storage of snow and for transportation of the snow. The snow storage would be limited to three feet tall. It would be contained within a fenced enclosure. As the snow melts, the water would flow west away from the wetland. The river is +/-650' west of the wetland. The use would be seasonal only.

The Town Planner assumed an application would be submitted for local review early this summer.

2. Ladybug LLC

A landowner at the junction of Noah Wood and Darling Roads has had excavation done within the Town highway right of way. The intent was to change the path of the road towards the east to allow a larger lawn area for the landowner. However, the required permission from the Selectboard or the TDRB was never granted. Over 5000 square feet on both sides of Noah Wood Road have been excavated. Material taken from the south side of the road was placed in a riparian buffer area on the north side of the road. Soil was added to approximately a 200' length of the buffer.

The owner was made aware of the situation and has apologized for the misunderstanding. An engineer has been hired to create plans acceptable to both the Selectboard and the Town Development Review Board. The owner has agreed to remove all soil from the riparian buffer area. The original surface below is a lawn and should be easily visible once the additional soil is removed. The Town Planner will provide updates as they happen.

D. Maggi Wetland Application Update

The Town Planner updated the CC on the Maggi application process. The owner has met twice with the TDRB. A third meeting is scheduled for April 26, 2016. The owner's engineer will be present to explain the mitigation process which includes a rain garden and re-engineered stormwater flow among other elements.

E. Goals for 2016

The Town Planner asked the CC if they wished to set any goals or do a special project for 2016. Not hearing any responses, the Four Corners Habitat Corridor was offered as a possibility.

A map of the four corners; Woodstock, Bridgewater, Reading and Plymouth was shown. The map included State owned lands - mostly the Coolidge Forest areas, town owned land, and private properties. The area in question is designated by the Agency of Natural Resources as VCD2a - a high priority location for Connectivity Blocks.

The idea of establishing a wildlife corridor among the four towns has been around for at least a decade. Fortunately the area is mostly unreachable by public road and has not been developed to any extent. Woodstock has a 27 acre Forestry zone covering most the area. Bridgewater does not have any zoning. Bridgewater, Plymouth and Woodstock are part of the TRORC, whereas Reading is a member of the Southern Windsor RC.

After discussion, the CC noted support for the project. The Town Planner will coordinate work with Pete Fellows, both a TRORC staff person and a resident of Plymouth within the area of discussion. Mr. Fellows suggested meeting with the head of the Coolidge Forest and the Mecawee Pond Association as starting points. The Town Planner will ask Mr. Fellows to create a more detailed map with additional private parcel information.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

A. East End Park and Ride

Chair Alessi asked about the proposed East End Park and Ride surface as he and members of the Sustainable Woodstock committee were concerned with stormwater runoff.

The Town Planner noted it was his understanding the surface would be hard pack and not asphalt. The Town Manager was off for the week and unable to respond. Only the apron where the parking lot connects to Pleasant Street would be asphalt. The State funded park and ride is just west of the recently built stone wall, opposite the Alsup barn / warehouse. Parking would be head-in. The Village maintenance crew will be able to grade a hard pack surface to reconfigure if needed for stormwater flow.

B. Sustainable Woodstock Activities

On April 21, 2016 Sustainable Woodstock and the National Park Service will co-host an awards event and Earth Day themed discussion at the Billings Farm and Museum. John Elder of Middlebury, a prominent writer and environmental activist, will be the key note speaker. All are welcome, food will be served before the event.

On May 21, 2016 a cleanup of the East End River Park is scheduled to take place. This would be a full day activity.

C. Riparian Buffer

Mr. Peterson noted the Woodstock Union High School is about to plant willows and other riparian shrubs in their riparian buffer to enhance the existing growth. It was assumed the students would be doing the planting. It was also mentioned, the school has an outdoor classroom directly across the road, just west of the Mill Road Bridge. The Town Planner will contact John Hiers, agriculture and forestry teacher at the school for additional information.

Mr. Peterson also asked about removing Japanese Knotweed from along the river bank behind the Universalist Church. The church would like to plant riparian vegetation to enhance the buffer and to keep the knotweed at bay. The Town Planner suggested he contact Michael Bald, an invasive plant specialist as to the best course of action for removing the knotweed.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2016.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 pm.

Submitted by:

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner