



Woodstock, Vermont The Shire Town of Windsor County

TOWN - VILLAGE MANAGER GOVERNMENT

Town Hall • P.O. Box 488 • Woodstock, Vermont 05091 • 802/457-3456

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

February 20, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Byron Quinn, Al Alessi, Bo Gibbs, Lynn Peterson, Cyndy Kozara, Howard Krum
MEMBERS ABSENT: Bethany Powers
OTHERS PRESENT: Jack Rossi, Peter Vollers, Gerry Hawkes, Donna Durgin, Michael Brands

I. OPENING OF MEETING

Chair Quinn opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

II. MINUTES

The January 16, 2019 minutes were approved as submitted.

III. APPLICATION REVIEW

A. T-4878-18 Paul and Dionne Palandjian

Application is for Conditional Use approval to excavate area in excess of 5,000 sf for creation of new field. The land is located at 1959 Cox District Road and is zoned Residential Five Acre.

Mr. Rossi, landscape architect, presented the application. Mr. Vollers, attorney, and Mr. Hawkes, forester, aided the presentation.

The CC reviewed site plans of the proposed 11 acre field in which trees and their stumps would be removed. The field would be regraded and planted in the spring.

A stream flows through the center of the proposed field, eventually ending at the Ottauquechee River just east of the Lincoln Covered Bridge. During Tropical Storm Irene the stream overflowed, destroying a culvert and large section of Cox District Road just south of the Palandjian home. The riparian buffer measures 50' from top of slope on both sides of the stream.

The intent of the project is to enhance the aesthetics of the field by removing an overgrown area of trees. The owner hopes to restore this to an open field to be mowed periodically with a brush hog. Trees would be cut, stumps would be removed, and the area would be graded and seeded. The owners had completed similar work a few years ago in the adjoining field to the south, just north of Spruce Way.

For the most part the area is composed of scraggly White Pine and Poplar trees. There are small groups of Ash and Maple, with Hemlock along the stream.

Within the riparian buffer, 50' along the stream, the intent is to thin out the dead and unhealthy trees. Thinning of the overgrown trees would allow the remaining trees to be healthier. The applicant hopes to remove up to 30% of the trees within the riparian buffer.



Chippers Inc., a local tree/landscaping company, was hired to do the work. Mr. Rossi serves as designer and project manager. Mr. Hawkes was brought in as the tree and wetland expert.

Mr. Hawkes supported the fact that removing unhealthy and dead trees would allow the remaining trees to be healthier. The area is overgrown with far too many trees. Thinning and removing dead, unhealthy and undesired trees will eventually enhance the riparian buffer. There is no plan to replant trees. Trees will start growing on their own, and with proper management a healthy buffer will be restored.

A number of Ash trees are to be removed. Unfortunately, the future of Ash trees in Vermont is forecast to diminish rapidly with the soon-to-be present Emerald Ash Borer, invasive insect.

The CC asked numerous questions on the number of trees to be removed.

Mr. Hawkes referred to a basal measurement used in the forest industry. The diameter of trees are measured at chest height to determine their wood production capabilities. Generally trees of less than a 2-4" diameter are not counted. The 30% removal would be spread across the riparian area and was deemed necessary to enable a healthier riparian buffer.

Ms. Durgin, a Cox District Road resident, was worried about stormwater increase. In 2014, when the south field close to Spruce Way was cut and graded, it appeared that stormwater along the road increased.

Mr. Rossi and Mr. Hawkes noted that the majority of the trees along the brook would remain and are not to be clear-cut. Tree lined streams lose water in the summer months. This is due to the additional retention of water in a tree's trunk and foliage. Additionally, the remaining trees would be healthier and thus able to retain more moisture. In the case of the south field, the area was clear-cut which may have led to additional stormwater runoff. With the north field, the proposed springtime grading could help direct water to appropriate locations to reduce potential stormwater runoff.

Additionally, an old dam, pieces of metal left over from a prior aqueduct use and an old abandoned metal bridge would be removed from the riparian area. All of this lies within the existing Town road right of way and should not cause an undue disturbance. These items are old and rusty, and are considered a hazard.

After further discussion, Mr. Peterson motioned with a second by Mr. Alessi to recommend approval of the application as presented. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

Due to an error on the warning notice, the order of review was reversed. The TDRB reviewed the application before the Conservation Commission. However, both boards have come to the same conclusion.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Informal Discussion

345 Gabert Road - Riparian/Wetland/Vernal Pool/Amphibian Corridor

The Town Planner showed the CC a site plan of a proposed home site located within a 100' wetland buffer. The application has not yet been filed. The driveway to the home would travel across a stream within the 50' riparian buffer. The 22 acre property has numerous wetlands and two streams passing through it.

In 2015, the former owner received a permit to construct a pond within the wetland buffer. The same owner had also established a building envelope for a home and an approved septic system site that was located outside of the wetland buffer areas in an open field.

In the fall of 2018, State Wetland Scientist Rebecca Chalmers visited the site. She noted that the main body of the wetland to the east is a Class II wetlands and therefore under State jurisdiction. Per State regulations, a 50' buffer is required. The Town requires a 100' buffer for both Class II and III wetlands. Also noted were the presence of two formerly unidentified Class III wetlands which are not under State jurisdiction.

In November 2017, Arrowwood Environmental visited the site and noted the vernal pool as mapped in their 2002 study, which became the Town's official map, is not a vernal pool. It is a concave area but with no water retention abilities. Removing the vernal pool from the map also eliminates the Amphibian Life Protection and Clustered Vernal Pool and Adjacent Wetlands overlays which had been on the Town Zoning maps.

The current owners wish to relocate the home further north and uphill into a wooded area, just behind a stone wall.

An extension of the current driveway would be required. This would be placed within the 50' riparian area and the 100' buffer area of the Class II wetland. The driveway would also require significant regrading to meet the 10-12% grade requirements of a driveway. The current logging road was estimated to have a 16% grade.

The home as sited on the map would be built into a fairly steep wooded hillside. It would also be within 20' of the two recently identified Class III wetlands.

The owner will be filing an application by the end of the month to enable a CC review at the March meeting.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Town Plan Update - Forestry/Wildlife Corridors

There is no change from the information presented by the Town Planner at the January 16, 2019 meeting. The Planning Commission is still preparing additional amendments for the Town Plan.

B. Plastic Bag Ban

Michael Caduto, director of Sustainable Woodstock, wrote an email detailing current status of the proposed plastic bag ban. Change the World Kids and Sustainable Woodstock will survey 250 local businesses on their concerns with a plastic bag ban. Jill Davies, a Select Board member, has noted support for the proposal. Both groups are working with officials in Brattleboro to draft appropriate language for Woodstock.

Mr. Caduto has contacted officials at the Rutland headquarters of Mac Market. The Mac Market official has stated a willingness to listen to the concept. Mac Market is the largest source of plastic bags in the town.

Sustainable Woodstock and the Change the World Kids have proposed the purchase of shopping bags made of discarded cloth fabric that could be used to replace the single use plastic bags. The funding request, pending, was made before the Economic Development Commission.

Legislation at the State House has been proposed to support a state wide ban on plastics. It is assumed that any State legislation would have a compliance period. To enable a more rapid ban the Town could pass its own ordinance.

Finally, the two groups are researching sources for multi-use straws and cutlery to replace their plastic equivalents for local restaurants and vendors of takeout food.

C. Carbon Sequestration

Mr. Peterson presented a brief update on Carbon Sequestration. Mr. Caduto also sent around a short email on the subject. Chair Kelly attended the most recent meeting on Carbon Sequestration.

Mr. Peterson spoke of the North East Forestry Trust, a Maine based organization. They are proposing the purchase of a large forestry tract located in the Chateauguay No Town Conservation area to be used for carbon storage. The group is also looking to convert a forest tract they own in Maine to store carbon on a commercial level.

Mr. Alessi noted spotting a wood working school near Smugglers Notch. The school should be made aware of the obvious connection between furniture making and carbon sequestration. Premium made furniture would be advantageous in prolonging carbon storage well into the future.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Chair Election

Chair Quinn stated he would not run as CC Chair for an additional year. He would be amenable to serve as Vice-chair. Elections will be held next month for Chair and Vice-chair.

V. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for March 20, 2019.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP
Town Planner