

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**February 19, 2020**  
**Minutes**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Al Alessi, Byron Quinn, Cyndy Kozara, Howard Krum, Lynn Peterson  
**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Bethany Powers, Bo Gibbs  
**OTHERS PRESENT:** Matt Stover, Rick Standish, Dwight Doten, Tom Weschler, Randy Richardson, Michael Brands

**I. OPENING OF MEETING**

Chair Alessi called the meeting open at 7:00 p.m.

**II. MINUTES**

The minutes of January 15, 2020 were approved as submitted.

**III. APPLICATIONS**

**A. T-4990-19 Matt Stover**

The application is for Conditional Use approval to construct driveway, building envelope & create amphibian corridor in buffer zone. The property is located at 0 Carleton Hill Road and zoned Residential Five Acre / Conservation.

Mr. Stover presented the application.

The hearing was continued from the January 15, 2020 meeting to allow time for a site visit. During the January 15, 2020, meeting a copy of the wetland permit was also requested.

The CC reviewed numerous site plans and a map of the wetland area.

The site visit took place on February 13, 2020. Chair Alessi, Mr. Quinn, Ms. Kozara, Mr. Krum attended with Town Planner and Mr. Stover.

Mr. Stover gave a brief review of the site visit. He also noted that the State Wetland official, Rebecca Chalmers, has signed a “notice of pending permit” for the State Wetland approval to construct a driveway in the wetland.

The construction would require enough fill to cover a 90' long, 6' high, and 25' wide gap to connect the potential building site with the town road. A large 60' long 43" wide oblong shaped culvert for water passage would be placed at the bottom of the gap to allow both passage of water and amphibian life.

All added soil and exposed areas would be replanted to prevent erosion.

Ms. Kozara asked why the building envelope was removed from the application.

Mr. Stover noted the CC would have a better understanding if a specific site was chosen with a specific home design versus reviewing a large boxed area.

The CC agreed that a plank bridge would have a lesser impact to the wetland than the proposed fill and culvert solution. However, it was noted the cost of a bridge would be at least five times more expensive.

Mr. Quinn, former builder, estimated a bridge could cost at least \$50,000 and the fill and culvert method could run around \$10,000.

Mr. Quinn asked if soundings have been done to estimate the depth of the wetland soils. This could impact the amount of fill needed and the probable soil compaction rates.

After additional discussion, the CC agreed that the bridge option would have less impact on the wetland, but the cost differential makes a bridge unlikely.

An amphibian corridor review is required as there are numerous wetlands and vernal pool areas within 1500' of the main wetland. The corridors had been reviewed in detail at the January 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mr. Quinn moved with a second by Ms. Kozara to recommend approval of the driveway construction and amphibian corridors as presented.

The motion passed with a 5-0 vote.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. River Loop Trail**

Mr. Weschler, former EDC member, and Mr. Richardson, local resident and member of the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, presented an informal review of the proposed 3 mile walking path along the Ottauquechee River.

A large map of the project was presented. The map has riparian areas, wetlands, vernal pools, flood hazard areas and trail location.

The trail covers a large area consisting of multiple parcels in both the Town and Village. There are a total of six landowners involved: Town of Woodstock, Village of Woodstock, Woodstock Resort Corporation, Sunset Farms Condominium Association, and JBW partnership.

The design of the path was funded by a State Planning Grant. The construction of the path would be paid for by the Economic Development Commission. The path was originally designed in 2000 but was withdrawn after the major landowner expressed concerns with users wandering into agricultural fields.

The fields are now used for hay harvest only. Before, corn and soybeans had been the main crops.

Once the application is completed, the CC will review potential impacts to both the riparian 100' buffer and the wetland and vernal pool areas.

The Town Planner asked for more clarity as to exact location of the trail near the wetland sites.

Mr. Weschler requested help from the CC to determine exact ground location of the wetlands. The path would be worked around them. An initial walk of the proposed trail avoided wet areas.

The trail starts and ends at the East End Park where users could park their vehicles. It would follow the sewer easement along the river to the sewer plant. Slight excavation may be needed near the sewer plant to access the open fields north and east of the plant. From this point forward the trail would be a mowed grass path. The intent is to stay on the edge of the fields and out of the wooded sectors. There would be a few side trails to access the river. Keeping the trail in the field lessens the need to remove vegetation.

Two bridges are needed to traverse a couple of wet areas. Photos of simply constructed wood bog bridges were shown. This are very common in nature trails.

Rebecca Chalmers of the Agency of Natural resources would review wetland impacts. State Flood official, John Broker-Campbell would review flood impacts.

The main trail use would be during the summer months. However, it would be used as well in the winter once the ground is frozen. The trail may shut down during mud season to avoid erosion issues.

The trail along the river is totally within the 100' riparian buffer.

There may be 3-4 river access points. These may have picnic tables and chairs placed, which could be removed for the winter season.

The majority of the trail would be a mowed 4-5' swath with no hardpack or other materials added. The mowing would take place once a week or less, when needed. The mowed path will serve as a guide to keep users out of the fields and on the trail.

The Upper Valley Trails Alliance may be contracted to construct the trails.

The group hopes to use high school students and local volunteers to make it a community project.

There would be no use of federal or state money to construct the trail. Therefore, it does not need to meet the sometimes onerous standards of the Federal Highway Department.

The trail is intended for walkers only. There would be no bike activity. Trash cans may be placed along the trail. However, the standard “take it in take it out” mantra would be encouraged. There would be trash cans at the East End Park. Doggie bags would be available at the East End Park.

Mr. Richardson suggested the CC view the Mascoma Valley trail to see a good trail system.

The CC encouraged a site visit/trail walk in the Spring once the snow has melted and the land has dried. This could occur in April.

The applicant would like to construct the trail this summer and early fall.

**V. OLD BUSINESS**

**A. Town Plan Update**

The Town Planner noted the PC is currently rewriting the Education Chapter which has little impact on CC activities.

**B. Carbon Sequestration**

Mr. Peterson gave a quick update on carbon activities as the February monthly meeting did not take place.

The State has allocated money to the Forestry Department to do further investigation into carbon storage. A specialist will be hired to complete this task.

The Groton State Forest was suggested as a site for study of carbon storage in a natural forest. The park is part of a 400,000 acre strip of forest land in central Vermont.

It was noted that 80% of Vermont is forested, of that 80% is privately owned. Reaching private owners will be a priority for the future of carbon storage.

**C. Plastic Bag Ban**

Mr. Quinn showed the CC a recyclable bag he found to be available in the Virgin Islands. The bag is made in the USA. It resembles a typical plastic grocery store bag but is made of a 100% biodegradable material.

**V. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2020.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by,

Michael Brands, AICP  
Town Planner