

WOODSTOCK CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Wednesday, August 19, 2020
7:00PM
MEETING
CONFERENCE CALL
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Byron Quinn, Cyndy Kozara, Bethany Powers, Lynn Peterson, Bo Gibbs

MEMBERS ABSENT: Howard Krum, Al Alessi

OTHERS PRESENT: Wade Treadway, Jack Rossi, Barbara Barry, Jill Davies, Jody Thompson

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Alessi called the remote meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes from the July 15, 2020 meeting approved as written.

III. NEW BUSINESS

V-3561-20; Village of Woodstock, owner; Sustainable Woodstock, agent; Maxham Meadow Way (East End Park); 21. 51.18.; Zone: COM/FHD; To Install In-Ground Slide, Gravel Path & Rock Scramble.

Sustainable Woodstock representative Jack Rossi introduced the project to the board. The project consists of an in-ground slide, a gravel path and a rock scramble at East End Park. The project is partially within the 100-foot buffer from the Ottaquechee River. Therefore, the Conservation Commission must review the project before it can be heard at the Village Development Review Board.

Bo Gibbs asked of the slide would be fixed to the ground in some way.

Jack Rossi responded that the slide will be attached to the ground with concrete, so it would not detach. The rock scramble would be comprised of rocks placed in the ground and would not become dislodged during a flood event.

Bo Gibbs asked what color it would be.

Jack Rossi said it would be grey, they want to keep it neutral. He also said that the bank in question is currently filled with knotweed, so the installation will help mediate it in some

degree by removing it where the scramble and slide are placed. They will plant native plant species in place of it.

The commissioners discussed where the 100-year flood zone lies in relation to the proposed slide and scramble.

Jack Rossi explained that Flood Zone AE, or the 100-year flood zone, touches the lower portion of the slide and rock scramble.

Bethany Powers asked if the installation would create additional stormwater runoff issues.

Jack Rossi said the installation would not create any stormwater runoff issues. Additionally, it is installed behind the parking wall, so there will be no runoff from the parking lot.

The Commission asked who pays for insurance for the park.

Jill Davies responded that the Town of Woodstock pays for the insurance to cover the East End Park.

Jack Rossi mentioned that this is the last project as part of the East End Park. The park will be completed once this project is finished.

Hearing no additional public comment, the commission voted to close testimony.

Vice-Chair Quinn asked for a motion from one of the Commission members. Bo Gibbs made a motion to approve as submitted, Cyndy Kozara seconded the motion.

Motion Passed 5-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

A. Carbon Storage Update

Lynn Peterson discussed local and national projects. He stated Jeff Bezos invested 10 million dollars into a carbon sequestration project on the border with Canada in the Northeast Kingdom. He said there are 10 landowners that put their land into an approximately 10,000-acre piece for carbon sequestration. Lynn mentioned it is a slow process, but it is coming together. He also mentioned the Vermont Legislature has a working group focused on carbon sequestration. There is a new climate forester working for the group who also teaches at UVM. He said the local government, state government and academia coalition could produce some good results. Their first meeting is scheduled for the end of August 2020.

Lynn discussed the Shrewsbury cooperative that is attempting to do a carbon sequestration project as well. He said most forests in Vermont are privately owned, so sequestration will only be successful here through a collaboration of property owners.

Lynn discussed the idea of inviting Tim Stout, a local leader in the field of Carbon Sequestration, to the next Conservation Commission meeting. The commission agreed with the idea. Lynn said he will ask Tim Stout if he can make a presentation to the commission at their next meeting.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Blake Hill Informal Review – Scenic Ridgeline

Gina and Walter Beinecke re-introduced themselves and their informal review request to the commission. They are interested in building a single-family house in the Ridgeline Scenic Overlay district on Blake Hill. The property is affected by a view corridor easement along with a very large portion of it that is in the overlay district. They described views of the proposed house site and driveway public viewpoints. The house site would sit on a portion of the property that, according to the Beinecke's presentation and analysis, would not be visible from public vantage points.

The commission discussed the Ridgeline Scenic Overlay Zone regulations with the potential applicants. The commission thanked them for doing such a thorough investigation into the potential impacts a house would have in the Ridgeline Scenic Overlay Zone.

Cyndy Kozara stated her concern that if trees were removed that revealed a proposed house on Blake Hill, it would take many years for new trees to be planted and regrow. She stated that the placement of any proposed house should be analyzed very closely to avoid mistakes that could take years to recover from.

The commission thanked the Beinecke's for their attendance and wished them the best in their future endeavors.

B. Roadside Mowing Policy

A letter from the Town of Woodstock Highway Department requesting the Selectboard to reconsider the road mowing policy to allow for vertical mowing. It was submitted with a petition with a number of Woodstock town residents in favor of a proposed vertical mowing policy. The policy would permit the highway department to vertical mow certain parts of town roads. The point of vertical mowing is for public safety and snow plowing. The last time vertical mowing was done in Woodstock was approximately 15 years ago. The shrubbery along many town roads has grown in density to the point that sight distances are impaired around corners and curves. The highway department also expressed concern over a lack of area for snow deposits while snowplowing.

Jill Davies, selectboard member, asked the commission for their views on the proposed vertical mowing policy. She mentioned it would be good for the selectboard to be made aware of any potential issues.

Bo Gibbs asked how far they cut. Jill responded it would be plus or minus seven feet from the road and a height of up to 13'6" with automated equipment.

Bo Gibbs said if the mowing is done frequently it would have less of a visible impact.

Jill Davies asked the commission about the invasive poisonous parsnip since the seeds are spread through mowing operations.

Byron Quinn stated that it's best to mow early in the spring before the poisonous parsnip goes to seed.

Bo Gibbs stated that when you prune trees you cut at certain places and was concerned that doing this town-wide could be aesthetically displeasing.

The letter said consideration for scenic resources can be addressed at a case by case basis.

Jill Riley stated that the selectboard has no institutional memory of why vertical mowing ceased.

Cyndy Kozara thought that this could result in increased speeds on town roads if shrubbery was cut back to improve sight distance.

Lynn Peterson recommended doing an experiment to let the town highway department do a sample mow or cut on a certain stretch of a town road so that people could see for themselves the impact it might have.

Bo Gibbs asked if the trees that are important that should be saved in the R.O.W. could be marked so that they don't get cut.

Jill thanked the commission for their comments.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:05PM.