

Minutes
Conservation Commission
February 28, 2023

Attendance: David Miller, Chair, Zeke Nims, Reed Pugh, Kerri Layton, Ann Storer, Martha Hoyt, Steve Cohn, Elaine Vreeland, Administrator.

Minutes: It was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously to approve the minutes of February 14, 2023.

81 Cambridge Street: Public Meeting under the Wetlands Protection Act, Public Hearing under Winchester Wetlands Bylaw. Determination of Applicability. It was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously to open the meeting/hearing. *It is proposed to install a 10' strip of vegetation along the bank of a stream in the rear of the property, to remove an existing rotting fence, and to install a 4' metal fence with a gate to access the stream with an open area at the base for wildlife passage.*

- Elaine Vreeland represented Kathy Baumgardner, owner.
- Information presented: Request for Determination of Applicability

As the property owner was unavailable, Elaine Vreeland presented the Request for Determination of Applicability, showing a plant list which had been approved by Reed Pugh. All pre-selected plants should do well under the existing Norway Maples. A certified arborist's letter had been submitted to describe the need for trees in the area to be removed. Abutter Tod Gulick noted that the vegetation may struggle as he has Norway Maples across the stream, and they draw a lot of water. He recommended a drip irrigation system.

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to issue a Negative Determination of Applicability, with the following conditions:

- There shall be a pre-installation meeting with the contractor and the assigned commissioner.
- There shall be 100' linear feet of vegetation installed.
- The installed fence shall be the same as shown in the manufacturer's pamphlet.
- There shall be 6" of clearance at the base of the fence to allow for wildlife passage.
- A temporary drip irrigation system shall be installed for the first season or as needed.

Reed Pugh was the assigned commissioner.

44 Clark St.: Request for Certificate of Compliance. Continued to March 14, 2023.

Town Hall Minor Project: Continued to March 14, 2023.

Winning Farm Request for Certificate of Compliance: Elaine noted that not all documents have been received, so it cannot be released. The Conservation Restriction, ss-built plans, and two easements are still under review. She also said that the town punch list includes a requirement that two partial Certificates are to be issued before the final full Certificate. It was moved, seconded, and unanimously approved to waive the requirement for two partial Certificates of Compliance. During the discussion, Zeke Nims mentioned that there may be an access easement off Fairlane Terrace.

Spreadsheet of Commission Filings: Discussion Update. There was discussion regarding how to improve organizing files to include additional information. It was determined that using the existing Excel spreadsheet would be the best platform, and Keri Layton will continue with devising the format.

Miyawaki Forest: Discussion Update. Elaine reported that possible location of the area off the front parking lot by the High School is within the 100-year floodplain, and that the area contains sanitary sewer trunk lines to the Deer Island Treatment Plant. If trees were to be planted there, it would require filling the floodplain to accommodate the trees. Other areas within the High School campus may be suitable for a pollinator garden. It is still an unanswered question as to whether the High School would allow a forest in that location, or whether it is being used for other purposes.

The other possible area off Swanton Street at the Aberjona River was discussed, noting that heavy soil preparation would be required. Some money may be available from a previous filing. The Commission requested that Prassede Calabi, Reed Pugh, and Elaine Vreeland form a working group to address the fundamental questions and report back to the Commission. David Miller questioned the funding sources, and what role the Commission would play in any eventual outcome. It was noted that any Commission involvement would require several layers of decision-making, including whether we would support such an initiative, provide opinions on siting, and whether financial assistance might be offered. Regarding financial support, it was noted that the Commission already has obligations to almost 150 acres of conservation space and that any financial support for this additional ‘forest’ and concerns about potential ongoing financial obligations would need to be weighed in the larger context of conservation space strategies.

Town Forest: Reed Pugh reported that he had developed a Town Forest Management Plan, to be used by any volunteer. It lists management goals, tasks, and a list of completed projects. It is designed as a template so that anyone can look up the history of prior projects as well as projects remaining. It is also universal enough that it can be applied to any conservation area. David added that Town Counsel will become involved with the enforcement of encroachments.

Conservation Finances and Wetlands Bylaw: David Miller spoke regarding the need to consider our Bylaw language as to its completeness, and whether it should be amended to include Climate Resiliency as a protected interest. The lack of specific regulations was noted as well as our ability to develop them. David suggested legal assistance and continued that there could be some conversations which might become ideas for bylaw regulations or amendments, and requested volunteers.

He continued that he has been working with Elaine to update our understanding of current Commission bank accounts, and rules for spending the funds. Information will be shared with full Commission and used to support strategic thinking going forward.

The possibility of retaining Raegan McCain as a graphic artist to develop a logo and related materials was mentioned. Her initial proposal was less than \$1000. Interest was good and Reed noted his desire to be directly involved. David stated that he would complete analysis of Commission finances.

ZBA Commentary: David noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals has requested Conservation Commission commentary on Special Permits and Site Plan Reviews. He added that he and Elaine have been meeting with the committee Chair who is preparing a new application form which will request information from the Applicant to be used for review.

Aberjona River Day: This year's efforts will include a partnership with the Cultural District which will hire an artist to construct two outdoor sculptures to be filled with trash to become an art piece. In addition to trash pick-up, the Commission also wants to remove invasive plant species along Judkins Pond. Reed asked all members to look at areas that may need work to be ready to send volunteers to those locations. He also mentioned that Peter Wild would donate seedlings to give to volunteers.

Submitted by
Elaine Vreeland