



Williamsburg Conservation Commission
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Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2023
via Zoom

Commissioners present – Mary Dudek, Andrew MacLachlan, Melinda McCall, Joe Rogers

Members of the public present – none

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

RDA: none

NOI: none

COC: none

Enforcements:

- Follow up on 58 Ashfield Road, unpermitted bridge reconstruction on a right of way owned by Lawrence O’Connell, currently living in Florida: JR discussed the situation with Mr. O’Connell, who said that the Commission is welcome to go on the property to look at the river bank and any disturbance. Commissioners will discuss at the next meeting as to whether to do a site visit.
- Follow up on disturbance of protected wetlands at Beaver Brook Golf Course: Owner Chris Duval put straw wattle in and seeded the disturbed area but would not agree to planting shrubs. Natural Heritage also issued a violation due to potential impacts in rare species habitat and requested a project narrative, impacts, a site plan, and a wetlands delineation plan. JR will follow up to see what actions have been taken. Due to the drawn out nature of on-going violations, Commissioners agreed to leave enforcement to Natural Heritage for now.
- Follow up on 94 Ashfield Road bridge reconstruction: Construction of ramp has been delayed again due to contractor schedule.
- Follow up on 10B Eastern Ave, Gazillo: The Gazillos added a few more plants along the wetland edge. A motion was made and accepted unanimously to issue a Certificate of Compliance letter. MM will send, with a note about recent plantings.

Discussion of new potential violations: none

Discussions:

- JR met with Bill Sayre and Jean O’Neil at the Public Safety Complex to discuss best approach for moving forward with plans for plantings along the stream. It was decided that a RDA would be the best option. Jean O’Neil will submit it for the January meeting.
- MM met with Town Counsel to discuss options for holding uncooperative violators accountable. The easiest, least expensive, and least confrontational approach is a fine system with non-criminal disposition in District Court. The fine could be issued by the town or by the Conservation Commission, but either way, a by-law would need to be passed by town meeting. Members of the Commission will meet with the Select Board to discuss this. AM would like a clearer idea of how much work a Wetlands Bylaw would create and how fines would be issued and addressed. How are dog license fines, violations issued by other departments, or unpaid water bills addressed?
- Follow up on 66 Nash Hill Road unpermitted digging to reclaim an old fire pond. A Cease and Desist was issued. JR discussed the situation with the owner and will help him to create a permissible plan for work in the spring. Grading around the pond needs to be addressed.
- 74 Village Hill, Ecogenesis for Thomas Hodgkins: deadline for the temporary bridge removal is expiring soon and will need to be extended.
- River Road solar project, Agalita Energy: OOC is expiring soon and will need to be extended.
- The new owner of 5 Valley View Road, Stevenson Ramsburgh, reached out to the Commission about what permitting would be needed for the renovation work being planned. Commissioners visited the site and found that there had been substantial clearing in the wetlands and buffer zone. It was determined that almost any work would be in the buffer zone and require permits. MM sent this information to Mr. Ramsburgh and information about the permitting process, but had not heard back. MM will notify the building inspector of the need for permitting at the site.
- Follow up on Horse Mountain concerns about horses using the trail. The Woodland Trails Committee asked the Conservation Commission to edit the write up already in place. MM will send an edit.
- Update on the Hall property. There has been communication between the Woodlands Trail committee and Audubon about doing work on the O’Neil and Hall properties. The Conservation Commission administers those properties and would like to be part of the conversation. Strengthening the relationship with Woodland Trails is desired. MM will join an upcoming meeting to discuss options.
- Update on shared Conservation Agent: The idea for a shared agent has changed. Most towns in the region are more interested in sharing administrative support, while Williamsburg is more interested in support from a wetlands professional. Is it possible to get an increase in funding to allow for hiring a consultant for bigger projects or violations. Hiring on a consulting basis rather than on a retainer would not prevent the professional from representing other town residents. AM would like to see a list of past situations where a consultant would have been helpful.
- Follow up on moving forward with a bylaw: JR will review the latest draft. AM would like to know how much extra work a bylaw would create for the Commission.

Other business, including discussion of issues:

- Robin Casioppo from GZA signed a two-year contract and plan for monitoring the wetland replication at the Hatfield Street solar array.

Minutes from 10/12/2023 and 11/9/2023 were approved as amended.

Next Meeting: January 11, 2024.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00.

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda McCall
Secretary - Williamsburg Conservation Commission