

**TOWN OF NEEDHAM
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, August 10, 2017**

LOCATION: Public Services Administration Building (PSAB), Charles River Room

ATTENDING: Sue Barber, Artie Crocker, Peter Oehlkers, Alison Richardson, Debbie Anderson (Conservation Specialist), Matthew Varrell (Director of Conservation), Mary Hunt (minutes)

GUESTS: Dan Dobra, Dan Gordon, Love Albrecht Howard, Diane Simonelli, Greg Smith, and Members of Boy Scout Troop 13, Needham, MA.

P. Oehlkers (acting chair) opened the public meeting at 7:30 p.m.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS:

MEETING MINUTES:

Motion to approve the Meeting Minutes, as amended, of July 27, 2017 by A. Richardson, seconded by P. Oehlkers, approved 2-0-2. S. Barber and A. Crocker abstained.

ENFORCEMENT AND VIOLATION UPDATES:

ROSEMARY RECREATION COMPLEX

M. Varrell updated the Commission saying the project is ongoing. He said two staff positions are required in the Order of Conditions including an Environmental Monitor and Wildlife Specialist. He told the Commission he has not received reports from the Environmental Monitor and is frustrated by the lack of communication. He said Mike Retzky, Project Manager, is aware of the situation. M. Varrell suggested if the status quo continues the Commission may want to vote to encourage more communication. Discussion ensued. M. Varrell recommended if lack of communications continues to the next meeting, stronger action may be warranted.

HEARINGS:

211 BRIDLE TRAIL ROAD - *continued* NOTICE OF INTENT (DEP FILE #234-789)

P. Oehlkers opened the public hearing at 7:48 p.m. The Applicant's representative, D. Gordon of Dan Gordon Architects, explained the status of the project and that the Conservation Commission's concerns voiced in the first and second hearings are addressed, as described in the new plan. He said the revised plan eliminates hemlock trees, replacing them with a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees including Western Red Cedar, Tupelo, Witch-hazel, and additional shrub plantings along the back wall. He commented the quantity of trees remains the same. He noted the other major change to the plan replaces non permeable mortared stone paving with stepping stones set into the lawn, retaining the infiltration system in the area proposed previously.

A. Richardson commented on the choice of a Western Red Cedar tree, saying the tree should do well and is a good substitution for the native Canada Hemlock which suffers from Woolly Adelgid and would have to be sprayed regularly. She noted the challenge of using evergreens in such a shady area and that she hopes they will survive. D. Gordon reiterated requirements for pool enclosures and the need to excavate the existing wall to meet code. A. Richardson and Dan Gordon agreed that a reasonable method to protect the existing tree roots during excavation is by using an air spade to lower the finished grade at the base of the wall. Dan said that soil will be removed to a depth of approximately 6-inches in order to meet code or a 4-foot minimum height barrier around the new pool. Any roots exposed during air spading can be reinstalled in loam to proposed finished grade instead of being cut as in a typical excavation. This technique should reduce negative construction impacts to the trees to remain. They will require watering and mulching with care not to compact roots to remain during construction.

P. Oehlkers invited public comment.

Discussion ensued with the Boy Scouts asking for clarification on fencing and alternatives. A. Richardson explained the fencing regulation for pool enclosures in Needham. A. Crocker commented on potential alternatives. Photographs were viewed.

S. Barber asked for the square footage of the pool and surrounding area within the 25-ft. Buffer Zone. D. Gordon said the total area is 165 sq. ft., which includes 45 sq. ft. of paving stone.

Motion to close the public hearing for 211 Bridle Trail Road (DEP File #234-789), by A. Crocker, seconded by A. Richardson, approved 4-0-0.

Motion to issue an Order of Conditions for 211 Bridle Trail Road (DEP File#234-789) as amended, seconded by A. Richardson, approved 4-0-0.

Motion to issue a Waiver for 211 Bridle Trail Road (DEP File#234-789) allowing work within the 25-ft. Buffer Zone, seconded by A. Richardson, approved 4-0-0.

OTHER BUSINESS:

REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE - 130 WINDING RIVER ROAD (DEP FILE #234-662)

D. Anderson said the Applicant had supplied a timeline of when the landscaper was present at the site and when plantings were installed. D. Anderson said she explained the kind of information needed in a monitoring report, and that the Applicant was going to try to get the information to close out the permit. D. Anderson said the issue is ongoing, but progress is being made. The Request was tabled to the next meeting.

REQUEST FOR MINOR MODIFICATION - 1409 GREAT PLAIN AVENUE (DEP FILE #234-773)

Love Albrecht Howard, Landscape Design and Project Manager, represented the Applicant. She explained the original Order of Conditions allowed for the removal of four hazard trees, removal of an existing paved patio, removal of a landscaped timbered area, construction of a stone trench and rain garden, installation of a privacy fence, and installation of a wood deck. L. Howard is now proposing to move and enlarge the deck, install larger fencing, and trim, rather than remove, the large Silver Maple tree overhanging the house, while planting fewer new trees.

M. Varrell clarified the original number of replacement trees required was six. A. Crocker asked the size of the silver maple and to what degree will it be trimmed. L. Howard explained the tree has approximately a 4-ft. caliper, 2 dead branches, and 2 leaders that need to be cabled. P. Oehlkers stated he is fine with planting 3 trees and asked for a motion.

Motion to approve Minor Modifications to the plans for 1409 Great Plain Avenue (1409 Great Plain Avenue DEP File #234-773) by A. Crocker, seconded by A. Richardson, approved 4-0-0.

REQUEST FOR MINOR MODIFICATION - 50 LEHIGH ROAD (DEP #234-777)

D. Simonelli of Field Resources, Inc., represented the Applicant. She commented the current Order of Conditions allows for removal of several trees referred to on site plan. She said an arborist looking at the site deemed four additional trees to be in poor condition and is also requesting removal of two small pine trees. D. Simonelli is proposing the addition of four Eastern Red Cedar and two White Pine trees, and shrubs. She commented the Applicant is also requesting removal of an invasive Burning Bush shrub.

P. Oehlkers clarified the Applicant has approval for work within the 25-ft. Buffer Zone and is not looking for an additional waiver. He commented the arborist made a good case for removal of four additional trees deemed in poor condition and confirmed the healthiness of two White Pine trees. P. Oehlkers commented on the planting proposal asking why four trees along the top border are not integrated into the area. P. Oehlkers explained the Conservation Commission tries to make sure wildlife areas are maintained. He commented site plans showing trees planted along borders and at the very edges of a property indicate an attempt to put them as far away as possible to create a border, without accounting for other considerations. D. Simonelli suggested marking the site before placement and that the Applicant is flexible. Discussion ensued on the request to remove two small pine trees. A. Richardson commented there must be justification for removing healthy trees. A. Crocker commented trees deemed unhealthy do not have to be completely removed. He commented it appears trees are being removed for an expansive lawn. P. Oehlkers suggested the Order of Condition include snags. Discussion ensued on snag height and alternatives of integrating trees or shrubs, rather than lawn. D. Simonelli asked the Commission for the number of plantings, including the two healthy small pine trees, and that she would modify the plan for placement. M. Varrell said establishing the number of plantings, marking the area, and a site visit should be required. Discussion ensued on snag height; the Commission agreed on 10 feet.

Discussion ensued with the Boy Scouts with Commission members explaining wetlands, snags and wildlife habitats.

M. Varrell said the next step should be issuance of a letter approving minor modifications including the following conditions:

1. Two healthy trees are not to be removed;
2. Four trees deemed hazardous may be removed, with the 3 largest preserved as snags with a height of 10 feet;
3. All proposed replacement plantings must be laid out prior to installation for approval by Conservation Commission staff, encouraging as many of the plantings within the 50-foot Buffer Zone, especially in areas of existing lawn; and
4. Removal of the Burning Bush is permitted.

D. Simonelli clarified the number of trees will change based on the fact that two healthy trees will not be removed. She commented air conditioning condensers are also proposed for placement on the mechanical room side of the home. P. Oehlkers concurred.

Motion to approve, as amended, minor modifications to the plans including quantity of trees removed, locations, snags, removal of Burning Bush, and placement of air conditioning units for 50 Lehigh Road (50 Lehigh Road DEP File #234-777) by A. Crocker, seconded by A. Richardson, approved 4-0-0.

Discussion ensued with the Boy Scouts and an explanation of native and invasive plants.

NEEDHAM DPW REPAIR/MAINTENANCE ACTIVITY NOTIFICATION FORM: RECYCLING AND TRANSFER STATION VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Greg Smith, RTS Superintendent, showed photos of two sections of anti-litter fencing being installed at the Recycling and Transfer Station to prevent wind from blowing trash and debris into the wetland. He asked for permission to clear and maintain a section of vegetation within the 100-foot Buffer Zone so anti-litter fencing can be effective and staff can retrieve any loose trash not collected. The Conservation Commission concurred the request makes sense.

Motion to approve a request by the Department of Public Works to clear and maintain a section of vegetation necessary for effective anti-litter fencing under the DPW Repair/Maintenance Notification Form, seconded by S. Barber, approved 4-0-0. The Request was signed by P. Oehlkers.

Discussion ensued with the Boy Scouts with an explanation of the usefulness of anti-litter fencing, processing of trash, and protection of wetlands.

M. Varrell read an email he received from a Project Manager of an NSF-funded macro systems biology study requesting inclusion of Ridge Hill Reservation as a study site in the summer 2017. The Conservation Commission agreed to allow use of Ridge Hill Reservation for the study.

DISCUSSION ITEM: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN UPDATE - REVIEW OF DRAFT FINAL DOCUMENT

The Commission reviewed, discussed, and prioritized the goals and objectives listed the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. Discussion will continue at the August 24th meeting. No one from the public was in attendance for the discussion.

ADJOURN:

Motion to adjourn by A. Crocker, seconded by A. Richardson, approved 4-0-0. The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING:

August 24, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. in the Public Services Administration Building, Charles River Room.