

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

Date: Thursday, June 9, 2022

Time: 7:00pm

Place: This meeting was held as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

With a quorum present, the meeting opened at 7:00 pm with Susin Lunin presiding as Chair.

Members Present: Susan Lunin (Vice-Chair), Kathy Cade, Jeff Zabel, Leigh Gilligan, Judy Hepburn, Ellen Katz joined the meet at 7:40.

Members Absent: Dan Green, Associate Member Sonya McKnight

Staff present: Jennifer Steel, Ellen Menounos

Members of the Public: not recorded due to remote nature of the meeting

DECISIONS

A. CONSERVATION AREA DECISIONS

1. Eagle Scout Ryan Lin project completion presentation, Dolan Pond pollinator gardens and signs

- **Owner/Applicant:** Conservation Commission
- **Representative:** Ryan Lin, Eagle Scout candidate
- **Request:** Approve project completion
- **Jurisdiction:** Flood Zone, Buffer Zone
- **Presentation and Discussion:**
 - Ryan worked with about 10 people the day of installation.
 - The site near Auburndale Ave appears to be successful.
 - The site near Webster Park is planted in deep shade, so it may not thrive. Additionally, he planted the seedlings quite densely, so he may have to move some plants to new locations.
 - The site nearest the Dolan Pond overlook was not planted because Japanese knotweed covered that site.
 - Ryan is considering supplementing the area with more plants that he is growing at home. He continues to monitor and water the planting sites
 - Staff will work with the new Land Managers to address invasives at multiple sites.
- **Vote:** Accept the project as complete. [Motion: Zabel; Second: Hepburn; Roll-call vote: Cade (aye), Hepburn (aye), Lunin (aye), Zabel (aye); Gilligan (aye); Vote: 5:0:0]

2. Eagle Scout Rohan Martin Peters project proposal, Webster Woods Cliff Trail and timber stairs

- **Owner/Applicant:** Conservation Commission
- **Representative:** Rohan Martin Peters, Eagle Scout candidate
- **Request:** Approve project proposal.
- **Jurisdiction:** Buffer Zone
- **Presentation and Discussion:**
 - Rohan walked the Commission through construction details, materials, and workflow. There will be two trail heads on Hammond Pond Parkway to ensure safe approaches. Brush and fallen tree clearing are appropriate. The stairs will be a challenge and will need to be modified to accommodate field conditions. Rohan will install the first 3 steps as a prototype prior to a site visit by Steel and the full workday with his troop.
 - The project is expected to happen at the end of July and should take two weekends. Steel has made a preliminary site visit with Rohan and his father and feels that the stairs as proposed will enhance access and safety.
 - Trail blazing will be incorporated.
- **Vote:** Approve project proposal. [Motion: Zabel; Second: Gilligan; Roll-call vote: Cade (aye), Hepburn (aye), Lunin (aye), Zabel (aye); Gilligan (aye); Vote: 5:0:0]

B. WETLANDS DECISIONS

3. 275-281 Needham St., 55 Tower Rd., and 156 Oak St. (Northland) – NOI (cont'd) – Park Development around South Meadow Brook -- DEP #239--921

- **Owners.** Needham Street Associates (Arthur Friedman, Trustee), Northland Tower Investors, Northland Oak Street LLC



Mayor

Ruthanne Fuller

**Director
Planning &
Development**
Barney Heath

**Chief
Environmental
Planner**
Jennifer Steel

**Assistant
Environmental
Planner**
Ellen Menounos

**Conservation
Commission
Members**
*Kathy Cade
Dan Green
Judy Hepburn
Ellen Katz
Susan Lunin
Jeff Zabel
Leigh Gilligan*

**Associate
Member**
Sonya McKnight

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- Applicant. Kent Gonzales, Northland Development, LLC
- Representatives. Christopher Wagner VHB wetland scientist, Curtis Quitzau VHB engineer, Chris Fee, Stantec landscape designer
- Request. Issue COC.
- Documents in packets. None.
- Additional documents presented at meeting. None.
- Jurisdiction. Riverfront Area, Bank, Buffer Zone, City Flood Zone
- Project Summary.
 - This is a portion of the redevelopment of 22.6 acres of vacant industrial land into a large mixed-use development – the Riverfront Area associated with the daylighted portion of South Meadow Brook.
 - The proposed project will impact RFA.
 - Proposed work within wetland jurisdiction includes:
 - Construction of buildings, roadways, bike paths, etc. in the outer RFA within a previously degraded footprint.
 - Installation of bioretention and infiltration areas.
 - Removal of ~15,000 sf of impervious surface from RFA.
 - Temporary disturbance (tree cutting and grading) in the Buffer Zone and RFA followed by restoration with native trees, shrubs, and seed mix.
 - A clear limit of work will be identified, and erosion and sedimentation control areas will be installed.
 - The Project will improve drainage and stormwater treatment within the Riverfront Area.
- Presentation and Discussion:
 - No revised plans were provided, so the applicant team referred to the plans shown at the previous meeting. The team will submit a detailed narrative invasive species control plan (removal, planting, monitoring, and reporting) and revised plans reflecting their intent to aggressively remove Norway maples (they will hire a licensed herbicide applicator) and revegetate the area.
 - They have surveyed all trees (over 12”) – there are only 6-7 native ones but roughly 45 invasive ones.
 - They have painted in the field and survey located the “break in slope”. All grading will be “above” that line.
 - They have revised the proposed grading and planting plans and the park plans. The intention is to cut and grub all trees and all shrubs, remove a lot of fill above the grade break line, then replant heavily with trees and shrubs. Below the line they will do crane flush-cut removal of all invasive trees and flush-cut hand removal of all invasive shrubs and groundcover, with application of herbicide as necessary. Below the line they will install whips and live stakes of pussywillow and grey and silky dogwood and seed mix to get around the dense roots of the Norway maples.
 - After receipt of revised plans, another site visit, with new staking and flagging, will be arranged.
 - Commissioners commented on the possible misaligned expectations between applicant team and the Commission. The applicant team had referenced “enhanced stream and bank” in prior visioning efforts. Is this a stream restoration project? The applicants indicated that it was not their intention to enhance the stream bed, that they would be improving the water quality with their stormwater improvements, and that they would aggressively address invasives.
 - Commissioners noted (admittedly potentially conflicting) concerns about slope stability and removal of invasives. There must be thought given to whether the priority is a “one-shot” eradication of Norway maples (etc.) or phased eradication in order to maintain slope stability.
 - The question of the size and nature of native plant material was raised – whips, large saplings, smaller saplings, shrubs, seed mix, etc.
 - Staff asked about the ideal timing of tree removal, herbicide application, and planting. Applicants replied that targeted herbicide use ought not interfere with planting.
 - Staff suggested planting trees on the steep lower slopes. The applicants said that that might occur at a later time.
 - Staff noted that the steep lower slope plantings would likely need to be irrigated.
 - The Commission discussed the value of conducting a peer review to assess the proposed stream embankment restoration goals (stability and invasive/native species) and methodology (process, phasing, species/size, timing, techniques, monitoring, etc.). Staff noted that a peer review under “53G” would review and assess the proposed project, not provide different design options.
 - Staff reminded all involved that work in RFA is at the discretion of the Commission, so there is latitude for Commission input over and above the regulatorily required minimum performance standards.
 - Staff reminded all involved to not lose focus on the other work in the rest of the RFA (e.g., stormwater, roadways, etc.).
 - Staff will send a Doodle poll to find a date for second a site visit (weekday, midday) in the next two week
- Vote: Continue the hearing to June 30, 2022, and schedule another site visit. [Motion: Cade; Second: Gilligan; Roll-call vote: Cade (aye), Hepburn (aye), Lunin (aye), Zabel (aye); Gilligan (aye); Katz (aye); Vote: 6:0:0]

4. 68 Brierfield – COC -- DEP #s 239-563

- Owner/Applicant: Maxine Alcheck
- Representative: Joe Porter
- Request: Issue COC.
- Presentation and Discussion: All required paperwork has been received. At site visit on 6/02/2022, drainage systems, grading, and retaining wall conformed with the approved plans and OOC.
- Vote: Vote to issue a complete COC. [Motion: Cade; Second: Zabel; Roll-call vote: Cade (aye), Hepburn (aye), Lunin (aye), Zabel (aye); Gilligan (aye); Katz (aye); Vote: 5:0:1]

C. ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS

5. Minutes to be approved

- Documents in packets. Draft 5/19/22 minutes as edited by Jeff Zabel.
- Vote. To approve the 5/19/22 minutes. [Motion: Cade; Second: Zabel; Roll-call vote: Cade (aye), Hepburn (aye), Lunin (aye), Zabel (aye); Gilligan (aye); Katz (abstain); Vote: 5:0:0]
- Volunteer. Susan Lunin volunteered to review the 6/9/22 minutes.

D. ISSUES AROUND TOWN DECISIONS – none at this time

UPDATES

E. 8:10 – WETLANDS UPDATES

- Pavilion at Newton Center Playground is under discussion
- Crystal Lake Left Beach is under discussion
- Albemarle Field reconstruction is under discussion
- Marty Sender Phase I will be under construction soon
- Library parking lot will be under construction soon
- The City has shifted to online permitting and the Conservation Office will try using eDEP for all NOI/OOCs

F. CONSERVATION AREA UPDATES

- Three benches are to be donated for the Norumbega “overlook”. Fencing is needed to protect the recently restored slope.
- Trailhead signs are being redesigned and updated.

G. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

H. ISSUES AROUND TOWN UPDATES

- OSRP Trail Subcommittee is focusing on ACROSS trails.
 - Jay Werb provided a brief presentation on the recent “A Walk through Time” volunteer-led event that essentially created/formed a possible Upper Falls ACROSS loop. The many stations were each operated by volunteers who gave interesting talks on the historical importance of that site. Over 200 people attended, the atmosphere was festive, and reviews were very positive. They were fortunate to have had assistance with outreach from Jerry Reilly and his Nomadic Theater email list, Village 14, the Upper Falls News, and the word-of-mouth spread by the volunteers.
 - Maureen Reilly Meagher is interested in doing something similar in Waban and can reach out to the Jerry Reilly, the Hepburns, and Alice Ingerson.
 - Ted Chapman may be interested in doing something similar in Lower Falls.
- Commission members who volunteered to ground-truth ACROSS loops should report findings as soon as possible.

OTHER TOPICS NOT REASONABLY ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR 48 HOURS BEFORE THE MEETING

6. 17-19 Dunstan St – COC -- DEP#s 239-234 and 239-644

- Owner/Applicant: Nina Neivens
- Representative: None present.
- Request: Issue COC.
- Presentation and Discussion: The later OOC superseded the earlier OOC. All required paperwork has been received. A site visit on 6/08 confirmed that the drainage systems, grading, bounds, and plants conformed with the approved plans and OOC.
- Vote: Vote to issue a complete COC. [Motion: Cade; Second: Zabel; Roll-call vote: Cade (aye), Hepburn (aye), Lunin (aye), Zabel (aye); Gilligan (aye); Katz (aye); Vote: 6:0:0]

ADJOURN Vote: To adjourn. [Motion: Zabel; Second: Katz; Roll-call vote: Cade (aye), Hepburn (aye), Lunin (aye), Zabel (aye); Gilligan (aye); Katz (aye) Vote: 6:0:0]