



Williamsburg Conservation Commission
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Meeting Minutes – March 14, 2019

Commissioners present - Marci Caplis, Mary Dudek, Todd Lynch, Andrew MacLachlan, and Joe Rogers

Members of the public present - Rich Kirby from LEC, Adam Christie from Pro-tec; Chris Ryan from Meridian Associates; Larry West, Linda Rowley, Evelyn Voorhees, and Dean Kent, abutters to 5 Hatfield Road; Brien Tal-Baker (architect,) Brad Eichenwald, and Joanna Vaughn, for 15 North Farms Road; David Nehring, abutter to Greenway Park.

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm

Review of RDA for 15 North Farms Road. The Commission reviewed the plans for proposed house. The architect and owners showed great consideration in minimizing impact on the wetlands. A site visit is required, and will be scheduled before the next meeting, tentatively April 1 at 5:00 pm, weather permitting. A motion to continue the meeting was approved unanimously.

Information about Black Bear Research Study. Kathy Zeller from the Massachusetts Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit wants to do a study for ten weeks this summer. The study consists of 130 hair snares that will be set up around the state at strategic locations bases on female home range. These snares will be flagged and accompanied by an informational sign. The proposed sites in Williamsburg are on Water Department land. The commissioners gave their support to the plan, and will pass on that support to Bill Turner, the Water and Sewer Commission, and the Select Board.

Marcianna Caplis C. Todd Lynch Joseph Rogers Mary Dudek Andrew MacLachlan
Williamsburg Conservation Commissioners
Melinda McCall, Commission Secretary

Review of NOI for Solar Array at 5 and 5R Hatfield Street. A site visit was done on March 11 with LEC Environmental Consultants, though there was snow cover. Chris Ryan stated that a Forest Cutting Plan exists for the property. The overall plan is to build a 4.7 megawatt DC array. The site would be located on 13 acres of cleared land with an additional five acres cleared for roads and catchment basins.

- The plan calls for an 18-foot-wide gravel access road to access the site. The road narrows at a stream crossing. The crossing site was chosen because it is the narrowest crossing point, and has a lower slope, allowing fire trucks to access the site.
- Stormwater mitigation: All trees have to be removed. The land will be turned to meadow, resulting in higher runoff. This runoff will be routed to infiltration basins via swales. Swales and ponds will be created by excavating to bedrock. Outlet control structures will be built into the ponds, with water flowing to wetlands. The weirs are designed to prevent overflow for 100 year storms as determined by updated NOAA numbers. Commissioners expressed concern that 100 year floods are becoming more frequent.
- Steeper slopes could be stabilized with a grid to hold plants. Grids could be biodegradable, and easier for wildlife to move over. Mr. Rogers requested specs for the materials.
- The solar field itself will not be regraded. Slopes range from 30% at the base to 15% at higher elevations.
- Erosion control measures will remain in place until the Commission signs off on a Certificate of Completion.
- The installation of a pre-formed cement crossing will permanently disturb part of the resource area. An area adjacent to this site is planned for remediation. This area is currently wooded and will be cleared in order to excavate.
- Mr. Lynch asked if grass would be successful there or if other plants could be better suited. Mr. Ryan said he would check with LEC.
- A switch-back is planned for the road, which would reduce the slope and allow fire access. (was this a suggestion or a plan?)
- An 18-foot-wide gravel access road was an outcome of an effort to stay out of the jurisdictional wetland area. The slope of this road was concerning in terms of runoff and sediment. Possible options for dealing with this problem suggested by Mr. Christie:
 - Create a plunge pool.

- Install a riprap culvert under the road with a spreader that would allow water to flow through 100 feet of woods before hitting the wetlands.
- Add bars or reinforcing geogrid.
- On the lower slope of disturbed areas, sediment will be filtered by staked double bales of hay as well as blown-in tube socks.
- 2 of the 4.3 MW of power are to be held in battery storage so that power can be released at night. Lithium ion-batteries would be stored in an air conditioned building with fire suppressant controls. The self-contained building includes a channel to catch toxic run-off if there was ever a problem.
- Five construction phases are proposed. First is construction of infiltration pond and swale. Then clearing and installation begins at the top of the slope so that there is natural absorption of runoff by down slope forest. Consecutive phases would begin after previous site is stabilized, though stabilization is provided by fibers etc, not plants.

Questions and concerns posed by the Commissioners.

- There was no fee paid for the stream crossing.
- The NOI lists the proposal as a utilities project. Mr. Rogers thinks it should be listed as commercial.
- The narrative should present alternatives that were looked at, with explanations as to why they were rejected. Are there ways to get to the site without a stream crossing?
- Work should be done when the ground is frozen or dry.
- Since the company went straight to an NOI rather than starting with a RDA, there is no information about other potential issues, such as if the project impacts other jurisdictional areas.
- The Commission would like more details on how the bridge would be installed. Is there space to swing a 30 foot bridge? The bridge may need to be taken off the truck before the stream, and brought to the site on loaders.
- What is the tree removal plan along the course of the road? How much of a shoulder? Erosion controls?
- Planting plans for the replication area includes only three types of ferns. Other plants may be beneficial since it will be a sunnier site than the one being destroyed.

- Wetland data forms are needed.
- Analysis of upstream, downstream, and chosen crossing needs to be shown in order to satisfy Stream Crossing Standards.
- Concerns about the forest cutting plan. Was the property in Chapter 61? If so, a state review will need to be done since the clearing would be a conversion of prime forest.
- The Commissioners would like another site visit, and to have a 3rd party review of wetlands delineation. The Commission will find someone.
- There is concern about taking forest land for wetland replication.
- There is concern about the compacted gravel road leading into the array. The 10% slope is the maximum allowed. Pro-tec's response was that the gullies on either side of the road, with a catchment basin, should solve any problems. Also, might suggest using recycled asphalt to reduce sedimentation and improve compaction.

A motion made to continue the meeting to April 11 was approved unanimously.

Further questions/concerns about Hatfield Street Solar array. Should there be an upland restoration in addition to improving what's already been degraded? Is a road within to the array for fire truck access? Is this the Planning Board's jurisdiction? Also, the streamwater crossing and stormwater plans need review.

Spring Newsletter: Issues around large scale solar arrays will be the basis of the newsletter article.

Discussion about changing use of property under Chapter 61 A or B: Land under Chapter 61 is being cleared and converted to large scale solar arrays. Cutting and then immediately applying for solar array does not follow the intention of the law. DCR is not enforcing. Property owners are required to offer the town right of first refusal if pulling out of Chapter 61. They also need to pay taxes. Property owners are also required to do a MEPA review if taking prime forest land out for an alternate use. Rules for cutting trees are more lenient under Chapter 61. There should be a one year moratorium on

changes of use. Perhaps the Commission needs to hire a consultant to help with this issue.

Continuation of Greenway NOI. The commissioners had concerns about the use of herbicides and the effect on neighboring organic farm. An Order of Conditions was written requiring use of best practices including: no broadcast spraying, minimal use of product, avoid spraying in water or on windy days, minimizing impact on adjacent native plants. The Commission wants an annual report on progress and to be informed at the actual start and end of each treatment. Continued maintenance beyond the treatment period covered is allowed through submittal of written or verbal notification. The intention is to actively plant native species appropriate for the location, depending on what is needed for stabilization. The Japanese Knotwood problem extends to the abutters property. The Greenway Committee is willing to work off site if helpful and invited by the landowner. The plan with the conditions was accepted unanimously.

Note about Meeting format: All RDAs are open meetings. NOIs are hearings. These should be grouped together.

Update on 99 Main Street. Commissioners will draft a letter to landowners asking for cooperation and the following of state regulations.

Minutes from March accepted with changes.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda McCall
Secretary - Williamsburg Conservation Commission

Marcianna Caplis C. Todd Lynch Joseph Rogers Mary Dudek Andrew MacLachlan
Williamsburg Conservation Commissioners
Melinda McCall, Commission Secretary