



Williamsburg Conservation Commission  
141 Main Street, P.O. Box 447  
Haydenville, Massachusetts 01039-0447  
Phone: 413-268-8416 Fax: 413-268-8409  
conservation@burgy.org

**Meeting Minutes  
December 9, 2021  
via Zoom**

**Commissioners present – Marci Caplis, Mary Dudek, Andrew MacLachlan, Melinda McCall, and Joe Rogers**

**Members of the public present –Jeff Squire, The Berkshire Design Group; Robert Todisco, P3; Bill Sayre and Jean O’Neil, Public Safety Complex Building Committee**

**Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm**

**Continuation of NOI, Public Safety Complex, Berkshire Design Group/Town of Williamsburg:**

**The Berkshire Design Group (BDG) submitted a revised NOI for the demolition of the old Helen E. James school, site work, and construction of the new Public Safety Complex at 16 Main Street. Most of the site is in the 200 foot river front area of the west branch of the Mill River, while the southern part is in the 100 foot buffer. Jeff Squire shared the changes that were made to the plans in response to requests from the Commissioners at last month’s meeting.**

- The large Norway Maple is marked for removal due to its poor health.**
- Commissioners requested a switch to native, non-cultivars in the plant selection. BDG changed their plant materials, focusing on red-twiggged dogwood, witch-hazel, and maple-leaved viburnum; species that are tough and have fibrous roots to protect the stream bank. River birches replaced Japanese Tree lilacs in the parking islands. Blue Holly was kept in the plan, as a landscaping plant around the building, despite being a cultivar, because it is very tough and low maintenance.**
- Commissioners requested a construction narrative detailing plans for protecting the existing wetlands, what equipment will be used, and how the equipment would access the site without inflicting damage. This was added to**

the NOI.

- Commissioners and DEP had questions about the viability of the rain garden as a stormwater element on the south end of the parking area. BDG dug test pits in the area and found that water was perched above a layer of dense, friable material. Five feet of gravelly soil is between that and the water table. The new plan is to have the contractor break through that layer into the gravelly material beneath it, allowing stormwater to drain freely. It was agreed that the site is redevelopment rather than new development.
- Commissioners would like to see the existing basketball court removed, but the Public Safety Complex Building Committee voted to keep it for now due to a limited budget and potential for funds in the future from the Greenway Committee.
- Commissioners stated a preference for restoring a ten-foot strip along the east side of the river in place of restoring the sandy play area. BDG did not make that change because of a budget concern and an effort to minimize disturbance. Commissioners clarified that, though the sandy area proposed for restoration would be easy to access, its value for restoration is low, and currently has more plant diversity than lawn does. Permitting would not allow for mowed lawn as an improvement. In addition, if that sandy area was used as restoration, it would need to be fenced and be off-limits to recreational use. Commissioners explained that restoring a ten-foot strip along the river would not require much work, just planting some shrubs by hand, excluding machinery and mowing, and letting the buffer revert to a natural state. Mr. Squire expressed concern about the cost of planting.
  - Ms. Caplis reaffirmed that the Commission's focus is on restoring wetlands. Ms. O'Neil expressed concern about the play area becoming off limits if the sandy area is restored.
  - BDG will make a planting plan for the strip along the river.

A motion was made and accepted unanimously to continue the hearing to January 6<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.

**Consultation, Kathleen Casey, 11 Rear, North Main Street:**

Commissioners visited the site and gave advice about what work would need permitting and what would be considered maintenance.

**Minutes** from November 18 were approved with changes.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40.

**Respectfully submitted,**  
**Melinda McCall**  
**Secretary - Williamsburg Conservation Commission**