



Williamsburg Conservation Commission
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Meeting Minutes
August 31, 2023
via Zoom

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

Members of the public present – Jeff Smith, Todd Lynch, Jack and Donna McGill, Joan and Pete LaFogg

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Consideration of NOI, 92 Main Street, Jeff Smith for Martha Arnold, bank stabilization and widening:

No file number had been received from DEP. The Commission discussed the issue, and the hearing was continued to September 14 in anticipation of getting the file number.

The channelized stream is too narrow to hold flow from increasingly intense rain events, and is exacerbated by further narrowing caused by the collapse of some of the vertical walls. The plan addresses these issues by clearing out the stone walls, widening the banks by scraping out slumped soil, and resetting the stones to form a trapezoidal stream bed. Excess soil will be spread on the lawn to fill in low spots which will then be reseeded and further stabilized with landscape fabric such as jute on steeper areas. No extra stones will be brought in. In addition, a small bridge across the driveway also impedes flow. The bridge will be raised about one foot with longer stringers set above the bank and ramped on either end. No trees will be cut other than some sumac behind the shed.

About 75 feet of stream will be affected; upstream to the end of the stone lined channel, and then downstream to the edge of the house, stopping before it reaches land under the jurisdiction of NEHSP (Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.)

J. Rogers pointed out the Routine Maintenance provision in the WPA, 10.53(3) for a limited project, which exempts this type of project from the \$4 per linear foot permit charge for a typical bank stabilization project. The project itself is an improvement over current conditions. Rogers also suggested using a pumping/by-passing system rather than a turbidity blanket to prevent siltation during the work.

Follow up on letter to Pete LaFogg:

The Commission sent a letter to Mr. LaFogg in response to a concern brought by a town resident about possible work being done in the river front area with heavy machinery, as well as tree cutting. Commissioners had visited the site and had not seen any activity or areas of concern and had asked for an update. The LaFoggs reported that they were doing routine maintenance of the fence line for their livestock. Some trees were cut in a different area, but not along the river.

RDA for tree removal, Meekins Library:

Todd Lynch, a library trustee, presented a RDA for the removal of four trees along the river at the library.

- Large Ash near the parking lot that is in bad condition with a two-foot wide cavity: It is being held up by a cable, and an arborist declared it to be a danger.
- Large Sugar Maple with substantial die-off. There is a risk of it falling and damaging the retaining wall along the river.
- A Box Elder and another tree growing out of the retaining wall: There is a risk of debris jamming into these trees during high flow, creating blockages in the river and destabilizing the retaining wall.

Some of the tree material will need to be removed with a crane. There are plans to replant along the river wall, with an emphasis on mid-canopy trees that will provide shade but won't create issues in the future. If the project exceeds the town tree-cutting budget, the trees can be removed over time, based on priority needs during the three year period that the Commission's ruling is valid.

The site is under the jurisdiction of NHESP, and the RDA therefore needs a MESA (Massachusetts Endangered Species Act) review. The town has not received notification of approval from Natural Heritage, so the hearing was continued to September 14. If something happens and an emergency certification is needed, NHESP would still need to be involved.

Follow up on 16 South Street, McGill:

Work was done in the river-front area without a permit. Commissioners visited the site and worked with the McGills to develop a plan that works for the benefit of all and repairs any impact that may have been made in the river-front area.

- The river is uphill of the site so erosion is not a concern.
- Brush piles will be left as a buffer and to benefit wildlife.
- Zone 1 is behind an existing shed and will be laid with gravel for storing equipment or for outdoor seating.
- Zone 2 will be passive recreation with grass.
- Zone 3 will be a pollinator meadow, mowed only for maintenance.
- Zone 4 is within the tree line and will be underplanted with shrubs to improve drainage and to provide food for wildlife.
- Bringing in a small machine to spread loam in Zone 2 is fine.
- Opening up walking trails up to 30 inches wide and clearing hazardous trees is permitted as long as it is done with hand tools.

J. Rogers will draw up a sketch, and suggest some plantings. There is also a fire hydrant in the woods that is inaccessible. Highway Superintendent Banister or Fire Chief Connell will be asked to look at the situation and determine what needs to be done.

Enforcement Order, 94 Ashfield Road, Patricia and Roger Tetrault:

The Tetrault's live on the far side of the river on Ashfield Road, with access via a pedestrian bridge. Their old bridge was destroyed in the July flood. They were able to put in a temporary crossing and hired a company to build a new bridge. They talked with several town entities about the situation but were not informed that the project needed to be permitted by the Conservation Commission. The Enforcement Order asked for a halt to further work, and commissioners have a site visit scheduled for September 1. The goal is to find a way for the Tetraults to move forward while offsetting any impacts that may have occurred.

Follow up on South Main Street emergency repairs:

An emergency certification was issued to the town to repair the guardrail and replace eroded pavement damaged in the July flood. A MESA checklist and a locus map was sent to Natural Heritage, and the town received approval.

Upcoming repairs on Adams Road:

The highway department is planning to continue paving on Adams Road. A RDA was received. More information is needed as well as a site visit before the September meeting.

Next Meeting: September 14.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:12

Respectfully submitted,
Melinda McCall
Secretary - Williamsburg Conservation Commission