

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 21 September 2016
Community Room, Mansfield Community Center
MINUTES

Members present: Aline Booth (Alt.), Neil Facchinetti, Mary Harper (Alt.), Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, Grant Meitzler, Michael Soares. *Members absent:* Robert Dahn, John Silander. *Others present:* Beverly Sims, William Okeson, Allison Hilding, David Sherwood, Elle Randazza, Tom Fahey, George Logan, Dave Ziaks, Tony Giorgio (Storrs Lodges); Jennifer Kaufman (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:34p by Chair Quentin Kessel. In the absence of two members, Alternates Aline Booth & Mary Harper were entitled to participate fully in the business of the meeting.

2. The **draft minutes** of the 17 August 2016 meeting were approved as written. {However, while it accurately reflects the Commission's understanding at the August meeting, the parenthetical phrase "(in particular, the Storrs Lodges application)" in item 4 is incorrect and will not appear in the approved minutes: the PZC had not accepted the Storrs Lodges application before the moratorium went into effect.}

3. IWA referrals. {The order in which the referrals were taken up was altered to accommodate visitors.}

a. **W1577 (Benzie, 1029 Storrs Rd).** The applicant proposes to install a new septic system for a new restaurant in the old Goodale Garage building. The system would be at the bottom of the steep slope behind the building, about 30 ft from wetlands at its closest point. Kaufman has asked for a soil analysis to verify that the proposed system would not endanger the wetland. After brief discussion, the Commission decided to defer to the result of this analysis (**motion:** Kessel, Lehmann): Provided the soil scientist hired by the Town finds no reason to question the application, the Commission foresees no significant wetlands impact from this project.

b. **W1564-2 (Storrs Lodges, Hunting Lodge Rd).** {Faccinetti, Harper, Kessel, Lehmann, Meitzler, & Soares participated in a Field Trip to the site on 12 September.}

Dave Ziaks presented an overview of the proposed development, with particular emphasis on wetlands issues.

The property amounts to 45.93 acres, of which 24.5 acres would be disturbed (at least temporarily: some of the disturbed area will be re-vegetated with buffer plantings). There are 6.7 acres of wetlands, divided by an old woods road that runs north from Northwood Rd. Wetland to the west of this old road drains to Cedar Swamp Brook; it includes a vernal pool, created by fill for the old road. Wetland to the east of the old road joins a north-south band of wetland across the property that drains to Eagleville Brook.

47 two-story units housing 692 students are proposed, half of them near Northwood Rd, half adjacent to Carriage House Apartments. All would be accessed by a road going west from Hunting Lodge Rd across the north-south band of wetland to the old woods road, which would be followed north to uplands beyond the vernal pool. Emergency access would be via a short extension of Northwood Rd.

To minimize wetland disturbance, the access road would be routed across the north-south wetland over an existing causeway for another old woods road. A 32 ft precast concrete arch

bridge {to be lifted into place by a crane} would span the middle of the wetland, preserving the existing causeway underneath it while reducing the amount of fill required for the 24 ft roadway. 4,400 ft² (approximately 0.1 acre) of wetland here would be filled to provide bridge footings and bedding for the wider road on either side of the bridge.

To compensate for this disturbance, the applicant proposes (a) to create wetland in a flat area adjacent to the wetland over which the access road passes (on the east side, north of the road), and (b) to restore wetland by removing old fill across the access road from the vernal pool. These projects would enlarge wetlands by 7,800 ft², a net gain of 3,400 ft². The applicant also proposes hand-removal of invasive barberry from wetlands on the property.

The decentralized storm-water management system is designed to preserve existing flows to wetlands by collecting runoff from impervious surfaces (roofs, pavement) in dispersed underground reservoirs for infiltration and discharge to bio-retention basins. There would be enough capacity in the reservoirs to handle runoff from a 100-year storm event.

The applicant maintains that the proposed access is superior to alternatives. A wetland crossing cannot be avoided, and the one proposed minimizes wetland disturbance. Access from Northwood Rd or Carriage House Rd is not feasible, as these roads are essentially parking lots that cannot handle a lot more traffic. Moreover, gaining access from Carriage House Rd would require negotiating a right of way with the owners of Carriage House Apartments. Access from Hunting Lodge Rd could be routed across the north-south wetland near the northern property line, but this area is at present undisturbed, whereas the proposed access utilizes a developed corridor.

Questions and answers {the latter provided mostly by George Logan}

- Q (Harper, 8/12/16 memo to GEI Consultants): What reason is there to think the ground-water infiltration system would work properly, given the often high water table and low permeability of soils? A: Numerous test holes have provided enough information on soils to warrant confidence that the system will work as advertised. Groundwater levels confronted by the system will typically be lower than those that now occur, since the system will be dispersing runoff that now soaks into the soil.
- Q (Harper): How would the storm-water system keep oil and other pollutants from parking lots from entering the groundwater. A: Pollutants attach to solids (sand, sediment), which would be captured in catch-basin sumps (which must be cleaned annually). Each catch basin would receive runoff from a relatively small area. The system is designed to meet the standard of removing 80% of total suspended solids. Runoff would then be released via the underground reservoirs to bio-retention basins, where remaining pollutants would be filtered out before the water enters wetland.
- Q (Soares): What assurance can be given that Storrs Lodges won't add to groundwater problems on Meadowood La? A: An under-drain system along the common property line would direct groundwater to wetland.
- Q (Faccinetti): Are the bio-retention basins going to function properly as filtration devices when groundwater is high? A: Most bio-retention basins would be located in moderately well-drained soils and will have under-drains to keep them from overtopping. Basins in well-drained soils don't need under-drains; basins in poorly drained soils will basically function as extensions of wetlands.
- Q (Kessel): What is known about the longevity of such basins? A: Basins of this design have been in use for 15-20 years with no problems.
- Q (Booth): How will the storm-water system be monitored and maintained? A: The Town could require a performance bond and inspections by an independent agent. It will be easier for the Town to deal with one owner than with a number of

- owners, as would be the case if the property were subdivided.
- Q (Facchinetti): What responses does the applicant have to concerns raised at the 9/06 public hearing about the potential wetland impacts of road salt, pet feces, and large piles of snow? A: Only approved de-icing chemicals would be used on roads and parking areas, pets will not be permitted, and the size of snow piles will be limited by the relatively small size of parking areas.
- Q (Beverly Sims): Would diesel-powered bus service adversely affect the vernal pool? A: Any bus service would go only as far as the proposed Community Center.
- Q (Lehmann): In what sense is it true (as has been claimed) that this project will have no impact on wetlands? A: While there will be short-term impacts during construction (and managed by appropriate controls), the project has been designed so that over the long term wetlands receive water of the same quantity and quality as they do now, and function in the same way in the watershed. (For example, the arch bridge on the access road will preserve the old causeway, which now functions as a dam that slows runoff to Eagleville Brook.)
- Q (Soares): How will construction be managed to minimize wetland impacts? A: In addition to the usual sediment controls, construction will be scheduled to avoid work near the vernal pool when amphibians are using it for breeding.

With exhaustion of issues and participants, discussion ended at 9:22p, and most of the applicant's representatives left the meeting. {But see 3.e below for questions addressed to the IWA.}

c. **W1575 (Willard J. Stearns & Sons, Inc., Browns & Coventry Rds).** {The Commission has previously commented on a pre-application submission for this project; see item 3 in the minutes for the meeting of 15 April 2015.} A 9-lot subdivision ("Mountain View Acres") is proposed for a 36-acre parcel on the corner of Coventry and Browns Rds. Lots 1-7 would be accessed by two common driveways from Coventry Rd. The northerly one serving Lots 1-3 crosses a wetland to access the house site on Lot 1; approximately 4,800 ft² of wetland would be disturbed. House sites on Lots 4-7 are clustered around a circle at the end of the southerly common driveway. Lots 8 & 9 are on Browns Rd; Lot 8 contains the existing house at No. 522. About 2.5 acres at the corner of Browns & Coventry Rds would be dedicated to the Town as open space.

Kessel distributed a draft comment, which was amended slightly in discussion. Harper noted that soils are described as draining "very slowly" and wondered whether the "relatively flat land" permits adequate slope for foundation drains. The Commission then agreed to comment as follows (**motion:** Kessel, Harper; all in favor save Lehmann, who lives at 532 Browns Rd and recused himself):

The applicant is to be complimented for the new design of the southern shared driveway, the proposed effort to preserve the high ledge on the southeasterly corner, and the easements proposed for the border on Coventry Road and elsewhere. This is consistent with the guidelines of the Conservation Subdivision, whose purpose is preserve natural areas. On the other hand, the northern shared driveway poses a problem for the Mansfield Conservation Commission (CC). It is a blatant misuse of the shared driveway regulation. A portion of the driveway to Lot 1 crosses approximately 150 feet of wetland. This is not consistent with either the Conservation Subdivision Regulations or those for the shared driveways.

As stated in Section 7.10, the use of a common driveway is not a right, but may be authorized where it would promote the design objectives of Section 5.1. That is a question the PZC must address. The CC feels that the northern shared driveway does not respect or promote these objectives, which include (according to Section 7.10.3) protection of scenic views and vistas, interior forests and/or potential conservation areas identified in the Plan of Conservation and Development. Section 7.10.4 states that the common driveway will promote cluster development. To earn the right of having three houses on a shared driveway, the developers should demonstrate a commitment to the design objectives of Section 5.1 before being granted a common driveway for lots 1-3.

Section 5.1 includes the following as benefits of shared driveways:

b. The protection and enhancement of existing and potential public water supply wells and ground water and surface water quality through appropriate design and installation of sanitary systems, roadways, drainage facilities, house sites and other site improvements;

c. The protection and enhancement of natural and manmade features, including wetlands, watercourses, aquifer areas, agricultural lands, hilltops or ridges, historic sites and features, expanses of valley floors, interior forests, significant trees and scenic views and vistas on and adjacent to the subdivision site. Wherever appropriate, site features shall be protected through a clustering of streets and house sites and the identification and preservation of significant open space areas including agricultural lands, interior forests and other land without physical limitations.

The long driveway to Lot 1 involves approximately 4,800 ft² of disturbance to wetlands, a significant impact. Ideally the CC would like to see Lot 1 set aside as open space, or offered for sale to the neighbors, especially those two whose houses will be directly impacted by the proposed placement on Lot 1. In no way does the proposed layout “cluster” the three houses on this shared driveway. The cost of developing Lot 1, with its long driveway through the wetland, and providing wetland mitigation suggests that its sale will not be optimal for the developers.

The CC would also like assurance that the proposed foundation drains have enough slope to function properly, especially in wet periods, given the characteristics of the soil.

d. W1576 (Russer-Milne, 494 Wormwood Hill Rd) The applicants propose a 24x24 ft 2-story addition to their house, 43 ft from a stream at its closest point. The Commission agreed (**motion:** Soares, Faccinetti) unanimously that no significant impact on wetlands is to be expected from this project, as long as proper erosion and sedimentation controls are implemented.

e. Questions for the IWA concerning W1564-2. At Kaufman’s suggestion, the Commission formulated the following questions for the IWA regarding the Storrs Lodges application:

- How is the proper maintenance and functioning of the storm-water system to be assured over the long term?
- How will adequate protection of wetlands be assured during the construction phase? Will there be third-party monitoring?
- What is GEI Consultants’ view of the issues raised by Harper (12 August) and Kip

Kolesinskas (17 July)?

- Has the alternative of a lower density development been considered?

4. Adjourned at 9:56p. Next meeting: 7:30p, Wednesday, 19 October 2016.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 26 September 2016; approved as amended, 19 October 2016.