

Town of Pelham, NH
Pelham Conservation Commission
6 Village Green
Pelham, NH 03076-3723

MEETING OF 08/14/19

Members Present

Karen Mackay, Louise Delehanty,
Kara Kubit (alt), Al Steward (alt),
Brandie Shydo, Paul Gagnon

APPROVED 09/11/2019

Members Absent:

Ken Stanvick, Dennis Hogan (alt),
Mike Gendreau, Lisa Loosigian

Paul Gagnon brought the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and appointed Al Steward and Kara Kubit as voting members for tonight.

NEW BUSINESS:

Map 28 Lot 7-136 & Map 29 Lot 7-131	59-85 Marsh Road, School Department properties – Discussion of a wetlands permit application for the construction of the replacement of two foot bridges for the Pelham High School cross country trails – Presentation by Nicole Duquette of Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) and Kenny Pawlowicz working on an Eagle Scout Project.
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The wetland permit application has been submitted to NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) by GPI. GPI will not be responsible for any construction on the site. The wetland permit application is for the repair and construction of 2 cross-country trail bridges over an intermittent stream that runs behind the school properties. The impact area is proposed to be 760 square feet (sf). The impact has been reduced since the application was compiled because the work on the bridges will not be as extensive as initially proposed. No other permits are needed to begin construction.

There was no permit ever pulled for these bridges and no original drawings. This application will allow the Pelham School Department to have legally permitted bridges that comply with state regulations. The bridges will be raised by about 6 inches in order to keep the structure above the 50 year storm event. These bridges will not be above the 100 year storm. There will be no issues during normal size storms. Both bridges will have earthen ramps that lead up to each end of each bridge with a WCD and wetland impact of about 50 sf for each. Earthen material will not be brought into the area, the material will be acquired on-site and moved to the ramp locations. Retaining walls will not be necessary because the ramps will be sloped up about 6 inches. The decking of the bridges will be composite material rather than wood which will be expected to last 10 years.

One bridge is a 40 foot long span. This bridge is sagging in the center and has become unsafe and is difficult to walk across. Initially the school department wanted to replace and enlarge the bridge, but bids for the work came in that far exceeded the budget. This bridge will have the

frame reinforced and the decking on the top of the bridge will be replaced. The bridge will remain about 5 feet wide which will cause bottle necks as multiple runners reach the bridge at the same time. All work will be done above the stream bed. There will be permanent impacts inside the stream bed for the posts that currently rest in the bed.

Mr. Pawlowicz has designed and will construct the second bridge as part of an Eagle Scout Project. The second bridge will be 8 feet wide and 20 feet long. Stringers 2 x 12 inches by 20 feet will be used in the construction with a spacing of 16 inches on center. Mr. Gagnon requested the spacing be 12 inches on center because of the heavy foot traffic expected on the bridge. Mr. Pawlowicz agreed to Mr. Gagnon's request. Posts in the stream bed will not be necessary to support the bridge. A 6x6 inch by 10 foot long support will be placed at each end of the bridge. A one-half inch by 2 foot long section of rebar will be hammered into the ground to anchor each side of the end supports in place.

This bridge will be totally replaced. Over the years the bridge in this location has been built, been washed away in high waters, then been built again. Each old bridge has been too heavy and/or too damaged to move back into place to serve as a safe bridge. This bridge will be built across the stream bed. No supports will be necessary in the stream bed. These design modifications will be added to the wetlands permit application. All old bridge materials and debris will be removed from the site of the 20 foot bridge by Mr. Pawlowicz.

NH Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) has found several hits on plant and animal life in the area. A 14 page document from the NHB describes the species of concern and is included in the wetlands application. NHB does not think this development will impact these species. They requested the boards on the bridges be placed with a one inch gap between boards. NH Fish and Game had no comments on this project.

There will be some impact to the stream bed during construction for the movement of materials and walking through the bed while working. There will be silt socks/fencing which will help keep the slope stable while construction is being done. Materials for the bridges will be stored upslope from the wetlands.

As Conservation members, we try to evaluate whether a site will be improved or degraded with any proposed construction. Mr. Gagnon believes this site will be improved by the construction of these bridges. The bridges will be improved in order to provide safe passage to the cross-country team as well as public use of the bridges and trails. In addition, secure bridges will prevent the wash-outs and debris that remains within the wetland from destroyed bridges every few years.

Open to Public:
No public input.

Motion: (Steward/Delehanty) to recommend the plan as described and remove all debris pieces from previously damage/destroyed bridges.
Vote: 6-0 in favor

Map 30 Lot 11-102	61 Dutton Road – Proposed 3 lot subdivision with wetland and WCD impacts – Presentation by Joseph Maynard of Benchmark Engineering, Inc.
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This property is a 10+ acre parcel with a powerline easement along the easterly side of the property. A wetland runs through the powerline corridor and bisects the lot then exits to the west toward Clark Circle. This wetland area flows into Tony's Brook. The ZBA requested Mr. Maynard come to Conservation prior to a ZBA vote.

Mr. Maynard must go to ZBA for the frontage of the property. The lot has 500+ feet of frontage on Dutton Road. The current house is proposed to have 200 feet with 1 acre of land. The lot directly behind the house is proposed to have 110 feet of frontage and 2.2 acres of land. The rear lot on the property is proposed to have 200 feet of frontage and 7 acres of land. The rear lot is largely within the powerline easement and has the most wetlands on the property.

The property will have a long shared driveway for the back 2 lots to minimize wetland and WCD impacts. Mr. Maynard would need a hammer-head in order for large emergency vehicles to turn around at the end of the long driveway. Mr. Maynard has not done a full dredge and fill yet. He does not want the expense if he cannot get the zoning approval for the two additional lots. A 21 inch culvert is needed in the wetland crossing in order to handle a 50 year storm event. Mr. Maynard is proposing a 36 inch culvert because in recent talks with the state they have requested larger culverts for the purpose of burying one-quarter to one-third of the culvert to form a natural bottom. Natural bottoms on stream beds allow small animals to crawl through the culverts. The larger size allows the culvert to be buried and still permit storm water to flow easily. A 36 inch culvert in this location should handle a 100 year storm event.

Mr. Maynard was initially going to subdivide this lot into 5 lots with a town road. There is space for 5 lots with 35,000 sf outside of the wetlands for each lot. All calculated area for building is outside the powerline easement. Five lots would greatly expand the impacts to the wetlands and WCD. If a road is built on this property, the design would be much more complicated than a driveway and the wetland crossing could not be at the narrowest point. The lot has good sandy soils and a low water table. He decided a 3 lot subdivision with a shared driveway would be a reasonable alternative.

Mr. Maynard sent his request for protected species to Natural Heritage Bureau today. Results take about 2 weeks.

Public Comments:

Mr. Robert Gamble read a letter, written by his wife to the town, into the record. The letter expressed concerns about water flow, damage to the wetlands and the powerlines being used as a wildlife corridor. The stream proposing to be crossed has been described as an intermittent stream, but Mr. Gamble disputes that characterization. He says water flows all year and the width of the stream is in the 6-7 foot range. Recent building across Dutton Road has caused water to increase on his property. He is concerned that more building will cause more water to flow to his property. Mr. Gamble would like to walk the property with the Commission.

David Hennessey is a member of the ZBA, but has spoken in the capacity of an abutter. He has recused himself from this case. He lives on the opposite side of the powerlines and does not feel this project will affect his property. He did suggest the case be seen by Conservation because the powerlines are a major corridor for wildlife from Dracut to Windham, the wetlands involved feed into Tony's Brook and the town is an abutter to this property. Mr. Hennessey is not opposed to the project he just thought the project should be evaluated. Tony's Brook has had problems in the past as the Brook drains behind Clark Circle, crosses Dutton Road near the Baptist Church then flows under the shopping plaza and into Beaver Brook. There has been extensive water backups at the end of Dutton Road and into the shopping plaza which may need to be considered when development is happening adjacent to Tony's Brook.

Commission Comments:

Ms. Delehanty described state Senate Bill 200 which just passed. The bill talks about wildlife corridors. During the development process, consideration should be given to wildlife corridors, connectivity, roads, and enlarging culverts. Water is flowing through the powerlines all winter. These tributaries flow behind Clark Circle and into Tony's Brook.

This driveway will be very long. Commission members do not want to see salts and deicing chemicals running off the driveway into the wetlands. Restriction on the use of salts is difficult to enforce. Another issue of concern from members is the wildlife corridor. The uplands surrounding the wetlands in the area could be used by reptiles and small mammals for nesting. Sandy soils are good for drainage, but are also good for turtles to lay eggs. Mr. Maynard stated he would not be touching the buffer to the wildlife corridor.

Mr. Gagnon described 3 problems with the project. There is not enough frontage so a variance is needed. The driveway will be long at 700 feet and shared which the town does not like. In addition, there is a driveway crossing. Mr. Gagnon complemented the owners for doing a beautiful job restoring the house on Dutton Road. This lot is compromised by the wetland and powerline easement, as well as, the lack of frontage. Mr. Gagnon would like to see one additional house lot which would solve all other issues. Each of the two lots would have 200+ feet of frontage, a short driveway, no shared driveway, no wetland crossing and no need for ZBA approvals. Last year the town purchased 25 acres off Clark Circle. There is a lot of wildlife in the area. This development seems excessive for this site. One additional home with the existing home is reasonable. More than that is excessive.

Motion: (Mackay/Steward) to request a site walk.

Vote: 6-0 in favor.

Site walk will be Saturday August 24, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. The Commission will invite the ZBA.

WALK IN ITEMS:

Mr. Steward has been collecting short videos from hikes on town parks and lands. He has filmed hikes with the senior groups, logging on school property and work on the trails. Equipment has been moved to the conservation area by Moeckel Pond for a timber harvest.

Ms. Mackay has seen 1 adult and 2 juvenile bald eagles multiple times this summer on Canobie Lake. Recently, one of the juveniles caught a large mouth bass and was eating the fish while sitting in a tree. Ms. Shydo said she saw a bald eagle eating carrion on the town beach a few years ago. Ms. Mackay also saw a squirrel playing like a kitten in the yard. The squirrel was tumbling and pouncing, running up and down trees and doing summersaults. Ms. Delehanty saw a coyote cross her yard by the powerlines. Which reinforces the idea of this area as a wildlife corridor. Mr. Steward was fishing today on Gumpas Pond and saw an adult and juvenile osprey chasing each other diving and soaring over the lake.

Next month will be the last Conservation meeting prior to Old Home Day. Ms. Delehanty would like to pass some of her supplies for the event off to another member. She has set up the display for the past several years and is unable to do the set up this year. Ms. Shydo volunteered to take the supplies and do the set up in the morning.

There was a brief discussion about the positives of conservation land as opposed to developed land. Open land is cost neutral to a town where residential development costs the town more money than it produces in taxes.

MINUTES:

Motion: (Shydo/Steward) to approve the minutes of July 10, 2019.

Vote: 6-0 in favor.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: (Mackay/Shydo) to adjourn.

Vote: 6-0 in favor.

Adjourned 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Mackay,
Recording Secretary