

Weston Conservation Commission (WCC) - Public Meeting Minutes
September 5, 2023
Approved: September 19, 2023

Members Participating: Joe Berman (Chair), Rob Mosher, Sean Rush, Ellen Freeman Roth

Members Absent: Rees Tullos, Glenn Butcher, Alison Barlow

Conservation Staff: Jordan McCarron, Joshua Baker

Notes: Under current state law public bodies may continue holding hybrid and fully remote meetings, without a quorum of the public body physically present, as long as adequate, alternative access is provided. As such, no in-person attendance of members of the public was available but every effort was made to ensure that the public could adequately access the proceedings in real time including a dial-in option.

Joe Berman, Chair, opened the meeting at 7:30 pm with an opportunity for public comment. Hearing none, the following hearings and meetings were taken up in order.

Prior to and for 2 weeks after this meeting, meeting materials can be found at:

<https://www.westonma.gov/DocumentCenter/Index/5106>

Approval: Signage for Historic Site on Sears Land

Phyllis Halpern, Historic Commission, gave an overview of the proposal. After the approval of Eagle Scout Ciaran Gavin's project to clear vegetation and improve visibility at a factory site located along the driveway into 27 Crescent Street, the Historic Commission thought it would be useful to have a second sign on site to describe the larger water management system by the water mill and school furniture factory. The sign would be 18x24 on a single wooden post and installed along an existing trail.

A motion to approve the installation of an interpretive sign at the Sears Land by the Historic Commission in the vicinity of the mill and school furniture factory site, the final design to be approved by the Conservation Administrator was made by Sean Rush; seconded by Rob Mosher. Roll call vote 4-0 in favor.

Request for Determination of Applicability: 128 Wellesley Street, DOA 2023-012; C. Miller

Dave Burke, Wetland Scientist, provided an overview of the proposal, which included the expansion of the existing driveway and replacement/improvement of the existing catch basin. All work is in the outer 50-foot of the Buffer Zone to a Bordering Vegetative Wetland. A portion of the site's planting plan also falls within the 100-foot buffer zone on site, to which it was noted that all species being planted in the buffer zone will be native.

Ellen Freeman Roth, Commissioner, expressed concern using a Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) application for this type of project, wondering if accepting an increase in impervious surfaces incrementally through RDAs could see a larger cumulative impact on the property and Resource Area. Dave Burke reminded that the Wetlands Protection Act instructs us to look at the impact to the Buffer Zone and whether it would impact the wetland. In this case, it would be difficult to make such a link.

A motion to issue a Negative 3 Determination of Applicability for 128 Wellesley Street, DOA 2023-012, was made by Ellen Freeman Roth; seconded by Sean Rush. Roll call vote 4-0 in favor.

Cont. Notice of Intent: 21 Warren Place, DEP 337-1475; M. McDade

A motion to continue the Notice of Intent hearing for 21 Warren Place, DEP 337-1475, to September 19th, at 8:00 pm, by request of the applicant, was made by Rob Mosher; seconded by Ellen Freeman Roth. Roll call vote 4-0 in favor.

Cont. Notice of Intent: 12 Robin Road, DEP 337-1474; K. Zhao

A motion to continue the Notice of Intent hearing for 12 Robin Road, DEP 337-1474, to September 19th, at 8:15 pm, by request of the applicant, was made by Ellen Freeman Roth; seconded by Rob Mosher. Roll call vote 4-0 in favor.

Cont. Notice of Intent: 169 Ridgeway Road, DEP 337-1470; P. Harkins

Jordan McCarron, Conservation Administrator, provided an overview of the permitting history of the project, citing the previous needs for stormwater and board of health comments and review which were now in their final stages. Diane Simonelli, Field Resources, gave an overview and update of the project. The applicant had hired an arborist to review the tree's in the tree removal area, reducing the proposed removal from 14 to 11 and providing details on each tree to be removed as well as the three to be saved. In addition, the applicant had expanded their mitigation planting to include replacement trees as well as the 35 shrubs. A wildlife habitat assessment was conducted on site, showcasing that the site is not privy to any unusual or outstanding habitat quality.

Ellen Freeman Roth, Commissioner, inquired if the applicant would be willing to plant additional trees. Ms. Simonelli suggested that they would be amenable. Ms. Freeman Roth further questioned how possible it would be to plant trees on the site due to ledge conditions. Ms. Simonelli explained that the arborist had provided direction on how to retain the protected trees and sees no reason that new trees couldn't grow near the ledge considering that trees currently grow there.

Rebecca Sykes, homeowner, cited the arborist report which showed that they could save two oaks and a hickory. The 11 remaining trees slated for removal consisted of 7 which were hazardous or non-native and so only 4 trees to be removed were in good health. Joe DiGregorio, homeowner, said that they would be willing to add more plantings and enhance the habitat in any way they could.

Ken Galton, 171 Ridgeway road, asserted that this project doesn't constitute an improvement over existing conditions, citing the blasting of ledge, removal of large canopy trees, and challenges to stormwater management. Mr. Galton expressed further concern over the stormwater management, explaining that the alterations made could cause flooding in his basement as well as on the road itself, saying that leaf duff could clog any drains or catch basins. Ms. Simonelli replied that there won't necessarily be blasting, depending on the ledge. Further, Ms. Simonelli explained that the planting plan is robust and designed to enhance the area, and further, that the stormwater system will have an operation and maintenance plan to prevent clogs. Melissa Galton, 171 Ridgeway Road, cautioned that the ledge will be likely difficult to remove, and assumedly will need blasting.

The Commission concluded that it would be required for the planting plan to represent as much of an improvement as possible to satiate all the concerns regarding the project. Further, Ms. Simonelli offered to plant one tree per healthy tree removed. The Commission agreed and suggested conditioning the Order of Conditions to require a new planting plan to be reviewed and approved by the Conservation Administrator.

A motion to close the Notice of Intent hearing for 169 Ridgeway Road, DEP 337-1470, and issue an Order of Conditions with special conditions requiring all applicable local permits to be received before construction commences and a planting plan submitted and approved by the Conservation Administration with planting locations to be decided in the field, was made by Sean Rush; seconded by Rob Mosher. Roll call vote 4-0 in favor.

The Following Administrative Matters were addressed throughout the meeting:

Approval of the 8/22/23 Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes:

A motion to approve the 8/22/23 Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes was made by Ellen Freeman Roth; seconded by Rob Mosher. Roll call vote 3-0-1 in favor.

Approval of Trail Re-route at College Pond Conservation Area; DEP 337-1016:

A motion to approve the relocation of a trail at College Pond under Section II(1) of the Trail Maintenance and Invasive Species Management Order of Conditions, DEP 337-1016, was made by Rob Mosher; seconded by Ellen Freeman Roth. Roll call vote 4-0 in favor.

Jordan McCarron, Conservation Administrator, provided the following Land Management Updates:

- The Conservation Office has received several comments and concerns this year regarding the field mowing, specifically at 80-Acre Field and Ash Street. The concerns were expressed over the late mowing, which cut flowering plants short. Mr. McCarron explained that this incorrect timing was due to the abnormally wet season and that this is not an expected result for future seasons.
- A “Trails Summit” with WFTA will take place in October with a more precise date pending.

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 pm.