

APPROVED

APPROVED

MINTUES OF THE NEW CASTLE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Tuesday, November 7th, 2017 – 5:00 p.m.

Members Present: Lynn McCarthy, Chair, Conni White, Vice-Chair, Rebecca Audet, Beth Barnhorst, Tracy Degnan, Rockingham County Conservation District, Darcy Horgan, Ron Pascale, Jim Rini, Brandon Tanguay

Members Absent: Bill Marshall

Others Present: Don Graves, Building Inspector, Richard and Heidi Reilly, 29 Shaw Circle

1. Approve Minutes.

Ms. McCarthy called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. and asked attendees to sign in. Ms. Barnhorst made a motion to approve the October minutes as written. Ms. White seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Work Session / Applications.

Richard and Heidi Reilly were present for a work session to review construction plans for their property at 29 Shaw Circle. They do not need a conditional use permit, as they are building up on an existing structure, but their construction plans fall within the wetland buffer. Don Graves, Town Building Inspector, directed the Reillys to the Conservation Commission for suggestions on how to proceed with their plans while protecting the surrounding wetlands. Mr. Graves gave an overview of the Reillys' plans, which are to put a second level over the existing footprint, while keeping the same roof coverage as before. The north, east, and west side of the existing footprint fall within the 50 foot wetland buffer. The Town Zoning Board approved the Reillys' plans, as nothing would be expanded further into the wetland buffer zone. Mr. Graves added that the Reillys will be upgrading their septic system and will relocate it 75 feet away from the wetland.

Ms. White inquired about the current vegetation on the side of the Reilly property. Ms. Reilly noted that there is currently fresh water wetland on the side of the property, with a rock wall setting down into the wetlands. Ms. White would like the landscape materials to be addressed, and raised concern about construction sediment going into the wetland. The Reillys noted that they will be using a silt fence during the construction process to contain sediments and prevent them from entering the adjacent wetland. No vegetation removal will be necessary for the proposed construction plans. Ms. White asked about the Reillys' landscaping plans, and while they do not have detailed landscaping plans, they are hoping to upgrade the rock wall in the backyard to make it higher and sturdier. Ms. Reilly noted that there would be no changes to the grass coverage on their property, and Ms. Barnhorst advised against planting grass into the wetland setback, as this could result in fertilizer entering the wetland.

Mr. Rini suggested directing the roof drainage to the south side of the property, particularly drainage coming from the north end of the property that falls in the buffer zone. The Reillys agreed with his proposal to have gutters running to the east side of the land that is not in the buffer zone.

Ms. White and Ms. McCarthy plan on conducting a site visit at the Reillys' property, during which they will give guidance on buffer planting that will help protect the wetland.

3. Unfinished Business.

Ms. McCarthy gave an update on the Tree Preservation Committee, which has been meeting weekly. The Committee is focusing on three areas: enforcement, education, and drafting tree cutting permits. Enforcement is the largest issue facing the town right now, so the Committee has been discussing potentially having a code enforcement officer. There have also been discussions about adding a section on tree cutting to existing Town Building Permit Applications. This section would include rules surrounding tree cutting in town, specifications on what would need to come before the Conservation Commission, and penalties for any infractions of these rules.

Ms. Degnan noted that the Rye Conservation Commission has been having similar issues with enforcing tree cutting rules, and said that the Commission now takes pictures during site walks to keep for documentation purposes. She also mentioned that if there were to be a town tree ordinance, the Building Inspector would have to enforce it.

4. New Business.

Ms. Degnan of the Rockingham County Conservation District (RCCD) was present to discuss outreach that will further educate the community on conservation practices.

Ms. Degnan stated that the New Castle Conservation Commission applied to a Department of Agriculture Integrated Pest Management (IPM) grant three years ago, and was awarded \$5,000. She presented the final report of the grant, which entailed: 1) going into Lavenger's Creek salt marsh to set up three plots where a solarization experiment would take place (these areas were previously cut in 2014, and the plots were set in 2015), 2) cutting down 2/3 of an acre in the largest patch of phragmites in Lavenger's Creek, and 3) completing outreach, which involved speaking with land owners and residents about pest management practices around Lavenger's Creek.

Ms. Degnan outlined components of the outreach, which included a salt marsh "walk and talk" with Dave Burdick in October 2015, and an event for municipal officials and volunteer board members led by Frank Richardson in January 2016. A final report of the findings, "Phragmites Control Methods to Highlight Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Tools to Restore Critical Habitat" was distributed at the meeting. The report includes an executive summary highlighting the importance of Lavenger's Creek, a breakdown of objectives and the related findings, a list of permits, and the outreach that has been completed. Ms. Degnan requested that any comments and suggestions on the report be sent to her by Wednesday, November 15th at noon so that she can send a revised version of the report to the NH DAMF (Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food) and to the NH DES (Department of Environmental Services).

Pictures of the solarization experiment, including a workshop on the project and the challenges of conducting the experiment, were distributed. Ms. Degnan noted that the solarization experiment stopped the majority of phragmites from resprouting. She recommended solarization, coupled with proper management and time, for treating a small area of phragmites or other

invasive plants. Ms. Degnan felt that solarization would not be reasonable for a larger plot, as the tide changes would render it difficult to keep the plastic layering down, which would make the project too labor-intensive.

Ms. Barnhorst asked about the effect of storm water drains on the growth of phragmites. Ms. Degnan stated that the storm drains that feed directly into Lavenger's Creek are indeed contributing to phragmites growth, and that this is a topic that should be further reviewed. Ms. Barnhorst would like to put in the report suggestions of ways to prevent the regrowth of phragmites. Ms. Degnan agreed, and brought up the possibility of retrofitting storm water basins on town and state right-of-way land that could accept runoff water and filter it before it reaches the wetland. She raised concerns over a lack of records on storm drains in town, and whether this is a town or state issue. Ms. Degnan suggested speaking with Steve Tabbutt, Department of Public Works Superintendent, and a NH DOT (Department of Transportation) representative to discuss concerns over storm water drainage impacting Lavenger's Creek, and to see if it would be possible to get hazard mitigation funding to address the ongoing watershed issue. Ms. McCarthy would like to see the town revamp its storm water regulations, and Ms. Barnhorst added that she would like to have stricter zoning ordinances in town.

Discussion continued over ways to strengthen the Conservation Commission's outreach. Ms. McCarthy suggested installing a sign by the New Castle Public Library that could include announcements about educational events in the Macomber Room. A potential location of the sign would be in place of the large burning bush near the library entrance.

Ms. McCarthy asked about suggestions that the Commission could give homeowners to help with phragmites control. Ms. Degnan noted the importance of keeping up with cutting back the phragmites, but cautioned that this alone will not solve the problem, as the plant is being fed by drainage water and fertilizer that has leached into the wetland. Mr. Pascale suggested putting an article in the New Castle Islander with images of phragmites accompanying a description of the problems they pose to the local ecosystem.

Ms. Barnhorst would like to see more education at the elementary school in town to educate children, who can then share this information at home with their parents. Ms. McCarthy brought up the possibility of using the town property on Pit Lane as a science educational center for the Maude H. Trefethen school to use. This area was formerly the site of the town dump, but could be cleaned up and include a small trail leading to Lavenger's Creek. Ms. McCarthy and Ms. Degnan will do a site walk and flag areas suitable for such a trail, so that the surrounding environment is minimally impacted.

Ms. Degnan stated that all invasive plant control was completed this year. This included treating Japanese knotweed along Lavenger's Creek.

Ms. Degnan also mentioned that Jane Ballard, a coastal intern from NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), is available two days a week to assist with outreach and education. She specializes in finding natural resource values, and Ms. Degnan distributed a handout with some of Ms. Ballard's research topics that she could further explore and address under the Commission's direction. Ms. McCarthy suggested that the intern could help with the

Tree Preservation Committee, while Ms. White mentioned that she could work with the intern on incorporating new maps and data into education on wetlands. Ms. Degnan requested that the Commission review Ms. Ballard's informational sheet so that she can be given target items to work on. Ms. White agreed to meet with Ms. Degnan to set up a job description for the intern.

5. Announcements.

None.

6. Adjourn.

Ms. McCarthy moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Tanguay seconded. The motion carried, unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rumph
(Temporary Secretary)