

APPROVED

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE NEW CASTLE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Tuesday, July 11th, 2023 – 5:00 p.m. (Town Hall)

184 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 15, Lot 6. Applicant: Michael Traister and Melanie Sommer. Representative: Steve Riker, Ambit Engineering. Proposed: Shoreline stabilization.

147 Cranfield Street, Tax Map 12, Lot 14. Applicant: Bradford and Catherine Greeley. Representative: Corey Colwell, TF Moran. Proposed: Building addition.

Members Present: Iain Moodie, Interim Chair; Beth Barnhorst; Tom Chamberlin; Tony Coniglio; Jim Rini; Conni White, Consultant.

Members Absent: Jim Cerny.

Others Present: Corey Colwell, TF Moran, Inc.; Jason Cook, TF Moran, Inc.; Bradford and Catherine Greeley; Daniela Moebius, Moebius Architecture; Steve Riker, Ambit Engineering, Inc.; Melanie Sommer; Michael Traister.

1. Call to Order.

Mr. Moodie, serving as Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Voting members are Mr. Rini, Mr. Chamberlin, Ms. Barnhorst, and Mr. Moodie. Tony Coniglio is a new alternate member.

2. Introduction of new member – Tony Coniglio.

Mr. Moodie welcomed Tony Coniglio as an alternate member of the Conservation Commission.

3. Approve minutes from March 7, 2023 meeting.

Mr. Moodie made a motion to preliminarily approve the minutes for the March 7, 2023 meeting as submitted. Mr. Chamberlin seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Application.

- A. 184 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 15, Lot 6. Applicant: Michael Traister and Melanie Sommer. Representative: Steve Riker, Ambit Engineering. Proposed: Shoreline stabilization.**

Steve Riker of Ambit Engineering was present along with Applicants Michael Traister and Melanie Sommer. The Applicants are seeking a minor impact wetland permit from the NHDES

for work outside of the highest observable tide line. Mr. Riker noted that DES will be looking for comment from the Conservation Commission on this application. The impact to the buffer zone would be machinery traveling to and from the work area. This shoreline stabilization project seeks to reduce or eliminate the significant erosion issue on the property. The salt marsh currently has a three to four foot drop where it is being eroded. The face of the salt marsh where it meets the mud flat is in poor shape due to boat traffic and wave action in the Piscataqua River, as well as the wind direction. Mr. Riker noted that he has worked collaboratively with Dave Burdick at UNH on a hybrid approach that will use both hard and soft components to stabilize the area. DES would not allow only rocks to be used.

Mr. Riker explained how there are existing stone boulders that are somewhat in a line. The plan is to reorganize these rocks that are already on site and to add some rocks to create a sill, which will be placed at elevation 1. Larger waves will hit the sill and deflect some wave energy before it hits the shoreline. There will be a second row of rocks at elevation 2. Core fiber logs, or coconut fiber woven logs, will be installed as well, with salt marsh grass in between the logs. The logs are common for this type of application to hold sediment in place so that plants can establish and roots can take hold, according to Mr. Riker. He stated that the core logs are biodegradable, though it is unknown how long they last. No height or barrier is being added, so the restoration will not have the appearance of a sea wall.

Mr. Riker demonstrated the construction access area on the plans, which is currently maintained lawn. A small excavator machine is all that is needed to complete this project, along with material delivery, including stone, core logs, anchors and stakes. Ms. Barnhorst asked about plans for buffer plantings along the construction access way. Mr. Riker responded that no plantings will be done because the Applicants are already restoring the shoreline. The Applicants confirmed that they do not use fertilizer or pesticides.

Mr. Moodie asked if the Applicants have thought about a Plan B. Mr. Riker stated that they have not thought of an alternate plan because they are still working on Plan A, which they feel is the best option for the area. Mr. Riker explained that all work will be performed during low tide, with most of the machine work taking place above the highest observable tide line. Mats will be utilized as well. Mr. Moodie felt that the project will cause minimal disturbance.

Mr. Riker noted that this project is subject to compensatory mitigation, which means that the Applicants will need to pay an "in lieu fee" for any amount of impact below the mean high water line.

Mr. Rini motioned to recommend approval of the pathway proposed for the shoreline stabilization project for Michael Traister and Melanie Sommer, 184 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 15, Lot 6, based on the Ambit Engineering plans dated June 26, 2023. Mr. Chamberlin seconded. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of four to zero.

B. 147 Cranfield Street, Tax Map 12, Lot 14. Applicant: Bradford and Catherine Greeley. Representative: Corey Colwell, TF Moran. Proposed: Building addition.

Corey Colwell of TF Moran was present along with Jason Cook, the civil engineer who conducted the drainage analysis on site, as well as architect Daniela Moebius and Applicants Bradford and Catherine Greeley.

The Commission conducted a site walk prior to the meeting. Present at the site walk were the Applicants, Mr. Colwell, Mr. Cook and Ms. Moebius, as well as Conservation Commission members Iain Moodie, Beth Barnhorst, Tom Chamberlin, Tony Coniglio, Jim Rini and Conni White. Also present were Planning Board members Darcy Horgan, Anne Crotty, Lorne Jones and Kate Murray. During the site walk, members observed the boundaries and setbacks. Mr. Colwell outlined the location of various buffer plantings. The impervious surface area on the property will be reduced significantly. Half of the existing patio will be covered by the addition, with the remaining portion removed and replaced with 18 inches of stones for roof water runoff infiltration.

At the public hearing, further details of the proposal were discussed. The application is to add a modest 581 square foot addition to the home to allow for the Greeleys' daughter and son-in-law to move in. 168 square feet of the proposed addition falls within the 50 foot buffer. Mr. Colwell demonstrated the current stormwater flow on the plans. Virtually all of the site runoff is going back into the wetlands right now. To ensure that the buffer will be improved, the Applicants are proposing a rain garden to capture stormwater from the proposed addition. The rain garden will capture and treat stormwater and intercept it from going into the wetland. Buffer plantings, such as dogwood and serviceberry, are proposed to create native plantings between the home and the wetland buffer. Although the overall site will have a modest increase in impervious coverage by 7%, the impervious coverage in the buffer zone will be reduced by 43% given that the stone retaining wall and the entire patio will be removed. The stormwater reaching the wetland will be cleaner and reduced post construction. In addition, the removal of lawn reduces the potential future use of fertilizer, though the Greeleys do not use fertilizer.

Ms. Moebius went over the floorplan. The Greeleys will have single story living and would like their daughter to move in to support them as they age in place. Ms. Moebius examined existing spaces in the house to make those as efficient as possible. The addition will have a bedroom and bathroom, and the existing walkout basement will be extended. The kitchen and living room area would be expanded to accommodate the additional household members. The proposed addition will extend the existing house footprint six feet into the wetlands buffer, but all of this is within the existing impervious patio area. With the addition, the house will still meet the maximum allowable building area. Ms. Moebius explained that the proposed roof is angled in such a way so as to allow PV panels to be installed in the future, which will increase the energy efficiency of the home. The grade of the land will slope around the addition.

Mr. Moodie read from the Zoning Ordinance and shared his concern about changing from a patio to a structure, which he believes is a significant change. He stated that structures are temporary, but wetlands are forever. The construction just outside of the wetland buffer is concerning him as well. Mr. Moodie commented that pushing more structure into an already nonconforming area is contrary to the goals of the ordinances. Mr. Colwell responded that the proposal has no

vegetation removal in the buffer. The net result is a better buffer because of 1) the reduction in impervious surface by 43% in the buffer, 2) the improvement of the quality of the stormwater that reaches the buffer and wetlands, and 3) the addition of buffer plantings and the rain garden. Mr. Colwell added that there is no degradation of the buffer, and the buffer post-construction will be better than the buffer as it currently exists.

Mr. Colwell provided further information on the proposed rain garden. The rain garden will be a grass-lined depression approximately five inches deep. Mild excavation will be required with the surrounding berm. The garden will have engineered soil to allow for a more rapid infiltration of water into the ground. The rain garden will be able to handle up to a 50 year storm event, or 8.5 inches of precipitation.

Mr. Rini asked how much of a hardship it would be to avoid the six foot bumpout of the kitchen, and perhaps make it four feet instead. Ms. Moebius responded that the bumpout is needed because of the clearances and to allow enough space for the Greeleys' daughter and her husband. Ms. Barnhorst asked about the kitchen. Ms. Moebius noted that it is currently nine feet by nine feet, and is proposed to be 12 feet in length and remain nine feet wide. The dining area will be shared. She felt that the Applicants have been very conservative, and pointed out that some clearances for the doorways are smaller than she would like for a fully accessible house. She had looked at the possibility of expanding sideways, but this would create issues with the setbacks. The house is a cape with low ceiling heights, so structurally, it would not work for creating shared spaces. The Applicants have applied for and received two variances from the Zoning Board of Adjustment, for expansion of a nonconforming structure and to allow 2,522 square feet of lot coverage where 2,000 square feet is the maximum allowed. Both variances were unanimously approved on June 20, 2023.

Mr. Chamberlin agreed with Mr. Moodie that one of the primary purposes of the Conservation Commission is to prevent building within the buffer, but he also understood the purpose of the application and the mitigation efforts to improve the buffer from its existing condition. Mr. Rini suggested including a planting plan in the conditions for approval. Mr. Moodie commented that he would like to see additional plantings within the wetland setback. Ms. White felt that other applicants have had alternative choices, but in this case, there are no other choices. She felt that the proposal is the best option for a two-family house. She agreed with Mr. Colwell that the project will enhance the property, and also pointed out that these particular wetlands will be overrun by phragmites within the next ten years. Ms. Barnhorst agreed about the condition of this particular wetland, which is Wentworth B. She stated that this is a small ask, and the Applicants are doing a lot of mediation to improve the wetlands. Mr. Moodie would like the fence around the wetland to be removed to allow for wildlife to traverse and to give more space for the buffer plantings. He also urged the Applicants to remove the compost pile, as it spills nitrogen into the abutting wetlands.

Ms. Barnhorst motioned to recommend approval of the site development plans, including the new addition, by TF Moran dated May 30, 2023, as submitted for Bradford and Catherine Greeley, 147 Cranfield Street, Tax Map 12, Lot 14, with the following conditions: 1) that the deer fence around the wetlands be pulled back to the lot line, 2) that the compost pile be removed, and 3) that the areas of disturbance between the lot line and the wetland be replanted

with native plantings similar to those in the application. Mr. Rini seconded. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of four to zero.

5. New Business.

A. Update on Pit Lane culvert.

Ms. White presented a video prepared by David Murray that highlights the Rockingham County Conservation District's project progress on the Pit Lane culvert. The video serves as the "deliverable" for the federal grant that the Town received for the project.

B. Set date for next meeting.

The next Conservation Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 5, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. at the Town Hall.

6. Adjourn.

Ms. Barnhorst moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Chamberlin seconded. The motion carried, unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rumph
Secretary