

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE NEW CASTLE PLANNING BOARD Wednesday, July 28th, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. (Macomber Room)

Release of escrow money held for landscaping for Stephen Eldred, 180 Portsmouth Avenue, Map 15, Lot 5.

Continuation of a Public Hearing for approval of a Conditional Use Permit for applicants Thomas Hammer and Deirdre Hammer Trusts, 49 Mainmast Circle, Map 9, Lot 18, for replacement of an existing structure, driveway reconfiguration, utility connections, grading, fill and associated landscaping within the 100 foot buffer of a Class A wetland.

Members Present: Darcy Horgan, Chair; Lorne Jones; Iain Moodie; Kate Murray.

Members Absent: Margaret Sofio; Bill Stewart.

Others Present: Jane Bruno; Deirdre and Thomas Hammer; Stephen Eldred; Vincent Purreau; Steve Riker, Ambit Engineering; Alex and Nancy Vailas.

Chair Horgan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Noting a quorum, Chair Horgan indicated that the voting members are herself, Ms. Murray, Mr. Jones, and Mr. Moodie.

1. Release of escrow money held for landscaping for Stephen Eldred, 180 Portsmouth Avenue, Map 15, Lot 5.

Chair Horgan stated that there is \$22,000 in escrow pending the completion of the planting plan for applicant Stephen Eldred, 180 Portsmouth Avenue. The planting plan has been completed and Mr. Eldred is requesting that the escrow funds be released. The Conservation Commission conducted an inspection on July 5, 2021, and a letter from the Chair, Conni White, was submitted to the Planning Board. In the letter, Chair White noted that the planting plan differed from what was originally approved, but is satisfactory from a conservation perspective. A small section of the northwest area of the site still needs to be replanted, which Mr. Eldred will be doing. Chair White recommended the full escrow be released.

Ms. Murray commented that it did not seem like the planting plan is complete. Chair Horgan explained that she pulled the plan that was originally approved by the Planning Board. She noted that the one incomplete section mentioned by Chair White was not actually part of the plan for which escrow money was held. Consequently, Chair Horgan felt that all escrow funds should be released.

Mr. Jones motioned to release the escrow for Mr. Stephen Eldred, 180 Portsmouth Avenue, Map 15, Lot 5, per the comments on the Conservation Commission letter. Mr. Moodie seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Continuation of a Public Hearing for approval of a Conditional Use Permit for applicants Thomas Hammer and Deirdre Hammer Trusts, 49 Mainmast Circle, Map 9, Lot 18, for replacement of an existing structure, driveway reconfiguration, utility connections, grading, fill and associated landscaping within the 100 foot buffer of a Class A wetland.

Steve Riker of Ambit Engineering presented on behalf of Deirdre and Thomas Hammer. The existing single-family residence is located to the west of Lavenger's Creek. The lot is relatively small at 0.29 acres, and is almost entirely located in the 100 foot buffer. There is a house to the north and a house to the south. The Hammers wish to demolish the existing home and build a house that has a proposed covered deck and stairs to the rear and a garage. There is currently an asphalt driveway that goes to the back of the house. This would be eliminated and replaced with a modest driveway, which will result in a large reduction in pavement. The plan has already been submitted to the NHDES for a wetland permit and a shoreland permit. The wetland permit is pending, and the shoreland permit has been approved. The lot will be conforming under the proposed conditions, and no zoning variances will be needed.

The impervious surface area on the lot will decrease from 30.8% to 26.6%. The proposed conditions will be a big improvement to the site, as stormwater currently flows down the driveway and slope and into Lavenger's Creek. There will also be less impervious area within the 50 foot setback, with 122 square feet proposed where there is currently 347 square feet. The corner of the proposed deck and stairs would fall within the 50 foot setback, but there will be no living space in this setback.

Mr. Riker explained that there will be a minimal amount of grading to accommodate the home. The current slope is quite steep. The slope will be lengthened and lessened in steepness. The applicants are proposing to have a boulder retaining wall, which would accommodate the grades needed for the driveway. There would be a drip apron in the rear of the house to accommodate water falling from the structure.

The Hammers went before the Conservation Commission on June 1, 2021. Mr. Riker went over the recommendations of the Commission. The Commission recommended using a silt sock and orange construction fence to contain materials during the demolition. The silt sock is biodegradable and will be at the top and bottom of the slope. Also, a turf mat will be installed on the hill of the grade.

Ms. Hammer prepared a landscape plan, which incorporated plants from the list provided to her by the Conservation Commission. The buffer planting area will be 1,692 square feet. Ms. Hammer wanted something more natural and less rigid to keep a rugged look that is easy to maintain. Mr. Hammer agreed that they wish to reduce maintenance.

Ms. Murray asked for details about the turf mat. Mr. Riker explained that it is a commonly used biodegradable mat that is placed on unvegetated slope. The plants grow right through the mat. The mat is rolled out and pinned in, and protects the slope until the plants underneath are able to grow. Ms. Murray also asked how the slope will be made less steep. Mr. Riker responded that the edges will be filled in, and the grading will get tied into the surroundings on the Hammer

property, which also tie into the neighbors' grading. Chair Horgan inquired about the reason for altering the grade so close to the Creek. Mr. Riker explained that this is to provide a flat area so the Hammers have some outdoor space, as they do not have anything in the front yard. Mr. Hammer added that there is an easement in the rear of the property and along the south side for the sewer line, which is why there is no vegetation in these areas.

Mr. Moodie felt that the proposal is a vast improvement to the existing conditions. It will contain water on site and stop erosion, which is particularly important given the poor condition of the existing embankment. His only critique is with one of the proposed plants, which is native from Florida to Massachusetts. He would like to have a grass planted that is more indigenous to this area.

Chair Horgan asked about water runoff that will be captured. Mr. Riker explained that some of the water will go to the front yard, where it will have to go all the way around the house and through the buffer plantings before reaching the Creek. The roof pitches in the back of the house so that the water there would go to the drip aprons.

Chair Horgan opened the public hearing at 7:37 p.m. Jane Bruno, an abutter, stated that she has no issues with the proposal. Vincent Purreau stated that he is another abutter, and he did not have any issues with the proposal. Alex and Nancy Vailas are also abutters who wanted to familiarize themselves with the project. Mr. Vailas felt that the proposal is an improvement that will enhance the area. He asked about the building area within the 50 foot buffer. Chair Horgan explained that a conditional use permit is needed because of the small portion of the deck and stairs that would be within the 50 foot buffer. Hearing no further comments from the public, Chair Horgan closed the public hearing at 7:40 p.m. and brought discussion back to the Board. Ms. Murray asked when a demolition permit would be needed. Mr. Moodie stated that this is done through the Town Building Inspector. Chair Horgan noted that the landscape plan has been submitted to the Building Inspector. Ms. Hammer added that she will speak directly with Conni White, Chair of the Conservation Commission, about possible planting options. Mr. Riker pointed out that the revised Ambit Engineering plans tie in with Ms. Hammer's landscape plan. He stated that the DES conditions its approval on a three-year revision of the planting plans.

Chair Horgan noted that the Conservation Commission recommended a \$30,000 bond. She asked Planning Board members about a possible escrow amount. Chair Horgan stated that the escrow is strictly for the most sensitive area of the lot, and the value should be approximately the value of the plantings. Mr. Hammer felt that the amount requested was reasonable.

Mr. Moodie motioned to approve the proposal of a Conditional Use Permit for Thomas Hammer and Deirdre Hammer Trusts, 49 Mainmast Circle, Map 9, Lot 18, for replacement of an existing structure, driveway reconfiguration, utility connections, grading, fill and associated landscaping within the 100 foot buffer of a Class A wetland, as shown on the plans submitted by Ambit Engineering dated May 5, 2021 and revised through July 27, 2021. The Planning Board's approval is further conditioned with all of the conditions on the notice of recommendation from the Conservation Commission dated June 1, 2021, including the bond for \$30,000 for the landscape plan. Ms. Murray seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Review and approve the minutes to the June 23, 2021 meeting of the Planning Board.

Ms. Murray moved to accept the minutes as written for the Planning Board meeting on June 23, 2021. Mr. Jones seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Old Business.

Chair Horgan stated that Ken McDonald has the final version of the new Zoning Ordinance book ready to be printed. The book will include a trifold wetlands map.

Chair Horgan discussed the Town Master Plan. Tom Maher, new Chair of the Select Board, met with her to discuss the Master Plan. He has been assigned to shepherd the process. Chair Horgan also spoke with the planner of the Rockingham Planning Commission. The planner shared that she could give a free presentation on how to tackle the process of revising the Master Plan. She recommended that this presentation be delivered to all interested parties in town, which would include all Chairs of the land use boards in town, the Chair of the Capital Improvement Project, Select Board, and Budget Committee. The presentation has been scheduled for Thursday, September 16, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Macomber Room. The Rockingham Planning Commission also recommended doing a survey to send to all residents so they can share what they envision in town for the next five, ten, and 15 years. The goal is to have buy-in from everyone in town. Planning Board members discussed the logistics of conducting this survey, and also talked about possible Master Plan Committee members. Chair Horgan noted that only one public hearing is required to accept the final Master Plan, which must be finalized by the end of 2022.

5. New Business.

Chair Horgan stated that the next Planning Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. in the Macomber Room.

6. Adjourn.

There being no further business, Ms. Murray moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Jones seconded. The motion carried, unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meghan Rumph
Recording Secretary