

APPROVED APPROVED APPROVED APPROVED APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE NEW CASTLE PLANNING BOARD  
Wednesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 – 7:00 p.m. (Town Hall)**

**Public Hearing for Applicants Michael S. Traister and Melanie S. Sommer, 184 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 15, Lot 6, for a Conditional Use Permit for a shoreline stabilization installation which involves temporary and permanent impact on tidal wetlands under Zoning Ordinance 9.2.5 for work within the 100-foot wetland buffer.**

**Members Present:** Darcy Horgan, Chair; Anne Crotty; Rich Landry; Iain Moodie.

**Members Absent:** Lorne Jones; Kate Murray; Bill Stewart.

**Others Present:** Steve Riker, Ambit Engineering, Inc.; Melanie Sommer; Michael Traister.

Chair Horgan called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Noting a quorum, Chair Horgan indicated that the voting members are herself, Mr. Landry, Ms. Crotty, and Mr. Moodie.

**1. Public Hearing for Applicants Michael S. Traister and Melanie S. Sommer, 184 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 15, Lot 6, for a Conditional Use Permit for a shoreline stabilization installation which involves temporary and permanent impact on tidal wetlands under Zoning Ordinance 9.2.5 for work within the 100-foot wetland buffer.**

Chair Horgan confirmed that the Applicants wish to proceed with four of five voting members present. Steve Riker of Ambit Engineering was present along with applicants Michael Traister and Melanie Sommer. Mr. Riker noted that the property has a significant erosion issue that has been getting worse over the past few years. The site has an existing single-family home, a tidal dock, shoreline frontage consisting mostly of salt marsh, some sandy beach on a flat area, stones and rocks, and a tidal flat located above mean low water and below means high water. The southern area of the shoreline frontage has a larger salt marsh area. The salt marsh face is primarily to the south of the dock, and has experienced significant erosion due to heavy boat traffic in a narrow channel, wave action and ice damage in the winter. The eroded face is unvegetated.

Mr. Riker explained how he collaborated with Dave Burdick at UNH and came up with a proposed design that would slow down the erosion issue using a hybrid approach of both hard armory (stone and rock) and biodegradable plant material. Some rock will be rearranged on site and some additional rock will be brought in. There will be two rows of rock between elevation zero and two. The purpose of these breakwater rows, or sills, is to break up wave action. Up slope from the sills will be core logs staked into the face of the salt marsh to make it more vertical. Core logs are a biodegradable coconut fiber product. In front of the logs will be stone to keep the core logs in place. Mr. Riker pointed out how the erosion along this face is very irregular, so they will have to use different sized core logs based on what will fit. On the northern side of the frontage, salt marsh cordgrass will be planted in between the core logs to hold the

sandy material in place. Chair Horgan asked about the core logs deteriorating. Mr. Riker explained that the hope is that over time, the soils in the area will cover up the rock and revegetate themselves. The core logs will allow time for the plants to establish themselves.

Mr. Riker stated that the original plans called for the equipment entering on one side of the home, but they have changed that to the other side of the home (the southern side) because it will allow for easier access. Materials will be dropped off via truck and there would be small machinery to bring the materials to the shore. Most of the access area is within the tidal buffer zone. The portion that is located outside of the buffer zone requires a shoreland permit. Wetland and shoreland permits have been submitted to the NHDES and are currently under review. Eben Lewis from NHDES has been on site and has seen the plans as they have evolved. Mr. Riker feels that the current plans will be approved by the State.

All work will be done during low tide hours. Mr. Riker provided details of the swamp mats to be used, which are designed for machines to drive over them and eliminate rutting and soil disturbance. The mats get removed when the work is complete. No tree removal or vegetation removal is required to perform the job. He added that the neighbors on both sides of the Applicants are in favor of the project. Ms. Sommer shared that the hope is to start the work this winter.

Mr. Moodie liked the hybrid engineered approach to this project. Mr. Landry noted that it will be interesting to see how the project works out, as it is a relatively new concept of using a combination of rocks and biodegradable materials.

Chair Horgan opened the public hearing at 7:34 p.m. Ms. Sommer says their goal is to preserve the marsh. They understand the hybrid approach is experimental, and they are following what the State requires. Hearing no further comments from the public, Chair Horgan closed the public hearing at 7:35 p.m. and opened discussion back up to the Board.

*Mr. Landry motioned to approve the Conditional Use Permit of applicants Michael S. Traister and Melanie S. Sommer, 184 Portsmouth Avenue, Tax Map 15, Lot 6, per the Ambit Engineering plans dated June 26, 2023. This approval is conditioned on the following: 1) that all State permits, including wetland and shoreland permits from DES, are granted, and 2) that the Applicants file a New Castle Shoreland Permit. Approval is based on the Applicants having met all of the conditions of Section 9.2.5 of the New Castle Zoning Ordinance for a Conditional Use Permit. Ms. Crotty seconded. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of four to zero.*

## **2. Approve minutes to the July 26, 2023 meeting of the Planning Board.**

*Mr. Landry moved to approve the minutes as written for the Planning Board meeting on July 26, 2023. Ms. Crotty seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

## **3. Vote on changing the Public Hearing Posting Fee per RSA 675:7.**

Chair Horgan explained that RSA 675:7 states that towns are no longer required to advertise public hearings in a newspaper as long as the hearings are posted prominently on the Town website and in two public places in town. The two public places in New Castle are the Town Hall and Post Office. Because of this, the Town will no longer be charging the \$190 fee for posting in a newspaper, and will instead charge a \$50 fee to cover the administrative work of posting the advertisements.

*Chair Horgan motioned to approve reducing the posting fee for Public Hearings from \$190 to \$50. Mr. Landry seconded. Motion carried unanimously.*

#### **4. Discussion on proposed wording for a definition of “Driveway” to add to the Zoning Ordinance.**

Chair Horgan noted that the Zoning Ordinance does not currently have a definition of a driveway which is needed since driveways are mentioned in other definitions. The goal will be to include any part of the driveway that is used for parking including bumpouts, regardless of whether they are pervious or impervious, in the lot coverage calculation. There was extensive discussion on the driveway definition and what should count toward the total allowed ground coverage on a lot. The Board ultimately decided to table the matter for now and revisit it when other related Zoning Ordinance changes, such as in the building area and impervious surface definitions are decided. Mr. Moodie and Mr. Landry were charged with looking into revising the following definitions: Sections 2.3.35 impervious surface, 2.3.39 lot coverage, 2.3.13a building area and 2.3.29 gross floor area.

#### **5. Old Business.**

None.

#### **6. New Business.**

Chair Horgan stated that there is an RSA that states that the Select Board ex-officio member on the PB has to have an alternate to serve exclusively as his or her ex-officio alternate on the Planning Board. Lorne Jones has agreed to be the ex-officio alternate member for Bill Stewart, the current Select Board ex-officio representative on the Planning Board. This will be voted on by the Select Board at their September 5 meeting. Chair Horgan stated that the Planning Board will need to have another alternate. She encouraged PB members to recommend some potential new names.

Chair Horgan announced that the next Planning Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 27, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall.

#### **7. Adjourn.**

There being no further business, Mr. Landry moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Moodie seconded. The motion carried, unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully

Submitted,  
Meghan Rumph  
*Recording Secretary*