

City of Laconia
Conservation Commission
Wednesday, December 16, 2020 - 6:00 PM
City Hall in the Armand A. Bolduc City Council Chamber
Accepted 1/20/2021

12/16/2020 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dean Anson called the meeting to order at 6:01PM.

2. ROLL CALL

Members present: Chair Dean Anson, Vice-Chair Deb Williams, Lisa Morin, Mike Foote, Planning Board Liaison Stacy Soucy

Members absent: Marnie Schulz, Wes Bates

Staff present: Conservation Technician Ashley Ruprecht, Planning Director Dean Trefethen.

Guests: On behalf of the Perley Pond proposal; City Manager Scott Myers, City Councilor Bruce Cheney, Joanne Coppinger from RFS Engineering, Parks and Rec Director Amy Lovisek

3. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

3.I. Acceptance Of Minutes From November 18, 2020

D. Williams requested a correction on the spelling of her name in section 2.

L. Morin motioned to accept the minutes with the proposed change. D. Williams seconded.

All voted in favor.

4. NEW BUSINESS

4.I. Perley Pond

Chair D. Anson moved this item to the top of the agenda. City Manager Scott Myers gave a brief introduction of the proposal to remove woody vegetation from Perley Pond and explained the City hired RFS Engineering to conduct the permitting for the project. J. Coppinger from RFS Engineering gave an overview of the proposal to remove woody vegetation, such as buttonbush, that is growing along the Perley Pond and obstructing the view and causing silt to gather along the waterline. A grass lined swale is proposed paralleling North Main Street to collect runoff. Erosion controls will be installed for the construction of the project. NHDES approved the permit and work will happen during the dry season. The wetland was recently surveyed and delineated by a Certified Wetland Scientist.

M. Foote asked if buttonbush is invasive. J. Coppinger said it is a native plant species but the concern is that it is tall growing and will inundate the pond over time. There is discussion about the natural cycles of ponds and the history of Perley Pond, which isn't fully known.

D. Williams asked if there will be dredging. J. Coppinger explained that the removal of the woody vegetation root systems is classified as dredging but otherwise no other dredging of the pond is proposed. Most of the woody vegetation removal will be done adjacent to the road, and not near the Perley Oak Tree.

J. Coppinger explained the grass swale in more detail. L. Morin had concerns about the swale possible causing access issues. J. Coppinger said it is only 1' deep so it can still be easily traversed on foot. L. Morin would like to have shorter, 3'-4' tall at maturity plantings, at least gallon pot size, installed along the pond edge since they have better root structure than the grass that is proposed. J. Coppinger said that the grass is only what is proposed to stabilize the site and afterwards plantings can be installed with non-motorized hand tools.

There is discussion about the construction sequence. This will be determined by the contractor that is selected. Chair D. Anson said that it would make most sense to remove the woody vegetation and then construct the swale so that you are working from the inside outwards and avoid damaging the swale.

There is further clarification from City Manager Scott Myers about the history of the Perley Pond, which used to be popular with ice skating. The property was given to the City with the condition that it would be maintained. The Perley family approached a City Council member asking that it is restored. City Manager Scott Myers said that the goal is to restore scenic vistas of the pond in an ecological friendly way. He is not encouraging people to park on the property because the Perley Oak frequently drops branches. A contractor and funding to do this project have not yet been determined.

M. Foote asked why they aren't proposing to dredge the center of the pond because it is shallow. City Manager Scott Myers said they are trying to do as minimal impact as possible.

There is discussion about the catch basin and whether it will effectively trap sediment before draining into Lake Opechee. J. Coppinger will look into this further and see if any additional design changes need to be made.

There is discussion about what plantings may be appropriate. The Conservation Commission will work on the type and location of plantings and a maintenance plan that Amy's crew can follow. Chair D. Anson would like to work with A. Lovisek on the maintenance plan. D. Trefethen and A. Ruprecht will establish a timeline and let the Conservation Commission know when they need these plans by. If City Council moves forward with funding the project, the earliest time construction would begin is late summer/fall of next year during the dry season. J. Coppinger added that the permit from NHDES is good for 5 years so if it doesn't happen next year there is still time.

There is further discussion about parking for the site. Councilor Cheney spoke about the history of the pond and said if people wanted to ice skate they could park on the shoulder of North Main Street. L. Morin said that while the way the pond used to be maintained was common for that time, today we know that mowing to the water's edge and other practices are unhealthy and bad for the water quality.

Chair D. Anson wants to share draft plans with the Perley family. The Commission will send information they collect on this project to A. Ruprecht.

4.II. Ordinance Updates

A. Ruprecht explained that the only change from Version 8 to Version 9 was made today, and was suggested by Chair D. Anson to add the word "topographical" between "existing" and "grade" in section 235-19.F.(1)(d).

Chair D. Anson acknowledged A. Ruprecht and D. Trefethen for the work they've put into these changes and making it clearer to those who have projects in the City. M. Foote motioned to support the proposed changes to the Wetlands Conservation and Water Quality Overlay District and Shoreland Protection Overlay District. D. Williams seconded. All voted in favor.

D. Trefethen explained that these will go before Planning Board on January 5, 2021 for presentation and then the February meeting for Public Hearing, and then depending on if changes need to be made they may vote to have it go before City Council for approval. City Council may also have a public hearing. Chair D. Anson may attend these meetings, and other members can join as well if they would like.

5. NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES APPLICATIONS

5.I. 95 Centenary Ave NHDES Wetlands PBN

There were no comments.

5.II. 262 Shore Dr. NHDES Wetlands Permit

There is brief discussion about the proposal. L. Morin said the beach is already existing and this is an improvement. M. Foote motioned to accept the application and not to provide any comments to NHDES. L. Morin seconded. All voted in favor.

6. OLD BUSINESS

6.I. Climate Change

This item was addressed after item 4.I.

Chair D. Anson asked City Manager Scott Myers and Councilor Cheney about the Unitarian Universalist Society of Laconia who came before City Council with a petition requesting the City takes action by implementing climate change policies. Chair D. Anson requested that the Conservation Commission is delegated this request, or if the City Council forms a subcommittee that the Conservation Commission is involved.

City Manager Scott Myers said they are in the preliminary stages on this but agrees to keep the Conservation Commission involved if a subcommittee is formed. Councilor Cheney agreed with City Manager Scott Myers and said there is some natural hesitancy because the petition is aggressive in some areas. The City has already taken some actions, there are some "low hanging fruit" projects and then there are projects that will take more work and effort in order to implement. M. Foote said he thinks people interested in this topic and proposing changes should join the Conservation Commission or other boards. There is general discussion about projects and progress that has occurred in the City.

6.II. Grant Opportunities

A. Ruprecht provided information on grants that are available for various types of projects the Conservation Commission may want to do. A. Ruprecht will be applying in 2021 for the Moose Plate grant to assist with funding the NRI update as other communities have received around \$5000 towards their NRIs in previous years.

Chair D. Anson asked L. Morin if she is aware of brooks that may be good candidates for plantings along their banks for stabilization. L. Morin said she has a list she will provide.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business at this time.

8. LIAISON AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

S. Soucy said that the wetland CUPs for Western Terrace and the septic for the Hilliard Road property were approved by the Planning Board. The application for the Mile Hill Road, also known as Mountain Lake Village was Accepted by the Planning Board. There is some discussion about affordable housing.

9. STAFF REPORT

A. Ruprecht said that along with the NRI update, she'll be working towards also updating the Natural Resources chapter in the Master Plan, and will involve the Commission throughout. A. Ruprecht said that the Rules of Procedure still need a final vote and will bring that back on the agenda moving forward. A. Ruprecht asked for members to review the 2021 contact information for the Commission and let her know of any corrections. M. Foote had a correction to his email address.

10. ADJOURNMENT

M. Foote motioned to adjourn. D. Williams seconded. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 7:37PM.