

Conservation Commission Final Minutes	February 13, 2024
Town of Hampton Falls	Town Hall

CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING FINAL MINUTES

A. CALL TO ORDER

- a.** Ms. Hill, Chair, called the meeting to order at 6:37pm

B. ROLL CALL

- a. Present:** Mary Ann Hill, Chair, Shawn Hanson, Ann Reis, Robert Wiener, Cathy Golas, Karen Ayers, alternate (not a voting member)
- b. Absent:** Lou Gargiulo, Selectman's Rep, Paul Melanson
- c. Staff:** Brianna O'Brien

C. NEW BUSINESS

a. 19 Lafayette Rd. Seacoast Motorsports- Miles Cook, Owner

- i.** Mr. Cook explained that the business is growing faster than expected and running out of space for inventory. They now need additional space for storage for safety and organization. They looked around to find alternative space but there was nothing available and that is the reason for the proposed auxiliary storage building.. Mr. Cook explained the drainage system on the property and the surrounding wetland area. There is a swale and retention pond on this property to manage all of the drainage. Currently all of the drainage on the site drains to the back. Ms. Hill commented that the swale does support wetland vegetation. Mr. Cook agreed. Mr. Cook is seeking approval to fill in the drainage swale in order to build a new building on the site and redesign the drainage for the site. This project proposes using storm tech (underground water storage chambers) which will manage the drainage the same as it does now; alternatively an additional retention pond could be installed. This project previously received a variance from the 75 ft wetland setback because it was proved that the surrounding wetlands are man made mostly because of the abutting hotels failed septic system which is also creating a high fecal bacteria count in the wetland.. The entirety of the proposed building would be in the buffer so there is mitigation proposed which includes a tree line.
- ii.** Ms. Golas asked about how climate change could impact the underground drainage system, would the system be designed to account for those impacts? Mr. Cook explained that the system will be engineered and then the designs will be verified by town engineers to account for those factors.
- iii.** Ms. Hill asked about cantilevering the new structure or building it on posts.
 - 1.** Mr. Cook explored this with the engineers and it did not seem to be with the additional costs.
- iv.** Mr. Hanson is concerned that there is too much impact for this site. Mr. Cook said that they did look into off-site storage and it was not cost-effective or feasible.
- v.** Currently the site has 46.3% sealed surface, the proposed sealed surface will be in the low 60s, Mr. Cook is not sure of the exact number. The town limit is 70%.

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- vi.** The next step for this application is to seek a variance and then go to the Planning Board.
- vii.** Ms. Hill indicated that they will have to write a letter to the ZBA with their opinion.
 - 1.** Ms. Golas asked how they decide what the impact on the wetland will be. If it is minimal, should the Commission consider supporting the application.
 - 2.** Ms. Ayers said that this is not a minimal impact.
 - 3.** The Commission agreed that the project proposes too much impact within the wetland buffer and the available use of the lot has already been maximized.

D. OLD BUSINESS

- a.** The Commission discussed the options for storage containers. Ms. Hill got several estimates.
 - i.** Mr. Hanson moved to spend \$4,015 for the purchase and delivery of a new 20 ft storage container from Page Street Leasing. Ms. Golas seconded. Unanimous vote.
- b.** RCCD is donating saltmarsh parcels. Ms. Hill read the amended deed sent from RCCD.
 - i.** Mr. Hanson moved to accept the deed as amended by RCCD and pass it onto the Board of Selectman for approval. Mr. Wiener seconded. Unanimous vote.
- c.** Plaque for Glenn
 - i.** This will be continued to next month.
- d.** CC sign
 - i.** Ms. O'Brien will send the options to the Commission in an email. The Commission wants a sign that will sit on an easel but is not corrugated plastic.
- e.** Two commission members' seats are up- Karen Ayers, will continue with her alternate seat. Shawn Hanson will continue with his seat.

E. COMMUNICATION TO BOARD MEMBERS

- a. ZBA**
 - i.** Rehearing for 3 Weare Rd. on February 22nd
 - 1.** The property owners have extended the existing parking area into the stream, set up industrial lighting and have been using it for commercial parking.
 - 2.** At the first hearing they were denied and the property owners were asked to correct 21 violations.
 - 3.** The property owner's stated that the original denial was not based on the five criteria so they requested to be reheard.
- b. Planning Board**
 - i.** Everything they have been working on the last few months has been warrant articles that will be on the warrant in March.
- c. SHEA**

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- i. Rayann Dionne, executive Director of SHEA, introduced Sara McNamara-Gagnon, SHEA's Coastal Conservation Coordinator
 1. SHEA has received funding through a NOAA Project of Special Merit that was obtained by the DES Coastal Program. The grant is 18 months long, designed to give flexibility to coastal states to try programs they might not be able to do under other grants. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon was hired to add capacity to advance conservation planning efforts and land acquisition.
 2. Mr. Hanson talked about what the priorities of the Hampton Falls Conservation Commission would be and mentioned that the priority parcels that SHEA identified were a good place to start.
 3. Ms. Ayers talked about the Depot and how there has been a lot of input and no action or plan has been put into place so that could be a good area to look into.
 4. Ms. Ayers also referenced the open space criteria matrix. This was a great tool that the Commission used to evaluate the prioritization of conservation land.
 5. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon touched on additional ways she can support the Commission like through grant-writing, and with help reviewing permits.
 6. Ms. Ayers asked about vernal pools. In April the library is hosting a vernal pool talk. The Commission would like to do a follow up field trip. Maybe this is something Ms. McNamara-Gagnon can help with. Mr. Hanson mentioned the site by the affordable housing complex and that the vernal pools there are great. Ms. McNamara-Gagnon has a background in herpetology and would be happy to help with a field trip.
 - a. The Commission discussed coordinating with the Earth Day events but it may not work out.

d. Meetings and webinars

- i. Hampton Seabrook Estuary Collaborative Zoom meeting on Saltmarsh Restoration was held on January 12th. There was a presentation on progress reports from MA and NH- Ms. Hill will send this email with the recording to the Commission.

F. FINANCIAL

- a. Fund Bal: \$163,226.26
- b. Budget Balance: \$14,700 or 11,900 depending on March election
- c. Conservation Land Capital Reserve Fund beg. Bal. \$45,148.67 Current Balance ~

G. MINUTES

- a. The Commission will review November and December minutes at the next meeting.

H. ADJOURNMENT

- a. Mr. Hanson moved to adjourn. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.