

Wakefield Conservation Commission Minutes – May 30, 2023

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Attendance: Chairman Jim Luciani, Peter Miller, Ken Alepidis, Bob Romano; Haley McHatton-Ballou;

Absent: Paul Wendelgass; Teresa Belmonte, Agent: Rebecca Davis

Commission Peer Reviewer: Matt Burne

This meeting was conducted hybrid. The Commissioners met in person at Town Hall.

DEP#313-620 - Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School – Continued Public Hearing: Notice of Intent for the demolition of existing school, construction of new school, parking lots, athletic fields, utilities, and stormwater management system within Bank, Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVW), the Buffer Zone, and the Riverfront Area – discuss, vote and issuance of Order of Conditions.

The Commission reviewed each wetland resource individually to outline activities proposed, whether activities contribute to interests outlined in the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and whether proposed disturbance could be mitigated.

Mr. Romano stated that the last meeting concluded with discussion of wetland #3.

Mr. Miller noted that canopy loss in this area was significant. He added that per optimum standards, a bridge is to be used for the stream crossing unless there is a compelling reason to use a culvert.

Mr. Romano noted that a minimum height of 8' was also required under optimum standards. The proposed culvert height does not meet optimum standards as it would be 5' to 7' in height.

Ms. McHatton-Ballou noted that Commission concurred at the last meeting that optimum standards for stream crossing needed to be met.

Wetland #4 – Isolated wetland, non-jurisdictional.

Wetland #5 – Isolated wetland, certified vernal pool. A level spreader will be installed north of the vernal pool.

Mr. Romano stated that the location of the level spreader was moved based on the Commission's comments. Roof runoff will flow into this vernal pool. He also expressed concern with snow being pushed into the vernal pool. The only proposed barrier is a guardrail. He felt that the proximity to the wetland was problematic as it is adjacent to the parking lot.

Mr. Alepidis stated that there was no added protection for the vernal pool.

Mr. Miller questioned the effect of blasting in this area. He expressed concern due to the toxicity of the blasting chemicals, the length of the blasting and the fact that work would be right up to the wetland.

Mr. Romano noted that it is unclear how much blasting would be required.

Mr. Luciani noted that raising the height of the wall would provide limited protection.

Mr. Romano stated that even with conditions, enforcement would be impracticable.

Mr. Burne noted that the vernal pool is not jurisdictional.

Wetlands #6 and 7 – drain, manhole and riprap installation. Track installation and associated grading would also be included. Work would be approximately 30' from the BVW.

Mr. Romano noted that work near these areas is on the opposite side of the road into Breakheart. 2,600 square feet of buffer is within the limit of work. The paved parking area at wetland #6 would see an increase of 1,200 square feet from impervious to pervious surface.

Wetland #8 – Contains an area of unauthorized fill placed during the construction of the original school which was to have been removed. Invasive species management only is proposed in the buffer zone. No work proposed in the 200' riverfront area.

Mr. Miller stated that invasive removal was proposed as mitigation. He noted that this would not mitigate for other areas of significant concern.

Wetland #9 – Adjacent to the existing baseball field.

Mr. Romano stated that runoff from this area flows to the off-site wetland abutting Wakefield High School. Under this proposal the water flow would now be concentrated through the sub-surface system to the wetland. This area would have the highest salt content of the entire site. He noted that there would be total suspended solids (TSS) removal but not salt removal.

Wetland #10 – Alteration of buffer. No work proposed within 25' of BVW.

Wetland series #1

- Loss of canopy.
- Blasting effects.
- Loss of water uptake.
- Salt runoff from Farm Street entering the wetland due to a drop off in elevation.

Wetland series #3

- Stream crossing.
- Bank and canopy alteration.

Wetlands #6 and #7

- Negligible alteration.

Wetland #8

- Riverfront area – invasive management only.

Wetland #9

- Subsurface stormwater system. Concern with discharge to wetland from catch basin runoff.

Wetland #10

- No work proposed within 25' of BVW.

Mr. Luciani expressed concern with canopy loss sitewide.

Mr. Miller noted that the significance of a 100' buffer discretion under the WPA is apparent. He added that the southern end of the site would sustain a large impact.

Mr. Romano noted that blasting is an issue in wetland series #1.

Mr. Luciani expressed concern with water flow during blasting. He reiterated that a salt monitoring plan was needed. He disagreed with the applicant following Department of Transportation snow removal standards. He felt that the snow removal process needed to be designed specifically for this site.

Mr. Romano expressed concern mainly around wetlands #1, #3 and #9. He added that salt would be an issue at wetland #9 as well.

Mr. Burne pointed out that due to the recent court ruling, the vernal pool is not jurisdictional.

Mr. Romano asked for a motion to approve the project.

No motion was made.

Mr. Miller made a motion to deny the project.

Ms. McHatton-Ballou made a second to the motion.

After the Commissioners were polled individually, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Miller made a motion to adjourn.

Ms. McHatton-Ballou made a second to the motion. After polling the Commissioners individually, the motion passed unanimously.