

Town of Newington, NH
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes, Thursday, January 12, 2023

Call to Order: Chair Jane Hislop called the January 12, 2023, meeting at 6:30 PM.

Present: Vice-Chair Derick Willson; Andrew Meigs; Laura Rogers; Alternate Member Jane Kendall; and Town Planner, John Krebs

Absent: Commissioner Jim Weiner; Alternate Member, Bill Murray

Public Guests: John Chagnon, Principal P.E. with Ambit Engineering; Mark Dupuis, Robert Schummeric, Gas Engineer, Tracey Sweeney, Senior Land Agent with Unutil; Shawn Tobey, P.E. with Hoyle and Tanner Associates; Ryan Plummer with Two International Group

1) Landscape Reviews:

- A) **Unitil Corporation** Site Plan to construct a gas line maintenance facility to be located off Spaulding Turnpike, Exit 4

John Chagnon, Principal P.E. with Ambit Engineering appeared before the Commission to discuss Unitil's landscaping plan for a replacement gas line maintenance facility along Route 16S off Exit 4 where the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DoT) transferred the lots to private ownership.

Mr. Chagnon said the Planning Board was very concerned about the aesthetic of facility, so they designed the utility building with a pitched roof and siding, inside a security fenced yard with a stone-based access road.

Mr. Chagnon said the Planning Board had asked that the trees be seven to eight feet high at planting, and they were originally proposing to plant White Spruce trees outside the fence on four sides; but they discovered that they would be grow to 55 feet with a deep tap root, which could present danger to the facility, so they might change to Virginia Eastern Red Cedar.

Mr. Krebs noted that the building and fence would be eight feet high, and suggested that they might want a 12-foot tree.

Mr. Chagnon said the other recommended tree was White Star Spruce that grew to 15 feet, but nurseries usually sold them at five feet instead of seven feet.

Chair Hislop recommended not having a single species monoculture because many native species were being attacked by disease and pests, and not selecting Colorado Blue Spruce, or White Pine either. Chair Hislop suggested planting three different species interspersed and staggered.

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Mr. Chagnon said the Planning Board was also concerned with establishment, and ongoing maintenance, so notes were on the plan. Mr. Krebs said there would be no water on site, so the Planning Board wanted to be sure their contractor would ensure that they water them with a water truck.

Chair Hislop noted that the Commission and the Planning Board required a signature from a certified landscape designer or architect to sign off on the final plan.

Commissioner Andrew Meigs asked if the landscaping could be made to look more natural. Town Planner, John Krebs responded that Unitil was buying an easement from the property owner that followed the dashed lines on the plan. Mr. Chagnon added that they wanted to relocate the facility outside of DoT right-of-way as well.

Vice-Chair Willson said he noticed a few gaps in the plantings, and wondered if it was out of concern for roots. Mr. Chagnon said no planting in the access area. Robert Schummeric, Gas Engineer with Unitil added that they typically didn't plant over pipes.

Chair Hislop asked how much of the site would be covered. Mr. Chagnon said site was centered on the former Flagstones parking lot, and they would leave most of the existing vegetation.

Commissioner Meigs asked if they would plant inside the fenced area, and Mr. Chagnon replied that they couldn't plant within the secure facility. Mr. Krebs said the north side could eventually be fortified with more substantial planting.

Mr. Krebs said the public view of Unitil would be from the north, east and south, and they expected the abutting property to eventually be developed as well.

Commissioner Meigs asked what mediation would be done after removal of the existing facility and jersey barriers. Mr. Chagnon replied that the site would be restored and planted with grass, until it reverted back to its natural state. Mr. Chagnon added that it was in the DoT right-of-way, so they would probably mow the area.

Chair Hislop asked about security. Mark Dupris with Unitil said they were governed by PS&A regulations, so the facility was not open to the general public, and would be monitored 24/7 to at the gas control center in Portsmouth with a trespassing alarm that goes to Newington Police.

Commissioner Meigs asked if would be concerned with a truck from highway in icy conditions. Mr. Chagnon said there would be trees, fence, and guard rails that would make it more secure than the existing facility with jersey barriers.

Mr. Krebs asked that they submit a new plan with three species, and signature. Mr. Chagnon replied that they would be meeting with the Planning Board January 25, 2023, and would provide the update before then.

B) Two International Group Landscaping Plan to construct a 205,200 Sig Sauer manufacturing, warehouse, and office facility at 165 Arboretum Drive on Pease International Tradeport

Mr. Krebs informed the Commission that Pease Development Authority (PDA) had their own site review board, and they were only looking for the Commission's guidance, and perhaps recommendation.

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Shawn Tobey, P.E. with Hoyle and Tanner Associates presented the site plan that would be located to the south of the Arboretum Drive rotary off the Spaulding Turnpike Exit 3, across the street from the water tower. Mr. Tobey stated that they tried to avoid all wetlands and buffers on the site.

Mr. Tobey showed the existing wooded areas, and proposed plantings.

Mr. Tobey said there were a series of stone walls that would be stockpiled that the Town could use, but if not, they would try to work them into the landscape.

Chair Hislop asked what species of elm was used on the Pease Tradeport, and how they were surviving. Mr. Tobey said he wasn't sure, but they tried to provide a wide variety of species, and there would be constant landscape contracts on the property, so any diseased trees would be swapped out. Chair Hislop recommended that they provide a variety of species, and avoid clumping by mixing species.

Vice-Chair Willson commented that planting all deciduous trees in front wouldn't provide any foliage or color in the winter. Mr. Tobey said they would review their selection.

Commissioner Meigs commented that transformers could run hot in summer with dense foliage. Chair Hislop added that arborvitae could be sensitive to heavy snow loads, and suggested other varieties that weren't as tall.

Commissioner Meigs asked if the Newington Historic District reviewed the historic Pickering homestead. Mr. Krebs said they had not, but the Planning Board was aware of it, and it was being protected.

Mr. Tobey said they were putting a sidewalk to area, and perhaps a marker, though barely visible cellar hole. Mr. Tobey added that there was an old fuel line that would be removed eventually, so a buffer implementation was recommended.

Commissioner Meigs commented that there was usually a notation of drainage flow on plans. Mr. Tobey responded that everything flowed to the back, and to a culvert on Arboretum Drive. Mr. Tobey said they would use a closed drainage system with treatment filters to be slowly discharged to a pond. Commissioner Meigs asked if there was any knowledge of what affect the drainage would have on streams. Mr. Tobey said their stormwater management plan had to be reviewed for the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) permitting process, and meet their standards.

Mr. Krebs said he and the Town engineering consultant, Eric Weinrieb, Principal P.E. with Altus Engineering reviewed the plan, and thought they did a thorough job, but still wanted a copy of the final plan.

2) Other Business and Discussions:

Chair Hislop said she appeared before the Budget Committee the previous week, with two the Board of Selectmen, and several brought up concerns with Fox Point erosion and the Town Forest.

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Chair Hislop said the Board of Selectmen also discussed the City of Portsmouth water main replacement. Mr. Krebs said he spent a lot of time with the City of Portsmouth Water Department, and they felt frustrated that Newington would want them to fix the problems down there, as it would cost so much.

Chair Hislop said an Aquatic Resource Mitigation grant was contemplated, but criteria called for public access, the way the public was allowed at the Wagon Hill public park in Durham, which a number of people in Newington would not accept.

Commissioner Meigs asked about the oyster beds nearby. Mr. Krebs said the Portsmouth Water Department had already dealt with that.

Mr. Krebs said they were going to drop sections of water line originally, but found that the current pulled back and forth on another project, so they would drop sheet pilings on both sides, and stage pilings on Fox Point, however briefly. Mr. Krebs said not sure permit status, but perhaps commission might want a subcommittee to review more closely.

Commissioner Laura Rogers asked if they had plans on remediation of the erosion at Fox Point. Mr. Krebs said the Town hired Duncan Mellor, who looked at several areas, didn't agree with DES recommendations, but it was determined that it would still cost a quarter million dollars.

Chair Hislop said DES recommended soft and hard with plantings and strategically placed riprap with vegetation to hold the shore, whereas Duncan Mellor suggested hard scape barriers. Alternate Commissioner Jane Kendall said she understood that hard scaping protected where placed, but altered current, and caused erosion further down the line.

Commissioner Rogers said she understood that it was costly, but thought it would be good to know the total cost should an opportunity come along. Chair Hislop said each site along the shore was different.

Mr. Krebs suggested that the Commission meet with the Board of Selectmen to address a few areas that needed repair, perhaps the worst areas, or the area that was used most by public to see how much it cost, and to obtain permitting.

Commissioner Meigs said it would be good to know if the areas of erosion were part of a natural cycle, or if there was something people were doing to the environment the way people were putting up seawalls to protect their beaches, and causing erosion elsewhere.

Mr. Krebs noted that passing a warrant article allowing the establishment of a perpetual conservation trust fund could allow the Commission to fund activities beyond the State regulated Conservation Fund could do.

Vice-Chair Willson said he had observed large old trees falling into Great Bay. Chair Hislop said that might be an additional reason for pulling the trails back from the water's edge. Commissioner Kendall wondered if it would be worth taking an inventory

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of the trees hanging over the edge, and strategically cutting certain trees and leaving root systems to hold the soil and slow down.

Chair Hislop suggested working on the proper removal of invasive species like bittersweet that was taking down trees. Mr. Krebs said he wondered if the Commission could raise funds for removal.

Commissioner Meigs said other Town properties where invasives go and would require dedication.

Mr. Krebs said there were a lot of retired people in town who weren't going to volunteer the way people did for Odiorne State Park at Rye where there were more resident and public volunteers, so it was probably necessary to hire a contractor.

Mr. Krebs asked if there was a Fox Point committee. Chair Hislop said there was, and there were funds. Mr. Krebs said the Commission might want to talk with the Board of Selectmen about having the Fox Point Committee focus on remediation on the point.

Vice-Chair Willson said talked with the Planning Board couple years ago where invasives were removed, and wondered what Ordinance done to prevent residents from planting ornamental invasives like flaming bush.

Commissioner Rogers asked about the Board of Selectmen's trust fund warrant article language.

Mr. Krebs' said he would email his article on the Adams Homestead history for Commissioners to edit.

Chair Hislop informed the Commission that Southeast Land Trust (SELT) did their 2022 Adams Homestead, Baird easement, and Trickey's Cove inventories, and found no issues.

Minutes: *Commissioner Meigs moved to approve the December 8, 2023, Minutes with corrections as discussed. Vice-Chair Willson seconded, and all were in favor.*

Adjournment: *Commissioner Meigs moved to adjourn. Vice-Chair Willson seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.*

Next Meeting: Thursday, February 9, 2023

**Respectfully
Submitted by:** Jane K. Kendall, Recording Secretary

