

**Minutes of the Peterborough Conservation Commission
site visit, Walden Eco Village, Middle Hancock Road
December 3, 2020, 2:30 p.m.**

Present: Jo Anne Carr, John Kerrick, Matt Lundsted, Francie Von Mertens, Robert Wood; Town Planner Danica Melone; Chad Branon, Fieldstone Land Consultants; project applicant Akhil Garland; neighbors David Buren, David Johnson, Hannah Johnson, Michael Kennedy, Kim Sands

Well School Eco Village Open Space Residential Development

Introductions were made and Conservation Commission co-chair Francie Von Mertens summarized goals of the site visit primarily as assessing impacts to the town's Wetlands Protection Overlay Zone and stormwater management. She said ConCom members also might have questions on septic and individual wells on quarter-acre lots.

Chad Brannon, project engineer, led the group to two wetland-crossing culverts on the existing access road that is proposed to be widened to 20 feet from 15. Town code allows wetland crossings to access buildable upland as long as no alternative exists that has less impact to the wetland. The ConCom assumes a special exception was granted to cross wetlands when the access road was constructed years back.

The three existing cottages and five other structures to the west of Garland Court are in the Wetlands Protection Overlay Zone (WPOZ). Town Planner Danica Melone said that plans at the time of their approval did not indicate wetlands. She noted the plans had not been signed.

The wetland appears to be an ephemeral stream channel. The three cottages and five structures are in the 50-foot buffer to that channel. There was no water visible at the time of the site visit and the presence of wetland vegetation was difficult to determine.

Mr. Branon confirmed that the existing common well and septic system for the seven existing dwelling units would remain unchanged, with no additional impacts to the WPOZ for the project in the area of the three cottages and five structures. The proposed 19 new lots would have individual septic and wells. Mr. Brannon said community septic was not being considered.

Robert Wood questioned what was known about hydrology in the area, given neighbors' stated concerns and the number of proposed wells. Mr. Branon said there were numerous test pits, and wells would be drilled bedrock.

The fire pond area required by the town's fire chief lies downslope from the existing cottage area and along the same stream channel. Mr. Branon said that its watershed area appears adequate to maintain a fire pond. Project applicant Akhil Garland asked if the pond could be used for farming purposes. (Response was not heard by the minutes taker.)

Matt Lundsted queried ConCom members if they saw impacts to wetlands significant enough to require mitigation. Members agreed they did not.

Mr. Branon led the group to the proposed stormwater detention area to the west of units 1-8. He said that stormwater would be encouraged that way by treatment swales. An existing forested area would be cleared for the detention pond. The applicant Akhil Garland requested that the detention area remain as natural as possible regarding vegetation and boulders on the site.

The group bushwhacked back to the parking area. Von Mertens said there likely would be a Zoom meeting the following week to approve comments to the Planning Board for its December 14 meeting. These comments would include assessment of Walden Eco Village's subdivision plans relating to requirements of the town's Open Space Residential Development code.