


Town of Stafford
Inland Wetlands Commission
Regular Meeting
July 19, 2023
Veterans Meeting Room

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TOWN CLERK

Members Present: John D. Wilson, Chair
Kurt Mordasky
Dr. David Mordasky
Janet Bareiss
Ricky Dorman, alternate

Also Present: Devin Cowperthwaite, Director of Public Works
Tyler Patrick Hines – Wetlands violation - 79 Stafford Street
Michael Prucker – Re: Wetlands violation at 79 Stafford Street
James Halleran – Re: Timber Harvest – 123 West Stafford Road

Agenda:

1. Call to order
2. Establish a quorum
3. Review and approve minutes of 6/21/2023
4. Discussion – Emergency Situation – Culvert failure on Furnace Hollow Road
5. Wetlands violation – 79 Stafford Street
6. Notification of Timber Harvest – 123 West Stafford Road
7. Adjournment

1. Call to order

John Wilson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Establish a quorum

A quorum was established with John Wilson, Chair; Kurt Mordasky, Dr. David Mordasky, Janet Bareiss and seating alternate member Ricky Dorman for David Smith. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Review and approve minutes of 6/21/2023

Ricky Dorman made a motion, seconded by Kurt Mordasky to approve the minutes of 6/21/2023 as written. All were in favor. Motion carried.

4. Discussion – Emergency Situation – Culvert failure on Furnace Hollow Road.

Devin Cowperthwaite, Director of Public Works, attended the meeting. He reported that the very heavy rainfall in the past week caused the culvert near the Stafford Meat Company on Furnace Hollow Road to collapse under the road. He said part of it washed away. They had to close down the road.

This is a well-traveled road and they need to at least do a temporary fix so it can be reopened as soon as possible. Devin Cowperthwaite said they engaged an engineering firm they do a lot of work with to evaluate the situation. The wing walls were undermined and the culvert needs to be entirely rebuilt. Under this firm's recommendations and supervision, they would like to leave the wing walls and headwalls in place for now, and replace the steel pipe with reinforced concrete pipe. They can put down stone and set it and backfill it with stone. They will use best management practices. He said erosion control measures will be determined by the engineers, but will probably involve silt fence. They will get a surveyor out to collect points and drawings will need to be done. To do the full analysis and work would involve a yearlong closure, so they need to do a temporary fix to get the road re-opened while they look for grant money.

Dr. David Mordasky made a motion, seconded by Kurt Mordasky to allow the town to proceed with a temporary fix to the culvert failure on Furnace Hollow Road per the engineer's recommendations and supervision. All were in favor. Motion carried.

5. Wetlands violation – 79 Stafford Street

John Wilson reviewed a map of the subject property from 2008. He said when it was approved as a lot, the driveway was to come across the common driveway and they were allowed partial use of the neighboring driveway to come in. He noted when the zoning permit was approved, it was only for general clearing and did not include stumping and grubbing.

John Wilson said he issued the violation because they put down millings through the middle of the wetlands without first coming before the Inland Wetlands Commission. Michael Prucker, who attended the meeting with property owner Tyler Hines, said in the area where they put the millings down, there was already some gravel and ¾" stone.

John Wilson explained that it was, historically, a cart path. He said there used to be a school house there which was later moved, but regardless, it is wetlands. He said when they had the heavy rain recently, the millings dammed it up and sent the river through the property next door. He said he felt they reduced the workings of a piece of the wetlands and disturbed the natural migration of the water down through.

Michael Prucker said he had called the town prior to putting down the millings and they were given permission to do so. Then, three days after putting them down, they got the violation letter. The idea was to use that road to allow the neighbors access to their 70 acres in back. John Wilson said he felt the wetlands need to be restored to their natural condition.

Michael Prucker said he has an engineer working on the issue right now. He noted they have gotten 12" of rain in the last two months, which is highly unusual.

John Wilson said there was no permit issued to go through any wetlands, and only the Inland Wetlands Commission can issue a permit to do that.

Michael Prucker said he always thought the wetlands were near the Rossi's property next door. Dr. David Mordasky asked if the wetlands had been flagged on the property. Michael Prucker, said they have not. Dr. David Mordasky said it is important to always have someone flag the wetlands first. Then if they want to go through them or if they are doing work within the upland review area (presently 100 feet), they would have to come before their Commission. He said they try to work with people to protect the wetlands but still come up with practical solutions.

John Wilson asked Tyler Hines why he was building a road for the Greikas to get to their land in back. Tyler Hines said a couple of trees had come down on the road and he felt putting the millings down for them would be a short-term solution. John Wilson said the Greikas could go straight back on their property, and they have access to it whether it is wet or dry. He said former ZEO David Perkins letter tells them what they need to do. He noted in the past that the Greikas tried to use the cart path for access and threw some gravel down, but they were told to stop.

John Wilson reiterated that the wetlands need to be restored. He noted that their permit to build won't go through unless this problem is fixed. He suggested they could get a soil scientist to come out and evaluate the situation and instruct them what needs to be done to restore the wetlands. They could also have an engineer do a drawing on how it will be fixed to keep the land percolated the way it should be with wetlands. He said he understood their predicament, and felt badly they had been mis-advised.

Ricky Dorman asked what if it takes some time to get an engineering or soil scientist response and in the meantime, they get more rain? Would it help to put up some silt fencing? John Wilson did not think that would improve the situation. He stressed to get a soil scientist or engineer to look at it right away.

Michael Prucker said they have the Gardner & Peterson engineering firm working on it right now. John Wilson suggested as soon as they have a recommendation to call the building/zoning office so they can get on their next month's agenda.

Tyler Hines said he would do that. He asked, in the meantime, if he can still cut trees in the approved areas. He said some trees in that area are dead and some have fallen down. John Wilson said he could. However, if the work to be done is in the upland review area (within 50 feet of the wetlands), he would need to come before the Commission and get a permit. He said he needed to double check, because the upland review area is currently 100 feet, but he believed when the permit on his property was granted, it was then 50 feet. John Wilson reiterated that if the Greikas had wanted a right-of-way, they should have requested and gotten it on the map when the permit was originally issued.

No formal vote was taken, but there was agreement by the Commission that Tyler Hines follow the directions that John Wilson asked for.

6. Notification of Timber Harvest – 123 West Stafford Road.

James Halleran, a forester from Durham, CT, said he is working with the landowners. They have about five acres and want to harvest about four acres of it to create more pasture for their horses. The site has reportedly sandy, poorly drained soils and the trees are mostly mature white pine.

Ricky Dorman asked if he planned to do any stumping on the property or excavation of the top layer of brush. James Halleran said, they didn't plan to do any stumping. As for excavation, he was unsure. He said they are just harvesting the timber.

John Wilson said the map they have indicates a significant portion of the property is wetlands but that might not necessarily be so. He said white pines don't usually grow in wetlands. However, the map is all they have to work with right now.

James Halleran said he hasn't been up to the property in a few weeks, and this is a fairly small job that would take about two weeks only. He said they planned to go up there when it is dry and hope to start in a month or in early September. It would be a short operation, so they are flexible.

Kurt Mordasky asked if the property is accessible. James Halleran said it is. It is right off Route 190.

John Wilson suggested they table the discussion until next month and in the meantime they each go up to the property and check it out themselves to see if it is indeed wetlands. James Halleran was amenable to the suggestion. John Wilson asked that he inform the property owner that members of the Commission would be coming up there. There was general agreement to proceed as John Wilson recommended.

James Halleran noted that when he checks GIS mapping, the town of Stafford is one that never includes the parcel data. He asked if there is a way to get this information. John Wilson suggested he call during office hours and speak to the Office Manager, Sheree Schold. She may be able to help him.

7. Adjournment

Dr. David Mordasky made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Kurt Mordasky. All were in favor. Motion carried. The July 19, 2023 meeting of the Stafford Inland Wetlands Commission was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Annie Gentile
Recording Secretary