

Town of Stafford
Inland Wetlands Commission
Regular Meeting
March 20, 2024
Veterans Meeting Room

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7 pages


TOWN CLERK

Members Present: Dave Smith, Vice Chair
Kurt Mordasky
Dr. David Mordasky
Hickory Lake
Ricky Dorman, alternate

Also Present: Andy Marchese, ZEO
Rob Bahler, CHA Consulting; Re: Whispering Pines Bridge
Claire Christiana, CHA Consulting; Re: Whispering Pines Bridge
Eric Peterson, P.E. Gardner & Peterson; Re: 0 Stafford Street
Tyler Hines, 79 Stafford Street; Re: 0 Stafford Street
Chris Mokrzecki, 81 Handel Road; Re: Timber Harvest
Public

Agenda:

1. Call to order
2. Establish a quorum
3. Review and approve minutes of 2/21/2024
4. Application – **Bridge Repair**
Applicant: Devin Cowperthwaite, 1 Main Street, Stafford
Owner: Town of Stafford, 1 Main Street, Stafford, CT
Location: 0 Whispering Pines Bridge, Stafford, CT
5. Application – **Driveway resurfacing and removal of sediment in wetlands**
Applicant: Eric Peterson, 178 Hartford Turnpike, Tolland, CT
Owner: Patricia Greika, 81 Stafford Street, Stafford, CT
Location: 0 Stafford Street, Stafford, CT; Map: 41, Lot: 30, Zone: AAA
6. Application – **Single family residential house**
Applicant: Robert Proulx, 132B West Main Street, Stafford, CT
Owner: Michael Corsini, 159 Wales Rd, Stafford, CT
Location: 159 Wales Road, Stafford, CT; Map: 19, Lot: 1.08, Zone AA
7. Application – **Timber Harvest**
Applicant: Chris Mokrzecki, 81 Handel Road, Stafford, CT
Owner: Jamie & Leon Faucher, 30 Handel Rd, Stafford, CT
Location: 30 Handel Road, Stafford, CT; Map: 44, Lot: 9, Zone: AAA
8. Adjournment

1. Call to Order

Dave Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Establish a quorum

A quorum was established with Dave Smith, Vice Chair; Kurt Mordasky, Dr. David Mordasky, Hickory Lake and Ricky Dorman, alternate.

3. Review and approve minutes of 2/21/2024

Dr. David Mordasky made a motion to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Kurt Mordasky. Dr. David Mordasky, Kurt Mordasky, Dave Smith and Ricky Dorman voted in in favor. Hickory Lake abstained. Motion carried.

4. Application – *Bridge Repair*

Applicant: Devin Cowperthwaite, 1 Main Street Stafford

Owner: Town of Stafford, 1 Main Street, Stafford, CT

Location: 0 Whispering Pines Bridge

Rob Bahler and Claire Christiana of CHA Consulting attended the meeting. Rob Bahler provided an overview of the plan. This is an application for the replacement of the bridge on Whispering Pines Road over Still Brook. The bridge is a three cell, asphalt coated, corrugated steel pipe arch culvert that per the Connecticut Department of Transportation is in poor shape. The three metal culverts are rusting and one invert got pushed up. They plan to replace the bridge with a 22-foot wide, 5-foot high box culvert.

Rob Bahler said they will maintain one-way traffic through the project area during construction. They will use a temporary bypass pipe to reroute the stream. Once construction is done, they will restore the area with conservation seeding mix.

Dave Smith asked if the new concrete products will have the same stream elevation. Rob Bahler said they will be raising the profile of the road about 8 inches on both sides of the bridge. The current low spot 200 feet north of the bridge will be maintained. They will be maintaining the existing roadway without additional drainage. The box culvert will be set on granular fill.

Dave Smith asked if there are any dewatering provisions. Rob Bahler said there will be in the early stage. He said when they are on the east side there will be a coffer dam with dewatering water handling on both sides to help with water flow through the pipe. This will be mirrored on the other side. He indicated the location of the dewatering basin on the plans.

Dave Smith asked about the timeline. Rob Bahler said they planned to start in April of 2025 and finish up that same year in November. He said this project will get both federal and state funding, 80 percent from the federal government and 20 percent from the state. The replacement bridge should have a 75-year lifespan.

Dr. David Mordasky made a motion to approve the 0 Whispering Pines bridge repair application from Devin Cowperthwaite, Town of Stafford, as presented. All were in favor. Motion carried.

5. Application – *Driveway resurfacing and removal of sediment in wetlands*

Applicant: Eric Peterson, Gardner & Peterson, 178 Hartford Turnpike, Tolland

Owner: Patricia Greika, 81 Stafford Street, Stafford, CT

Location: 0 Stafford Street, Stafford, CT; Map: 41, Lot: 30, Zone: AAA

Eric Peterson, P.E. with Gardner and Peterson attended the meeting. He was representing Tyler Hines of 79 Stafford Street who was issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) back on June 29, 2023 for the failure to obtain permits for the installation of a road/driveway within an area regulated by the IWWC. The property owner at 81 Stafford Street where the violation occurred is Patricia Greika. He provided a summary of what had led to the NOV.

The Grieka family had owned the property at 79 Stafford Street for many years, but a few years ago, they subdivided the property and Tyler Hines purchased it. To allow the Grieka's to continue to access their 77-acre parcel in back without going through his drive to where his house, once built, will be located, he discussed with the Grieka's how he might improve an old farm road in a 60-foot strip of the Grieka's property so they could get to their land in back using that pathway. Tyler originally spoke to someone at Public Works, but there was apparently some confusion about what he was going to do. He did not realize he needed to come before the Inland Wetlands Commission, and the work he did that created the NOV, putting millings down on the existing drive that was in the wetlands, was not done with any malicious intent.

Eric Peterson apologized for addressing the situation a bit late. He noted that Tyler Hines had come to their office in late summer but they had a backlog of work and were only able to address it now. Eric Peterson said there is an accumulation of sediment in the wetlands to the south of the property that will need to be removed. This work, that could be done by hand or machine, must be removed to restore the area to how it was before the millings were added. Eric Peterson said they are essentially applying for a permit to allow for the work that has already been done. This will allow access to the remaining land in back that is owned by the Greika family. He said the drive right now is relatively stable and it might do more harm than good to remove it. He is asking that the IWWC permit the drive as it is now, but with that additional cleanup he discussed.

Dr. David Mordasky asked if Tyler Hines had originally come to them, how would Gardner and Peterson have recommended they handle the work? He said they probably would have suggested they do things similarly. He noted the water does not move anywhere and said he felt the millings were compacted enough that they won't go anywhere.

Dave Smith said he could attest there was an established path that has been used occasionally over the years to get to the back.

Hickory Lake expressed concern that if they allowed things to stand as they are, how might the road be used years from now if multiple houses end up getting built on that back property? Dave Smith agreed that it would not be adequate for multiple houses, but felt it could work for just one. Hickory Lake noted also that there are standards that must be met for access for fire apparatus, ambulances, and other emergency vehicles.

Ricky Dorman asked about the width of the drive. He said he believed the code in town requires a minimum of 12 feet. Eric Peterson said it is about 11 feet. Hickory Lake said they could approve it as a pathway or access but not as a driveway.

Ricky Dorman asked if millings are an approved material for a wetlands crossing. Eric Peterson said they use asphalt for wetlands crossings, so he would not have a problem with it. Hickory Lake said if they used asphalt, it would be out of the wetlands. He said he was concerned that it could leech out products and that might put the Commission in a difficult spot if this happened.

Ricky Dorman asked Tyler Hines how he would handle it if he had to remove the millings. Tyler Hines said he would probably excavate it with a machine. The Commission discussed digging up the millings, stockpiling them, then putting down gravel and raising the elevation, then either leaving that as is or re-spreading the removed millings back on top. Dave Smith said that would be a lot of disturbance that he hoped they could avoid.

Andy Marchese asked if anyone had talked to the property owner about whether they wanted the millings removed. Tyler Hines said he spoke to the Greikas—both the mother and the son and they were good with the plan he presented. He said they wanted a gate there, though, so that no other people would be using the pathway to get back there. Andy Marchese also asked if the property owner should be coming before them because Tyler doesn't own that land. He said the question had recently been raised to him, so he needed to ask.

Dave Smith said they can approach this from several directions. They can accept the plan as presented, and when the work is completed satisfactorily, they could vacate the NOV order that is currently still in place. They could table the discussion until the property owner comes in. They could consider this a significant activity and hold a public hearing. Or they could accept the plan but with some modifications.

Hickory Lake reviewed the existing elevations. He said they need to be careful they are not creating a dam. Eric Peterson said the stone wall there works as a barrier. Tyler Hines said when he was first doing some cutting there, the area was a little wet but dried up quickly. He said last year, with all the rain, it was quite wet.

Ricky Dorman said the Greikas should be at this meeting and he did not feel comfortable making a decision without knowing for sure what they want. Tyler Hines said all he could say is that he communicated the plan with them and they were good with it.

Dave Smith suggested approving the permit but with a condition of approval that the millings be removed and used further up the road and that the area be replaced with gravel. If this work is done satisfactorily, then the cease and desist order would be lifted.

Hickory Lake said he was concerned the property owner is not here, nor is there an agent at the meeting representing them. He said he was surprised the violation was issued to Tyler Hines in the first place because he is not the property owner.

Ricky Dorman asked if they could lift the cease and desist order that was issued to Tyler Hines and reissue it to the Greikas. Tyler Hines said he was willing to absorb the cost to remove the millings and complete the work properly.

Hickory Lake asked if they accepted Dave Smith's suggestion, would Tyler Hines get in trouble with Public Works regarding putting in curb cuts or any other road requirements. Tyler Hines said he originally spoke to Public Works, but thinks now there may have been some confusion and they may have thought it was a driveway. Dave Smith said he did not believe Public Works would have an issue with Tyler Hines because it is neither a road nor a driveway. It would be a farm road.

Dr. David Mordasky made a motion, seconded by Kurt Mordasky to approve the application for a farm road at 0 Stafford Street, Map: 41, Lot: 30, Zone: AAA with the condition that millings be removed from the wetlands and in the transition area 10 feet to both the east and west and that process aggregate gravel, bank run, and geotech style mat be added. The material should be well compacted so it does not flow into the wetlands. This will also help preserve its useful life. Upon satisfactory completion of the work, the cease and desist order will be lifted.

The Commission discussed the motion. The question was raised what might happen if the Greikas came to them and said they did not want this done on their property. Dave Smith said they would then issue them a cease and desist order for the violation.

There was agreement that should the farm road become a driveway, additional activities and permits will be required.

A vote was taken on the motion. All were in favor. Motion carried. Dave Smith advised Tyler Hines to notify the ZEO when he is going to start the work and notify him again when it is completed.

6. Application – *Single family residential house*

Applicant: Robert Proulx, 132B West Main Street, Stafford, CT

Owner: Michael Corsini, 159 Wales Rd, Stafford, CT

Location: 159 Wales Road, Stafford, CT; Map: 19, Lot: 1.08, Zone AA

It was noted that neither the applicant or property owner were in attendance at the meeting. However, the Commission reviewed the application. Dave Smith said it appears the application shows no direct impacts to the wetlands and that the entire lot is in the upland review area. He noted also it is an approved lot of record.

Dr. David Mordasky said he did not see any issues as far as wetlands are concerned.

Hickory Lake made a motion, seconded by Ricky Dorman to approve the application of Robert Proulx for property owner Michael Corsini at 159 Wales Road, Map: 19, Lot: 1.08, Zone AA as presented. All were in favor. Motion carried.

7. Application – *Timber Harvest*

Applicant: Chris Mokrzecki, 81 Handel Road, Stafford, CT

Owner: Jamie & Leon Faucher, 30 Handel Rd, Stafford, CT

Location: 30 Handel Road, Stafford, CT; Map: 44, Lot: 9, Zone: AAA

Chris Mokrzecki of 81 Handel Road attended the meeting. He noted that Andy Marchese recently visited the property. He said there is a 12-inch to 18-inch stream that goes through the property. At the lower point downstream, he will put in a hay bale to catch sediment and silt. There is a 500-foot tracking pad that goes up the hill. He said this is where trucks will come in to pick up the wood. The landing area is about 100 feet in off Handel Road. Their machine will not go into wetlands or the upland review area, and trees will be pulled out with cable.

Dave Smith asked what the schedule would be for the work. Chris Mokrzecki said he hopes to start as soon as possible, weather permitting. He said he expects the project to take a couple of months.

Dr. David Mordasky made a motion, seconded by Hickory Lake to approve the application for a timber harvest at 30 Handel Road, Stafford, CT; Map: 44, Lot: 9, Zone: AAA as presented. All were in favor. Motion carried.

It was suggested that when Chris Mokrzecki is ready to start the work that he contact Andy Marchese and report back to him when the work is completed.

8. Adjournment

Prior to adjourning, Andy Marchese provided an update from last month's meeting. He said the owner of 16 Reservoir Drive is back from Costa Rica and will be filing a permit and coming before the Commission with an application for the work that was already completed at his home. There was a question about whether a retaining wall that was put

up without a permit may have been installed beyond the rear property line. Andy Marchese said the homeowner should be bringing a survey. In addition, the area will need to be flagged and mapped. He said it turned out that the boundary marker was in a tree that they had taken down. He added that the project is pretty much complete out there.

Hickory Lake made a motion, seconded by Dr. David Mordasky to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. All were in favor. Motion carried. The March 20 meeting of the Stafford Inland Wetlands Commission was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Annie Gentile". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Annie Gentile
Recording Secretary