

Minutes of a Conservation Commission Meeting – 25 October 2017

Members present: Peter Vincent – Chairman, Geoffrey Kontje, Christina Brown, Stuart Lollis, Lil Province

Absent: Jeff Carlson, Bob Avakian

Staff: Jane Varkonda, Lisa Morrison

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Chappy Beach Club NOI to upgrade septic system. Chris Alley and Kara Shemeth were present for the applicant. Lollis made it known that although he is a member of the beach club, he has no financial stake in the matter. The current septic system is failing; a new tank and pump chamber will be installed and the leaching field will be moved closer to the road. The system will be mounded slightly and the existing tank will be converted to a grease trap. The system will be a standard Title V system. The club's water supply well is 500 feet away across the street and up the hill. Ms. Shemeth did not think that any vegetation would be disturbed. The new system will have the same capacity as the existing and there is no increase in flow anticipated.

The plan is to dig out and store the excavated beach stand. Goodale's will truck in a foot of sand to act as a base, and then the beach sand will be replaced. Province made a motion to approve the project as presented. Kontje seconded the motion. Unanimously approved with the condition that the Commission may require some restoration planting of woody vegetation once the project is complete.

Holtz NOI to construct dwelling, pool, and garage within 200-feet of a vernal pool, Dark Hollow. Woody Mitchell from Squash Meadow Construction was present for the applicant. The vernal pool is located on an adjacent lot. The area was staked by Cooper Environmental. The construction has been moved as far from the vernal pool as possible. The applicant does not intend to build the pool or the garage right away, but would like the permits in place.

The property is part of the Dark Woods subdivision. The vernal pool is on Sheriff's Meadow property and partially on an abutter's property.

There were a number of abutters present who had questions and concerns. The agent pointed out that the only registered vernal pool in Edgartown is at the golf course, however the property is in the NHESP priority habitat. The application is under the local bylaw only and NHESP has ruled that the project is 'not a taking.'

Mike Ditchfield said that he has lived next to the vernal pool for 30 years and is concerned about the effect of the construction on the spadefoot toads and other animals. He said that he believed this is the only place in Edgartown that there are left. He said that generally they live 5 to 8 feet below ground and come out once a week to eat. He said that sometimes after a heavy rain they will come out to breed and create quite an amorous chorus. He said that the pool is also home to endangered spotted salamanders.

Christina Miller said that the toads are a threatened species and that the vernal pool is a very special unique habitat. She said she was concerned about the effect of landscaping and irrigation systems and lawn chemicals. She said that if an irrigation system uses well water, it may draw down the vernal pool. She urged the Commission to do the utmost within their power to protect the pond.

Mitchell noted that the lot is on town water and will also be on town sewer. He noted that half the lot will be untouched. Mitchell said that he had not yet presented the plans to the homeowner's association.

Beth Stone, another neighbor, said that she had issues with the house recently built by Squash Meadow, especially the amount of trees that were removed from the site and the excessive outdoor lighting.

Frank Markwica, a real estate agent, commented that the applicant does not intend to break any rules. He said that Mr. Holtz would like to keep the property as natural as possible and that he has great respect for the land.

John Williamson, an architect and member of the Dark Woods Architecture Review Board also had issues with the previous house built by Squash Meadow.

Mike Ditchfield noted that toads are particularly susceptible to fertilizers and pesticides.

Lynn Ditchfield said that she was not sure that transplanting trees was a good idea. Mr. Williamson agreed and noted that transplanting large trees is usually not very successful.

After some further discussion, the Commission voted unanimously to continue the hearing to the next meeting, 8 November, in order to schedule a site visit. Mr. Mitchell will submit a revised plan that locates the second vernal pool as well.

CONTINUATIONS:

When Pigs Soar (a.k.a. Cameron) NOI to repair and maintain stone revetment, Edgartown Bay Road. Doug Hoehn was present for the applicant. This property is flanked by a concrete retaining on one side and a wood retaining wall on the other. The intent is to follow the contour of the bank as is currently exists and use the existing stones. Additional stones will be placed about 2/3 of the way up the bank. The upper third of the bank will be planted with rosa rugosa and beach grass. Some extra sand will be brought in to be placed behind the stones. Access will be from the top of the bank, not from the beach. The house dates back to 1938.

Mr. Hoehn noted that no work is proposed on the existing, unlicensed groin.

Kontje asked about what trees would be left on the bank. Mr. Hoehn said that they intend to remove just the ones that are dead or dying. Province made a motion to approve the project as presented with the conditions that all construction be from the landward side, and that any fill brought in is tested for compatibility with the existing sand. Lollis seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

Foster NOI for the manual pruning of vegetation on a coastal bank, Starbuck Neck. Jeff Verner was present for the applicant. Verner said that the vines on the bank are out of control and he would like to manually prune them back. No root systems will be removed. The applicant would also like to top some of cedars on

the bank. All debris would be removed from the site. Verner said that most of the native vegetation has been swallowed up by bittersweet and porcelain berry. Kontje suggested that the beach plum, viburnum, and cedars be left alone for now and just the invasives pruned. If additional pruning is needed, Verner can come back and request additional pruning. Kontje made the motion. Brown seconded. Unanimously approved.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Rice Minor changes in grade, Wintucket (Former Bucci property.) Order of conditions was issued for the demolition and rebuilding of several structures and stipulated that there should be no changes in grade. The applicant is proposing some minor grading that the agent would like the board to review. The agent also asked for additional information from the landscape designer regarding the restoration of the native meadow and details on the proposed 'eco-lawn.'

Kristen Reimann was present for the applicant and presented the landscape plan. The only area of manicured lawn is immediately adjacent to the pool. The plan to restore the meadow involves stopping all mowing and loosening the top layer of soil and then overseeding with a fescue mix. It will then be allowed to grow out to a height of between 18 and 24 inches and mow once a year. It will be irrigated just enough to get it started.

The "Eco lawn" is a small area immediately adjacent to driveway and the leaching field.

The board approved the trails, the changes in grade, and asked the applicant to devise a mowing schedule for the meadow and the eco-lawn to be implemented over the next decade and approved by the agent. Province made a motion to approve the amendment. Kontje seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

White Oyster Pond. The agent reported that Albert White had called her asking to remove about five cedar trees that are growing up. The board approved the request.

Cape Poge Kontje said that he would like to contact the Mass Department of Ecological Restoration in order to get them to help restore circulation on the southern end of Cape Poge pond. He said that he has been observing the area for years and the little creeks that serve several small ponds are vulnerable to closing up, especially after storms. Two ponds are currently cut off and have no circulation resulting in the loss of shellfish and the gain in mosquitoes.

The board voted in favor of asking the agent to contact the department and having them evaluate the area.

Katama The board voted unanimously to approve a proposal that would allow cedars to be transplanted from the Town Landing at Herring Creek to the solar array at Katama Farm.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Approved: _____