

Minutes of a Conservation Commission Meeting - 13 January 2021

Members present: Edward Vincent - Chairman, Geoffrey Kontje, Bob Avakian, Jeff Carlson, Christina Brown, Lil Province

Staff: Jane Varkonda, Lisa Morrison

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

79 Turkeyland Cove (Continuation) NOI to construct two sheds and install a bocce court and hot tub. Chuck Sullivan, Caleb Nicholson, and Doug Hoehn were present for the applicant. Mr. Hoehn noted that the only remaining issue was the location of the bocce court. Hoehn said that he consulted with the Zoning Inspector, Reade Milne, who said that she had no issues with the court from a zoning standpoint. She said that, in her opinion, there is nothing in the zoning bylaw that would prevent its construction even though it is located in Zone 1 of the Ponds District.

Kontje said that his reading of the Ponds District Zoning is that nothing should be allowed in that area other than boardwalks and walking paths.

Hoehn said that the court would require minimal grading and minimal vegetation removal. Mr. Nicholson added that the surface is entirely permeable. Six-inches of the existing organic material will be removed and stored, then 6-inches of gravel would be deposited and topped with bocce mix.

Brown asked what type of vegetation is there currently. Nicholson replied that it is currently a mowed pathway. Hoehn said he doesn't see how the court could have any negative impact on the resource area: there will be no runoff, no vegetation or habitat destruction.

Kontje asked if it could be located elsewhere. Hoehn commented that although there is plenty of acreage, this location keeps all the activities close together in a centralized area.

Carlson asked the make-up of the bocce mix. Nicholson replied that it is a proprietary mix of stone and other organic materials. Carlson asked what kind of maintenance is necessary. Nicholson said that additional mix needs to be added occasionally, and the court needs to be raked periodically.

Nicholson said that he will collect the little bluestem currently growing in the area and reuse it to fill in around the edges once the court is installed.

Avakian commented that it is really not much of an alteration.

Brown made a motion to approve the proposal as presented with the following conditions: (1) existing little bluestem will be used to revegetate around the bocce court once it is built, (2) Conservation Agent will be informed prior to any excavation and will approve the court's location on-site, (3) photos of the site both before and after installation will be submitted for the file, and (4) bocce mix will consist of only organic materials.

Carlson seconded the motion. Avakian, Province, and Vincent also voted to approve the project with conditions. Kontje was opposed. Motion carries 5 to 1.

Chittick - North Water Street. Ms. Chittick was concerned about possible illegal cutting in the Conservation easement given to the town by Dickinson. Several photographs of the site submitted by Ms. Chittick were reviewed, as well as additional photographs taken by the Conservation Agent, who also submitted an old survey and a GIS aerial map. The agent is fairly sure that the cutting was done on the Lovell property, not in the easement. She believes that the Lovell property extends at least an additional 7-feet beyond the fence line. The Commission voted unanimously by roll-call vote to authorize the agent to procure a current survey of the property. It was noted that even if the the cutting was done entirely on the Lovell property, a permit of some kind would be needed.

Ms. Chittick was concerned that tracks on the property seemed to indicate that the area was being accessed by a vehicle. The agent said she thought the tracks were made by a wheelbarrow.

Katama Farm The Commission voted unanimously by roll-call vote to extend the lease with the Trustees through the end of February, as requested in the email from Dylan Sanders to town counsel. The Trustees will pay the Commission a monthly rent of \$1042 a month for the extension.

The agent gave a brief update on the progress made by the Katama Farm Stewardship Committee. She said that the committee generally been meeting weekly since mid-October. The committee has eight regular members and approximately 20 interested parties attend as well.

Several responses to the Request for Expression of Interest, which was advertised in November, have been received. The committee has developed a rubric for rating applications as a result of the RFP.

In addition the Committee has visually assessed the condition of the buildings as well as all the fields to ensure that there is adequate cover. Dr. Rachel Gilker has been advising the Committee.

There have also been discussions about how much rent should be charged for the agricultural acreage and whether or not the rent could be waived for capital improvements.

The committee has proposed a rent of \$15,000 for the educational operation, with adjustments possible.

There was some discussion about whether farms like Slough Farm or the Grey Barn need subsidies.

Carlson commented that Katama Farm is the largest contiguous piece of land in farming on the island. Kontje commented that the committee really wants to see a farmer succeed.

[Lil Province leaves meeting.]

Kontje said that the committee would like to encourage subleasing of portions of the agricultural acreage, subject to approval by the Commission.

Vincent asked if there were any updates on the Burke property, adjacent to the farm. He noted that the Land Bank is not interested in the property. The Commissioners commented that the Burke property presented a golden opportunity to provide farmer housing - something the farm has needed for a long time. Various possible fund-raising proposals were discussed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Approved: _____