

Northfield Conservation Commission January 19, 2017—Northfield Town Hall

Present: Bill Llewelyn, Charlie Blanker, Leslie Powers, Charley Eiseman, Mike Barry

Guests: Mark Stinson, DEP Regional Circuit Rider; Mickey Marcus, New England Environmental Principal wetlands scientist; Joe Lucas, Sr. Engineer, First Light; Sarah Wells, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust; Beth Bazler, Land Manager, First Light; Walter Jaworski, farmer; Katherine Johnson, Stewardship Subcommittee; Julia Blyth, Selectboard

Called to order at 7:35 by Bill Llewelyn.

**Formal Hearing on First Light/ Mt Grace/ NE Environmental mitigation proposal.**

-Joe Lucas explained that First Light is required by FERC to dredge man-made drainage ditches Turners Falls at the downstream end of the canals. DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers worked with First Light to determine an appropriate mitigation plan—first attempting to find a local project, but settling on this proposal to restore wetlands on “non-project” property on Old Wendell Rd as the most likely effective mitigation.

-Mickey Marcus explained that the Conservation Commission needs to issue conditions for the Notice of Intent for wetland work. The project proponents also want to understand the Commission’s interest in holding the Conservation Restriction.

-Sarah Wells explained the land ownership plan: Mount Grace would own the property and be responsible for maintaining it. They are hoping the Conservation Commission would hold the CR and monitor the property annually.

-Walter Jaworski currently grazes the land and under this proposal, would continue to do so.

-Mickey elaborated on details of the plan: a rocky berm would be removed to allow connection from a currently isolated wetland (manmade in the late 1960s, likely dug up by the Mountain Project to use in the berm around their upper reservoir) to the intermittent stream that serves as headwaters of Four Mile Brook. The parcel is maintained as grassland that currently supports nesting bobolinks. The isolated wetland and headwater stream would be revegetated with native wetland plants and fenced to keep the cows out, but mowed annually to maintain as open.

-Bill is concerned that the land would come off of the town’s tax rolls. Sarah said Mt. Grace pays taxes even though they don’t have to, but it would enroll the land in Ch. 61A. Bill unsatisfied.

-Members of the commission expressed concerns about the fence: Who maintains it? How to make it effectively keep cows out? Make sure wildlife can penetrate?

-Mark clarified that if the Commission made changes to the project through the order of conditions, they would be considered as part of the DEP permit.

-Charlie B asked about monitoring wells: Mickey said they determine ground water levels, and they will be pulled after monitoring the project for a few years after completion.

-Charlie B asked about how the work would be done and if the material from the berm would be left onsite or taken offsite. Mickey said they would use a small tractor/ maybe need an excavator for removing the berm, and add diversity to vegetation by planting grasses and herbs; no decision yet for material, probably would remove it.

-Charlie B made a motion to close the hearing. Leslie seconded. 5-0.

**-Motion to issue the Order of Conditions** on the NOI with the standard conditions as well as the following: prior to the start of construction, the applicant will provide a sequence of work and list of equipment to be discussed and approved at the pre-construction site visit; the

commission will review and approve the placement of material removed from the berm at the site visit; and the applicant will construct an appropriate fence sufficient to keep the cows out of the restored wetland that will not be a barrier to wildlife. Charlie B/ Mike B. Motion carries, 4-1.  
-Mark S will help Charlie B file the Order of Conditions on the eDEP account  
-The committee gave Sarah W a general sense of receptiveness to the idea of holding the CR. She will prepare a draft of the CR language.

### **New Business**

#### *Mark Stinson DEP update:*

- Glenwood Avenue culverts could have been deeper; needed more detailed plans; wants to arrange site visit in spring to discuss.
- website has links to outdated NOI and WPA forms; website should just link to DEP site
- Eversource/ Warwick Rd. hearing should be continued in order to avoid having to re-publish the hearing and re-notify abutters. There should always be a line on the agenda to discuss this.
- Need to fill vacancies on board.

#### *Katherine Johnson, Chair of Stewardship Advisory Subcommittee*

- hoping to get an alternate appointee to fill in when Charlie B can't come. Bill L volunteered.
- Looking for property binders from Mt. Grace made by Mallory; will contact Mt Grace.
- Would like space in the land use room to store Stewardship documents, committee. Stewardship Comm would like to use the land use room for meetings; Bill said to talk to the town admin.
- Presentation of draft management/ use plan for King Phillips Hill. Charlie B suggested that some uses (like archeological use) should be approved by Cons Comm after recommendation from Stewardship. Committee receptive to idea of limb cutting for view, but questions where funding would come from; suggests a joint meeting for that sort of thing. Discussion of camping allowed or not; suggestion to write policy for all town land. Mike has box of boundary markers. Other signs for indicating allowed/ prohibited uses may be available from VOSS signs, DCR, or Mt. Grace. Cons Comm receptive to Jerry W approaching new abutter to see if it is okay that the trail is on their land.

#### *MACC Letter*

Letter to Governor Baker to oppose new natural gas infrastructure. Letter recommending sign-on from Northfield resident Cliff Phillips. Charley E made motion to sign on. Seconded by Mike. Motion carries 3-2.

**Items not anticipated by the Chair.** There was a motion to continue the Eversource/ Mt Grace/ NMH hearing until March 15. Charlie B/ Leslie. Motion carries 4-0. 1 abstention.

**Minutes of Nov 16<sup>th</sup> approved with amendments.** Charlie B/ Charley E. 5-0.

Follow up: Leslie emailed someone from Eversource to try to get monitoring reports; no response. Leslie wrote up solicitation for consultants for the website. Charley wrote up changes to 53G rules indicating how consultants would be chosen. To be sent out and deliberated for Feb meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25. Charley E/ Leslie. 5-0.

*2/15/17*  
*Bill Lundy*