

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present: M. Harper, Q. Kessel, E. King, C. Rittenhouse, J. Silander, M. Soares, and W. Ouimet

Members Absent:

Alternates Present: M. Davis

Alternates Absent:

Staff Present: J. Kaufman

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Soares called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. Members present are M. Harper, Q. Kessel, E. King, C. Rittenhouse, J. Silander, M. Soares, W. Ouimet, and alternate M. Davis.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kessel MOVED, Ouimet seconded approval of the 29 December 2020 minutes as amended: Rittenhouse added "Special Meeting" to the header.

Motion PASSED unanimously.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

- Rich Roberts, UConn, asked when it would be appropriate to comment. Kaufman recommended during the agenda item.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. W1614-1 Application of Haven Communities (Formerly Haven Campus Communities) for the construction of a mixed-use development and associated amenities on three parcels located at 1753, 1733, and 1717 Storrs Road (Assessor's Parcel IDs 8.15.8, 8.15.9, and 8.15.10) and a vacant adjacent parcel (Assessor's Parcel ID 8.15.9-1).**

John Knuff, Attorney at Hurwitz Sagarin Slossberg and Knuff, representing Haven Communities, began the applicant's presentation addressing changes to the plan following and in response to LandTech's review. The site is currently developed with no water improvements at present. Applicant is proposing a conservation easement of 12.1 acres.

Chase Powell, VP of Development for Haven Communities, provided a project overview.

Eric Davison, Biologist and Registered Soil Scientist, provided an overview of water resources and direction of flow. Davison noted a culvert outlet on northwest corner of site that was confirmed as onsite.

CC noted Wetland 1 is appropriately identified as a headwater wetland for a coldwater stream, which is one of the most imperiled types in Connecticut. Why is the focus on vernal pools, of which there are not any on this site, and not on headwater wetlands for coldwater streams?

Davison responded that vernal pool surveys are standard procedure for most applicants. The beaver pond presents a barrier for coldwater species to enter headwater wetlands, and alters thermal and nutrient profile for the beaver pond. This is reflected in the warm-water fishes found during surveys.

CC noted that no surface water quality surveys were conducted, so there is no baseline to compare water quality against.

Davison responded that the applicant agreed to LandTech's recommendations for testing water quality pre-construction. Kaufman will follow-up on water quality testing with the Inland Wetland Agency.

CDM Smith, on behalf of UConn, responded to comments as well. The CDM Smith communications were not included in the packet for this meeting.

Jeff Bord, Professional Engineer, Bohler Engineering, provided an overview of changes to the site plan since September 22, 2020 meeting of CC, including:

- a) changing curbing, increasing pervious surface/green space, and moving receptacles, at the expense of 11 parking spaces, all near building 4000,
- b) geotechnical testing of aboveground basins to assess separation to groundwater,
- c) geotechnical testing of below-ground basin separation and changing basin from plastic to concrete to enable further separation from groundwater,
- d) re-routing of roof-water runoff of parking structure/building from south of building to north of building, and
- e) designating a conservation easement from wetland edge to remainder of property, totaling 12.1 acres (>50% of the property).

CC asked about overland treatment versus underground treatment of water.

Jeff Bord responded that above ground and utilizing vegetation is preferred, though underground addresses space constraints. The water quality is similar coming out of each.

CC asked about the basin behind the parking structure.

Jeff Bord responded that they had counted it as part of their water quality mitigation volume. Now it will hold water exiting water quality structures and will regulate flow, as a flow-control or mitigation basin. Applicant no longer counts the basin in their water quality numbers.

CC noted movement of dumpsters away from wetland edge is appreciated. Too often dumpsters are set at edge of wetlands and leak or drain to wetlands.

Rich Roberts, Attorney with Halloran & Sage, representing UConn and their Intervention filed today, referred to concerns raised by CC on 9/22/20:

- Areas of invasive species in need of treatment and management,
- Concern for steep slopes along the perimeter of built area, especially the western border of the property,
- Concern for minimal vegetative buffer along the stream that feeds the headwater wetland and the entire wetland edge, and recommend increasing the buffer width,
- Potential for a Conservation Easement and/or public access to protect the upland areas of this coldwater system and share its benefits with the public.

The concern for steep slopes and buffer widths (bullets 2 and 3), remain un-addressed. Further, the proposal increases impervious surface by 20%, reduces forest area by nearly 50%, and parking density increased as well. Work will be done within the 100-year floodplain, including fill, buildings, and regrading. Concern about proximity of buildings to wetland edge, reflected heat and light from parking structure into wetland.

Kaufman asked about letter of map amendment, which addresses FEMA floodmap issued raised by intervener.

Bord responded that a definitive answer has not been provided, but the applicant and town engineer are seeking clarification from federal government regarding floodmap.

Knuff noted that LandTech's review concurs with applicant's changes that address the concerns raised by the CC.

Bord and Powell noted that they have conducted 2 geotechnical surveys, and will conduct a 3rd during construction. Intervener's request for a 3rd survey prior to the construction survey and during the same season they already have results from, is excessive and redundant.

CC asked about revegetation plan for berms and edges. CC recommends native shrubs and grasses as appropriate vegetation type for a buffer along the wetland edge.

Bord replied they adopted the recommendation regarding revegetation after it was expressed at the 9/22/20 meeting.

CC asked about stream channels that are not represented on the map, so the application of the setbacks (50' or 100') are not delineated.

CC noted that water quality monitoring should be conducted where it enters the property, not in the pond, and where it exits the property.

Bord responded they are coordinating with LandTech to identify locations of testing and what aspects of water quality will be tested.

CC asked about impervious surface area for the project and the percent of the watershed that will be impervious as a result of this project.

The following individuals were in attendance but did not present at the meeting:

Jay Williams

Robert (Bob) Sitkowski, Associate Director of Real Estate, UConn

Soares MOVED and Silander seconded that based on the information presented at this meeting, LandTech's review, and applicant's responses, the changes to project design improve stormwater management on site and address the issues raised by the Conservation Commission in their meeting of September 22, 2020. Additionally, the Conservation Commission recommends the following for consideration by the Inland Wetland Agency:

- Concern for minimal vegetative buffer along the stream that feeds the headwater wetland and the entire wetland edge, and recommend increasing the buffer width especially with regard to setback from streams,
- Concern for the amount of upland review area that is utilized for the project area,
- To clarify the sequence of groundwater testing and construction recommended by LandTech in their letter dated January 11, 2021,
- To support LandTech's recommendations for groundwater monitoring and water testing of streams and the pond, including the locations of testing.

Motion passed unanimously.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

None at this meeting.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSION MEMBERS

- No reports.

COMMUNICATIONS

The following communications were noted:

- Kaufman is soliciting interest from CC members for spring programs.

FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Conservation Commission is a Special Meeting for conservation monitoring, scheduled for January 16, 2021 with a weather date of January 17, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:16 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:



Chadwick Rittenhouse
Secretary