

BELMONT CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

July 9, 2002

Members Present: M. Flamang, M. Weil, R. Foster, K. Baskin, M. King, J. Curro, J. Smith.
Associate Members Present: M. Velie, N. Davis.

Additional Attendees: Arthur Katz (Belmont Citizen Herald), Elaine and Paul O'Connell (applicants - 80 Clifton Street), Mark Lewis (architect), Trey Sasser and Casey Grant from the Brendan Grant Foundation, Stewart Sanders (guest), Mark Haley (guest).

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

New Business

The Commission unanimously appointed M. Flamang chairman. M. Flamang noted that J. Smith had been appointed a member of the Commission since the last meeting.

Public Hearing - Notice of Intent - 80 Clifton Street

Mark Lewis, architect, appeared on behalf of the applicants, Elaine and Paul O'Connell. The O'Connells propose to move their garage closer to the house. Their existing patio/deck will be partially removed, and the existing garage and driveway will be removed. One of the members asked how much impervious driveway is being removed, because it appears that is not reflected in his calculations in the Notice of Intent. He acknowledged that 100 square feet of driveway are being removed and they are not reflected in the Notice of Intent. M. Flamang asked about the composition of the existing stone parking area. It consists of crushed stone, which is pervious. R. Foster asked about the stone patio on the other side of the house. He estimated that it is 125 square feet.

K. Baskin pointed out that the amount being altered is the critical figure, not just the amount of pervious area being added. She reads from the regulations: Anything within the second 100 feet of the 200-foot buffer zone can be developed, up to 5000 square feet or 10% of the affected property, whichever is greater. There is a rebuttable presumption that the interests protected (including groundwater and the prevention of flooding in this case) are significant and therefore the Commission can prohibit development.

J. Curro asks whether the driveway can be placed just beyond the 100-foot buffer zone. That would require a longer driveway and a curbcut permit. There is a discussion of whether there are additional impervious areas that can be converted to pervious areas, and the applicants suggested that at least one walkway can probably be converted to grass.

M. Flamang asked the applicants if they are willing to continue the hearing. The Commission voted to continue the hearing to allow the applicants to recalculate what is being added and what is being removed. The hearing is continued to August 6, 2002.

Stewart Sanders noted that any deterioration in Winn Brook will disrupt the spawning of the herring, which come up the Alewife Brook. They cannot spawn unless there is sufficient flow in the Winn Brook. N. Davis asked the Commission keep in mind that storm runoff runs into Clifton Street and from there into the Winn Brook. K. Baskin noted that their stormwater exemption derives from the fact that there are less than four house lots regardless of whether there is adverse impact on the brook.

Public Hearing - Notice of Intent - 221 Concord Avenue (Baseball Field)

Casey Grant, Trey Sasser and Mark Haley appeared on behalf of the Town of Belmont. The Town proposes moving the existing baseball field closer to the high school and installing two dugouts, permanent bleachers and a gate. They have also added a fence in the outfield already. The dugouts will be set on concrete pads, one of which will be within the 100-foot buffer zone. Because the field doesn't currently meet accessibility requirements, a ramp to the bleachers will be required, and that will also be within the buffer zone, together with part of a walkway. The walkways will be partially brick and partially concrete. Drainage on the field will be improved and will connect to the existing storm water system.

They plan to use hay bails and silt barriers during construction, and filtration baskets will be placed in the catch basins in the area of work. J. Curro asked where the river ends. Mark Haley replied that it is in a culvert in that area, all the way into the pond. The Commission discussed whether there might be a 2 or 3 foot river between the culvert and the pond.

Upon questioning by N. Davis, Mr. Haley answered that the algae bloom in the pond was more likely caused by goose feces than the minimal amounts of fertilizer used on the playing fields. R. Foster suggested that they use soluble fertilizer so that the runoff is minimized. Mr. Haley said these changes will not impact the current watering amounts and therefore stormwater runoff shouldn't be impacted.

The Order of Conditions was granted, with the following conditions: Hay bales and silt fences and silt barriers in catchbasins will be required during construction. Sweeping and continuous wheel wash will also be required during construction, as will removal of litter and excess materials from the site daily.

Wellington Brook/Clay Pit Pond - Herring Proposal

Stewart Sanders reported to the Commission that there are three issues regarding the herring: silt, other water quality issues, and flow. He spoke to Tom Gatzunis about the silt issue. The carp in Perch Pond, Clay Pit Pond and Little Pond churn up the silt and cause problems. He requested that the Commission recommend that those who fish the carp remove them (not put them back in the ponds).

As far as other water quality issues, he is concerned that there are very high levels of fecal coliform bacteria (e. coli) in Little Pond. N. Davis said this is because of a crossed connection somewhere. Mr. Sanders is also concerned that if the MWRA discharges untreated sewage into Alewife Brook when the newly-hatched herring are headed back out, they will be adversely affected. He proposed that volunteers (including himself) help the Commission protect the herring. He has in mind a demonstration project involving erection of a silt barrier at Clay Pit Pond.

M. Flamang stated that the Commission should prepare a list of possible capital projects to propose to the Town even though the Town doesn't have the money available for such projects right now. K. Baskin suggested that there are grant moneys available for such projects from various sources.

Mr. Sanders offered to find out what the volume is in that pipe (at Clay Pit Pond) and where it drains from in order to assess whether a silt barrier could be put in as a demonstration project. His priority is to make sure the herring can continue to spawn.

Invasive Species - Rock Meadow

R. Foster distributed a description of invasive plants for use at Rock Meadow Conservation Land. She

suggested a "B Brigade" of volunteers who can be trained to identify and prune bittersweet, brambles and bamboo each time they are at Rock Meadow. Habitat currently has such a program. She noted that Ecological Landscaping Association will have a seminar on invasive plants in August. N. Davis suggested that Isabel Freeman could be persuaded to come teach the Commission to identify invasive species.

New Business

Smith distributed a draft proposed conservation bylaw for review and comment by the Commission.

The minutes for the meetings of May 7, 2002 and June 4, 2002 were approved by the Commission.

N. Davis says she has done some water sampling and testing with Roger Freimeier for the Mystic River Watershed Association and they have found fecal coliform bacteria in Winn Brook, probably entering between Claflin and Sherman Streets. J. Curro noted that there are very old sewer lines in the vicinity of Winn Brook School and it's suspected that some of those lines may have been cracked or crushed when houses were built there. N. Davis said that the Mystic River Watershed Association will pursue the issue with Tom Gatzunis and the Town.

K. Baskin got a call from someone who was concerned about a tree that had fallen across Beaver Brook, perhaps near the incinerator, blocking the flow of the brook there. Glenn Clancy will be notified so that the Town can take care of it.

The Environmental Notification Form has been filed for the Uplands development. K. Baskin has requested a copy and will review it and note the deadline for comments. If she sees any reason to comment she will let the other Commission members know.

The meeting was then adjourned. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, August 6, 2002.