

**Town of Blandford
Conservation Commission Minutes
April 24, 2023 6:00 PM**

Commission Members in attendance: Dick Gates, Colleen Doyle, John Piper, and Nate Maynard.

Others in Attendance: Representing Belle Fleur: Brian Lafreniere (Tree Removal/Construction), and Seth Taylor (Erosion Control Specialist) in person. Rolandy Romelus (CEO) via conference call. Amer Raza (Mass DOT). Julia Fiske via conference (Maxymillian – Wetland Mitigation for DOT)

I. Review / Finalize Previous Meeting Minutes

D Gates made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from 2/13, 3/20, and 4/10. J Piper seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

II. New Business

a. Hay cutting at Knittel Conservation for 2023

ConCom agreed to continue the hay cutting arrangement that has been in place in previous years to maintain the fields at the Knittel preserve.

D Gates made a motion to allow D Hobson to hay the North field and D Ripley to hay the South field at the Knittel Conservation Area. J Piper seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

b. Mass DOT Request for COC – Mass Turnpike Culvert Project (File # 111-0055)

D Gates was going through files and noticed that there was no closure or COC for this project. No record on file and it was unclear why. Regarding the OOC and special conditions, it appears ConCom wasn't notified or involved.

- A Raza discussed the challenges of the project with sites, operations, and permitting in multiple towns; and the difficulty in tracking and providing proper notifications.
- J Fiske discussed Maxymillian's role in the wetland replication, challenges with the original proposed site due to necessary tree and soil removal, and the difficulty of multiple towns and entities involved in the overall project.
- There was question regarding the final mitigation square footage as stated in the OOC versus the COC. Additionally, Jacobs completed the COC in 2021 when the final report was issued in Fall of 2022.
- D Gates stated that ConCom would take time to review and discuss how best to resolve, document, and provide a final COC.

c. Schedule joint Meeting - ConCom and Historical Commission Re: Shepard Farm

D Gates is working on setting up a collaborative meeting with members of the Historical Commission to discuss ideas about the future of Shepard Farm. Two

graduate students from the Conway School of Landscape Design are completing an ecological assessment and design project to explore future recreational opportunities at Shepard Farm. The two commissions will be collaborating on how best to utilize the property and what to do with the building and structures. The building is in significant disrepair and a decision will need to be made on what to do with it. Unless there is a plan or funding in place to rehab it, then it will likely need to be removed. Otherwise, it could pose a liability for future recreational use.

III. Continuing Business

a. Continue review of proposed Belle Fleur Marijuana Facility modifications received 2/8/23(File# 111-0060), including issues identified in email from the Commission to Belle Fleur dates 2/16/23. Also findings from 4/13/23 site inspection.

D Gates reviewed ConCom's email dated 2/16 and outlined issues that have been resolved and things that still need to be addressed in order to come into compliance with the AOC:

- The new construction general permit is current and in effect.
- SWPPP has been updated.
- Seth Taylor does not have a copy of the new SWPPP but will be provided one from either Marc or Rolandy. This is a high priority since S Taylor is performing site inspections and SWPPP reports.
- Questions regarding site inspections:
 - What is being inspected / observed?
 - Does Seth have a copy of the Amended OOC?
- S Taylor indicated that he does have a copy of the AOC and that site inspection reports cover the SWPPP, OOC, AOC, and general observations of site conditions. D Gates indicated that it should also document the status of unstabilized soil onsite. R Romelus indicated that soil piles are being worked on and that dirt is being moved offsite and being used to level out the site. He also stated that seeding hasn't taken place because soil temps haven't reached 50F. R Romelus gave timelines of the Fire Road being put in during the 1st week of May, followed by pipes and manholes to begin diverting surface flow from rain events into catch basins.
- D Gates stated that sediment traps need to be installed per SWPPP and inquired about the status of them. R Romelus stated that they are present in the form of straw bales, water bars, and gravel; and that more can be added as needed. D Gates stated that clear details on how sediment traps should be installed are outlined in the SWPPP.
- D Gates referenced the AOC and the need for wetland flagging and delineation throughout the site; ideally in blue flagging for wetlands so it can be differentiated from other site flagging.
- Reference was made to condition #47 that requires weekly assessment of work taking place in jurisdictional areas. R. Romelus stated that they haven't accessed jurisdictional lands but was reminded by D Gates that

all buffer zones and Riverfront areas are considered jurisdictional and that work is taking place within them and needs to be reported on. S Taylor stated that he would include updates regarding work within the wetland and buffer zones in future reports.

- Questions were raised regarding stumps being stockpiled onsite and how they would be addressed. R Romelus stated that they are looking into the most cost effective way to deal with them. He was reminded that the AOC states they need to be physically removed from the site.
- Questions were raised regarding the floor drains in the greenhouse concrete pads and when they will be tied into a holding tank. R Romelus stated that ConCom will be notified when installation is scheduled.
- Tree cutting in the Northeast corner was brought up. D Gates stated that the riverfront area, wetlands, and limits of work are not flagged and clearly delineated. This is critical if tree removal and other work is taking place. R Romelus stated that this would be addressed with Seth's assistance. Seth stated flagging and delineation could potentially be completed by the end of next week. D Gates stated that the silt fence determines the limit of work, and it should be better defined in the North and Northeast sides of the site.
- D Gates addressed the tree removal requests and flagging of trees around the greenhouse area. There are clearly some trees that are hazardous, but there are many that are healthy and not likely to be approved. Only hazard trees will be approved. ConCom has worked hard to preserve the limits of work and will not allow healthy trees to be cut within the buffer and wetland areas. R Romelus stated that he wants to be onsite to assist in reflagging of trees and felt that he bore the weight of liability if there were a tree hazard onsite.
- D Gates discussed site work encroaching and entering into the resource area beyond the limit of work West of Greenhouse #3. It appeared that the silt fence had been moved and the bank was cut into the adjacent wetland. Water was observed pooling in a tire track and a salamander egg mass was present in the pool. The limit of work is being compromised and cannot happen again and the encroached area must be restored.

b. Vernal Pool Update

D Gates, N Maynard, and a student surveyed a vernal pool on Falls Rd. that had well over 50 Wood Frog egg masses and over 40 salamander egg masses. Permission had not yet been obtained by SSW to go beyond the roadside, so there is a plan for a potential follow up visit. Photos were taken to document the site for certification. There were two potential vernal pools in the Knittel Preserve, identified on Mass Mapper, that could not be located. There was evidence of a dried up pool along the powerlines in a mossy area.

c. Status of Conservation Agent

The town will be posting the position for 5-8 hrs/week and will be screening and holding interviews.

IV. Other

a. Shepard Farm Grant

Callan Day 5/22/23
John R Piper 5/22/23
Michael W Gates 5/22/23