

CITY OF NORWALK
CONSERVATION COMMISSION/INLAND WETLAND AGENCY
October 25, 2022

PRESENT: Steve Klocke, Chair; Ed Holowinko; Cheryl Brown; Kathryn Knight; John Moeling

STAFF: Alexis Cherichetti, Senior Environmental Officer

OTHERS: Bill Pollack; Wilder Gleason; Craig Flaherty; Tom Ryder

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Klocke called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. It should be noted that this meeting was held on Zoom.com with all participants calling in, separately.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Cherichetti called the roll.

III. MISSION STATEMENT

Mr. Klocke said that they were not discussing this at this meeting.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public that would speak on general Conservation concerns.

V. RECEIPT & DISCUSSION

a) #S22-611 – 71 Crooked Trail – Meck – Construction of a new Single Family Residence adjacent to a wetland

Ms. Cherichetti began the presentation by noting that the application had been received and the commissioners were reviewing it for the first time. She oriented the commissioners as to the location of the property. She explained where the wetlands were and that a single family house is proposed to be developed on the property.

Attorney Wilder Gleason began the presentation by showing them the site plan of the property and describing the wetlands. He noted that there are a lot of trees on the property. He also said that the house was modest and would be compliant with setbacks. It would also have

a terrace in the rear. He also explained how water from adjacent properties runs into this property.

Bill Pollack, the landscape architect, continued the presentation with pictures of the current condition of the property from the road. He explained there was a significant number of invasive species. He said that many of the trees in this section had been compromised and are in a poor condition. He also noted that there was evidence on the property of excavation and filling many years ago. There was a discussion about whether there was an attempt to do work on the property, but Mr. Pollack said that there was none he was aware of. He showed them more pictures of the current conditions of the wetlands area. He said there was never any standing water that he had observed. Mr. Pollack said that the water which comes from neighboring properties is absorbed into the soil. There is no watercourse associated with this area.

Mr. Pollack showed them the site plans of the single family house at the northern portion of the property. He briefly discussed the drainage system. He also discussed the southern section of the property which was the only other spot where the house could possibly be constructed. Some mature trees would have to be removed. The wetlands would not be impacted. He then discussed the landscaping plan which included the proposed plantings. Those plantings would include native species and buffer plantings. He then showed them a rendering for the scale of the size of the home, as well as the back of the home. There would be a terrace in the back with sand which would allow for infiltration, rather than it being on a slab.

Wilder Gleason continued the presentation and said there would be no adverse impacts based on soil and erosion control reports.

Mr. Klocke then summarized what he believed that the applicant was presenting, including soil and erosion controls, the placement of the septic tanks and the removal of trees. He noted that an alternate design had been considered. There would be some grading on the north side. He said they would like to see more specificity on the removal of the invasives. He also asked if there were any plantings that could migrate into the wetlands and cause a problem. Mr. Pollack said that plantings would be non-invasive and native plantings. Anything ornamental would be vetted.

Mr. Moeling had concerns about the elevation of the house in relation to the wetlands. Mr. Pollack said there should not be any intrusion of water into the house. The house is only a little higher than grade. He did not think there would be much more water leaving the site than there is now.

There was a discussion about the passage of title of the property and whether it was contingent on this application. Ms. Cherichetti said that often the applicants are contract-

purchasers and encouraged the commissioners to do a site visit. She also noted that the staff had received an email from a neighbor, requesting a public hearing.

Ms. Cherichetti then shared an aerial view of the property and showed them the wetland area. She showed them the area where the house would be constructed.

There was a discussion about whether there should be a public hearing. Ms. Cherichetti said that it was a decision that the Conservation Commission would make. It was noted that the neighbors could sign a petition, requesting a public hearing. They hear the application again at their next meeting in November.

VI. DISCUSSION &/OR DECISION

a) #S22-609 – 556 & 558 Westport Avenue and 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, &14 Renzulli Road – Coastal Luxury Homes – Demolition of existing and construction of new mixed used multi-family development with associated stormwater management and landscaping in and adjacent to a wetland and watercourse

Ms. Cherichetti noted that this application was scheduled for a public hearing on November 8. Ms. Knight asked if any new information had been submitted but Ms. Cherichetti said that there had not been. Mr. Moeling suggested where the boardwalk could be moved to around the wetlands, rather than through it. He also had questions about the letter received from the town of Westport. There was also discussion about the calculation of a performance bond.

Craig Flaherty said that he could speak with Ms. Cherichetti about the performance bond. There was a discussion about the impact on the wetlands with having dogs unleashed. Mr. Flaherty said that they are discussing an enclosed pet run. Ms. Cherichetti encouraged the commissioners to do a site visit before the close of the public hearing. She encouraged the applicant to submit site plans showing the alternatives they discussed, including removing portions of the building within 50 feet of the wetland and removing the boardwalk from the wetland.

Public hearing would be held at the next meeting. Ms. Cherichetti asked Mr. Flaherty to send out notice to the abutting neighbors.

b) #S22-610 – 13 Valley Road – LandTech – Removal of invasive species and replanting with native in and adjacent to a wetland and watercourse

Ms. Cherichetti said that this application was similar to one submitted earlier in 2022. She then noted that the applicant had responded to the commissioners' comments.

Tom Ryder continued the presentation with a summarization of the major topics that the commissioners had requested. The first was about additional trees in the meadow. He said that they had not added trees because they wanted to keep it as a meadow. They may add shrubs as a buffer. The next item was replanting the area north of the driveway. Native shrubs would be planted here as well. The final item was about the proposed wildflower meadow south of the stone wall.

Ms. Cherichetti discussed the 1995 site plan from when the house had been built. Ms. Knight said that she had visited the property and noted that there was water running through the wetland. There was a discussion regarding the standing water on the site.

Mr. Ryder showed them a site plan and discussed what areas could be re-seeded. There was a discussion about the removal of the invasive species, including not doing anything.

Ms. Cherichetti shared Ms. Knight's photos from her recent visit to the site. Mr. Klocke asked whether they should have another opinion on the delineation of the wetlands. Mr. Ryder said that soil reports had been done in the previous application; Ms. Cherichetti agreed that it did not need to be done again.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a) October 11, 2022 meeting minutes

***** MR. MOELING MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

***** MS. BROWN SECONDED THE MOTION.**

***** MOTION PASSED, 4-0-1. MR. KLOCKE ABSTAINED.**

VIII. CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

Ms. Cherichetti said she did not have anything to report at this time.

IX. COMMENTS OF STAFF

a) Report of the Senior Environmental Officer

Ms. Cherichetti noted that 3 commissioners were attending the Connecticut Conservation Commissions and Inland Wetland Commissions Annual event on Saturday, October 29. She was always impressed with these events. Mr. Moeling asked them to share materials with the commission. Ms. Knight said they could also discuss it at the next meeting.

Ms. Cherichetti discussed The Connecticut Institute for Resilience & Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). She noted that there would be focused study areas based on zones of risk. South Norwalk was one of those areas. A consultant had been retained to study the area, mostly flooding issues, and heat islands throughout the city. Public input would begin in December. A steering committee would be formed and begin meeting in November. It would last for about one year. She asked one of the commissioners to volunteer to be on it. The city would receive actionable items to increase resiliency. Ms. Knight volunteered to be on the committee.

X. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

a) Report of the Commission Chair

There were no comments from commissioners.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

***** MS. KNIGHT MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN.**
***** MR. HOLOWINKO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
***** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:24 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Palmentiero