

Rochester Conservation Commission

Minutes of October 23, 2019

(These minutes were approved on January 22, 2020)

Members Present: Mark Jennings Michael Kirwan Mike Dionne Kevin Sullivan
Sheila Lulek Dan Nickerson

Members Absent: Meredith Lineweber Barbara Soley

Staff: Seth Creighton, Chief Planner

Mr. Dionne convened the meeting at 6:30 pm. Mr. Nickerson was appointed to vote in place of Ms. Soley.

- 1.) **Minutes:** the meeting minutes of September 25, 2019 were reviewed, edits were suggested. Mr. Jennings made a motion to accept the minutes with the discussed edits and Ms. Lulek seconded. The motion passed.
- 2.) **Conservation Overlay District:** *91 Innovation Drive – status of NH DES Wetland application.*
Mr. Creighton informed the members that NH DES has requested that the applicant relook at their plan because there wasn't sufficient evidence that the applicant tried to avoid impacting one specific wetland. Mr. Creighton reminded the Commission that they had made the same comment to the applicant over a month ago.
- 3.) **New Business:** a) *Discuss the meeting date for November's meeting (currently is scheduled for the day before Thanksgiving).* The Commission briefly discussed the date and decided to keep it as scheduled, November 27th.

b) *Brainstorm culvert upgrades/wetland mitigation in the Ricker Brook watershed.* The Commission discussed the perched culvert that runs under Strafford Road/Route 202A at 36 Strafford Road. They also discussed the culvert that carries Hurd Brook under Estes Road at the intersection of Howard Brook Drive and Estes Road. The Commission said this culvert has been looked at and it was supposed to be rebuilt years ago but hasn't been.

c) *38 Hanson Street-* Mr. Creighton stated that 38 Hanson St, the old Robbin's Auto building is being considered for demolition and the lot converted to a municipal parking lot. The Con Com members discussed why they oppose 38 Hanson St becoming a parking lot, including:
 - 1) The downtown is suffering enough with vacancies, there is no value in creating another hole.
 - 2) There is enough parking downtown already.
 - 3) A parking lot will be a cost burden to the taxpayer (first for construction and then for continued maintenance, including treatment of storm water).
 - 4) Parking lots negatively impact water quality.

Con Com also said that new City parking lots should be built to the same standards that private developers are held to, including landscape islands with trees and low-impact-development storm water treatment, such as the model parking lot design that resulted from the Greening America's Cities Grant.

Mr. Creighton asked if the Commission would like this be forwarded to the City Council. Mr. Dione motioned to have Mr. Creighton write a letter to Council, Mr. Sullivan seconded, all voted in favor.

d) Oak tree in front of City Hall: Mr. Sullivan explained that the Public Works and Building Committee talked about taking down the oak tree in-front of City Hall because grass won't grow underneath it and its acorns are a tripping hazard. The Commission doesn't support the removal of the tree on the merits of grass and acorns.

The following suggestions were made.

- 1) Have UNH Cooperative Extension evaluate the tree and grass; this is a free service.
- 2) Use a shade mix grass seed under the tree and/or replace the dead grass with mulch and plants or other non-grass surface.
- 3) Have a professional, such as a forester, evaluate this and all street trees downtown and come up with a maintenance plan, and then implement said plan. This includes compiling a list of appropriated street trees for future plantings/replacements, along with details of how to plant. Mr. Creighton encouraged these ideas be forwarded to City Council. Mr. Sullivan motioned to have Mr. Creighton draft a letter with the suggestions. Mr. Nickerson seconded. All voted in favor.

d) Ms. Lulek said that her friends have heard there is a leaking septic tank at the end of Ela Ct/Congress St/Bowdoin Ct. Mr. Creighton said that he'd tell the Health Officer.

e) Ms. Lulek said that she, as a Conservation Commission member and volunteer with Rise Up Rochester, has been questioned why there are dumpsters in the Union St parking lot, why they are unscreened, why there is a lack of recycling, why there is leaking/pavement staining, and why is no one taking care of the loose trash that blows out. Mr. Creighton said the he will alert the City Manager and Economic Development Dept.

4.) Notice of Intent to Cut Wood or Timber/Intent to Excavate: a) *Notice of Intent to Cut – Tax Map 215-17, 149 Four Rod Road*

There were no concerns with this application.

5.) Reports: a) *Technical Review Group*; Mr. Jennings gave a brief update of the projects that had been reviewed and going to the Planning Board meeting in November.

b) *Planning Board*: Mr. Creighton said all applications at the last Planning Board meeting had been approved.

6.) Old Business: a) *School/Conservation Commission Partnership – Hope Farm (Peaslee Road) Monitoring Report*; Darren Scopel of Spaulding High School was present to speak with the Commission members. The group discussed partnering with the students to visit and complete a monitoring report of the conservation easement at Hope Farm, hopefully in late November. Mr. Creighton said he would be in touch to get them a copy of the easement, monitoring reports from last year, and a survey plan that shows the land of 36 Peaslee Road (Hope Farm); which shows the area that is subject to the easement.

7.) Non-Public Session pursuant to RSA 91-A:3 II (d): *Discussion of acquisition of real property and/or recent site walks LACE Sheets*: A motion was made by Mr. Jennings to enter into to non-public at 8:04 pm and seconded by Kirwan. The motion passed.

8.) Adjournment: Mr. Kirwan motioned to adjourn at 8:12 pm, and Mr. Sullivan seconded. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted, Seth Creighton, AICP *Chief Planner*