

Minutes
Watertown Conservation Commission
Lower Hearing Room
Wednesday, March 4, 2015
7:30 p.m.

Conservation Commission Members Present: Marylouise Pallotta McDermott, Maria P. Rose, Charles C. Bering, Louis Taverna, Patrick Fairbairn, Leo G. Martin

Commission Members Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Christopher J. Hayward, Susan C. Jenness

Pallotta McDermott chaired.

(adopted May 5, 2015)

- 1) **Public Hearing – Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA) -175 No. Beacon Street - Installation of sidewalk at Bradlee Field Playground - Perkins School for the Blind, Applicant/Owner. Sandra R. Duran Representative: Perkins School for the Blind.**

Presentation: Sandra Duran the new Director of Facilities and Management represented Perkins School for the Blind. She was accompanied by Sonia Baerhuk, the Lead Landscaper for the campus grounds at Perkins.

The project as designed introduces concrete pavers into the buffer zone area which are important for visually impaired students. The plans are essentially improvements being made to the school's Bradlee Field Playground. It will require 123 square feet of new concrete paver sidewalk to be installed within the 100-ft to 150 ft. Buffer Zone to the Perkins Pond.

Immediately before Ms. Duran's tenure, an old wooden playground structure was removed from this location. This project came about as a desire to create an area with a new playground structure that is easily accessible for the students at Perkins. The installation of the sidewalks will make for a safe entrance into the newly renovated park systems with little impact of which there is a proposed mitigation plan.

Presentation of the Proposed Project.

- a. The pond.
- b. The 100 foot Buffer Zone.
- c. The Playground Area.
- d. A stone built path.
- e. The space for the pavers to assist the students in identifying demarcations to make for safe transition throughout the area.

Public Comments: There were no public comments.

Agent Comments: This is a relatively simple project, an RDA working within the Buffer Zone adding some impervious areas but a relatively flat surface with some already existing erosion control measures of which this project will actually correct.

The impact to the resource area will be negligible as long as erosion control measures are used appropriately, during and after construction, until the site is stabilized.

Motion: Martin made a motion for a Negative Determination and that the project be allowed to go forward. Fairbairn seconded the Motion.

Vote: A unanimous Vote for Negative Determination is reached and the project was approved.

Pallotta McDermott promised Ms. Duran that the commission will be by to see the project at the Perkins campus when complete. Ms. Duran said that she hoped so.

The Public Hearing is closed.

- 2) **Public Hearing – Notice of Intent** – Charles River Pedestrian Bridge Replacement- 114 Rear Pleasant Street/California Street - James Potvin, DCR, Applicant/Owner. Richard Baummer, Nobis Engineering, Inc., representative.

David Cloutier of Nobis Engineering of Lowell Massachusetts, represented DCR in presentation. He submitted certified mail receipts as proof of service of the abutter's notices.

Mr. Cloutier opened the presentation by agreeing with Pallotta McDermott that the existing pedestrian bridge is in poor condition both structurally and operationally.

He introduced the proposed plans to replace the bridge with a pre-fabricated bridge slightly wider than the existing bridge with a less steep elevation profile in compliance with the American with Disabilities Act.

Presentation of the Proposed New Bridge-

- a. The bridge is a prefabricated 1 piece steel truss with a wooden deck most likely made of epee wood which is resistant to rot and will provide a natural surface.
- b. ADA compliance required approach pathways on both the north and south banks of the river mandating the removal of the current abutments.
- c. ADA compliance required a more flat elevation profile that will be achieved with a slightly higher elevation on the ends of the bridge with a slightly lower profile at mid span.
- d. The same amount of space between the river and underneath the bridge will remain in order for the people who canoe and boat to use the bridge as before.

- e. As this is a single span bridge, the two piers that are on either end of the current bridge will be removed so there will be an open river way through the bridge.

Jurisdictional Issues

Land Under Water:

For removal of steel piers on either end of the bridge will be achieved by divers going in to cut and lift the piers up and out of the water leaving the footings in place, rather than complete excavation which would result in a far more serious disturbance.

For temporary Cofferdams-Will be installed on either side of the bridge where the bridge abutments would be so that when construction excavates we do not have to worry about flooding.

Inland Bank:

For the narrow bank areas which are covered in stone riprap around existing bridge. The plan is to remove and construct new abutments and replace in kind with new stone rip rap in a way that will not impact the natural existing vegetation in the bank.

Land Subject to Flooding:

For ADA accessibility, the pathway approach to the bridge will be relocated on the northern side of the bridge in order to make room for an acceptable ramp resulting in a slight fill in the flood plain calculated out to about 22 cubic yards of storage loss. To mitigate the loss proposed would be to excavate out an area on the southern bank, already being disturbed in the construction process. This will lower elevation through a small area creating a net gain in flood storage areas

Buffer zone:

For the Buffer Zone on north and south side which overlap one another in this project, there will be temporary storage areas for the duration of the project construction as follows:

- a. Erosion Control Plan.
- b. Two small coffer dams on either end of the bridge.
- c. Sediment Log - Erosion Control placed along the banks of any slopes of any earth disturbance.
- d. Sediment Log Barrier - Located along paved driveway area to be used for storage, refueling, maintenance relocating all of such activities that they be conducted in one controlled area where any spills would be contained from entering the river or disturbing the wetlands.

- d. Silt Boons will float in the River in sections of silt mesh as a weighted chain serving as a secondary level of containment in protection against turbidity from entering the Charles.

Closing Comments of the Presentation

The intention of this project is to have the existing bridge removed and to install the new bridge by one crane which will require the removal of approximately 17 trees. The contractor will need to catalog each tree slated for removal and replace them with like species with at least a 3" diameter at breast height (dbh) to be added in place. Due to the size of the bridge and it being one piece, this is the fastest and easiest way of replacing the existing bridge.

James Potvin, DCR representative stated that plans are for the project to go to bid in July and the project to start in fall of 2015.

All attempts have been made to replace the bridge with a new and improved bridge with as little disturbance to the area as possible.

Commission Comments

Martin stated that this is a nice looking job and a big lift. He inquired how high the retaining wall off the bridge would be. It was answered that the wall will be about 3 feet. He requested that a railing be installed as well and Cloutier agreed that a fence or railing would be a good idea.

Rose-Agreed with Martin that it is a great project and design. She suggested the use of granite block rather than rip rap to protect the areas as during high velocity, riprap can become disturbed. She was concerned about getting a 150' pedestrian bridge into the area based on a prior experience transporting a 30' structure. George Colbert lead structural engineer of project said the bridge will be trucked in in 30-35' segments and iron workers can make the connection mid river. He stated that the contractor will need to use his or her own creativity in determining the method of installing the bridge. Rose agreed that means and methods are not always known before the project.

Rose was not in favor of the potential loss of 17 trees and asked that they do everything possible to save as many as they can

Rose inquired about a Mass. Environmental Protection Act (MEPA) filing and Mr. Cloutier was unaware of any habitat issues that would require that. Rose stated the MA Division of Marine Fisheries may have some issues that they would like to weigh in on. Richard Baummer stated that they did not trigger any MEPA filing criteria and agreed to double check for them whether or not they are going to trigger any of the criteria. Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) was unaware of the project when she spoke with them about the herring migration. Mr. Cloutier agrees to communicate with CRWA about when the project will start.

Taverna inquired about whether or not there was an advantage to putting the new abutments up on top of the bank rather than in the bank to minimize impact within. It was answered that they are being installed in the bank due to span length which is an issue in this model of the bridge.

Fairbairn stated that Environmental Quality/Biology issues were a concern to him and whether or not there would be opportunities for nesting sites on the new bridge. Mr. Colbert said there will be 10 " x 10" ledges on the bridge the width of the tubing so that if the birds can get in there, there will be plenty of opportunity. Fairbairn commented on the loss of trees and said that this seems to be the cost for renewable resources. He was informed that Carol R. Johnson Associates, will handle the landscape in this project and that they did a great job on another project on the river bank about ten or eleven years ago.

Bering inquired if they looked into other materials aside from asphalt for the path on both sides of the bridge which are in the buffer zone. It was replied that they were trying to replicate existing conditions as much as possible and had not looked into that for this project. Bering pressed that whereas it is in a buffer zone, this would be the best plan possible. While the cost is higher this may be something Mr. Cloutier can work out. Mr. Lowell mentions that given DCR's resources available it may not be practical overall to use permeable surfaces but they would look into it.

Hayward focused on concerns with work plans. He said that we can all work through any plans with the contractor if that is the way you want to go. We can enter the order of conditions and then the contractor will meet with the agent for special conditions.

This is a great project. He stated that when the ADA no longer approved of the current bridge's structure, it had been said that the DCR just planned on closing the bridge and he was very happy to hear from Nobis Technology when they called to talk about the proposed plan.

Cloutier agrees that the contractor can meet with the agent to review the project and this can be entered into the Order of Conditions and that all conditions set based on the meeting tonight will be complied with by the contractor.

Motion: Martin makes a motion to waive the ordinance fee. Fairbairn seconded the motion.

Vote: A unanimous vote is reached to waive the ordinance filing fee.

Motion: Rose makes a motion to approve the project with an Order of Special Conditions. Taverna Seconded the Motion.

Vote: A unanimous decision is made to approve the project with an Order of Special Conditions including that the contractor who gets the bid meets with the Agent 30 days prior to construction to review the work plan.

The Public Hearing is Closed.

3) **Commission Minutes of February 2015 are adopted with modification.**

4) **Old Business**

- **MACC Conference discussion-** The conference was attended by Rose and Fairbairn.
- Rose attended an Enforcing Wetlands program which was mostly lawyers discussing issues about private property entries. She discussed the matter that just because inspection is set in an order of conditions, you may still need to obtain a warrant for a number of unusual issues.

Curtilage issues were discussed as areas around a property.

Rose attended a program with Fairbairn on Green Infrastructure as well.

- Fairbairn had a number of discussions with people at the state level, The Division of Ecological Restoration about maintaining a damn in the river. Watertown is currently listed as a dam being seriously considered for removal. Fairbairn asked Russ Cohn about refashioning the boulders around the damn but was told this is not a widely used way of doing this as it is a complicated mechanical procedure to do this. This is why the dams are usually removed.
- He was urged by the Palotta McDermott to see what can be done here and to bring some information to the next meeting.
- **Open Space Plan update-**While the Comprehensive plan was being upgraded, the Open Space Plan was as well. This was mistakenly not mentioned at the last meeting. Martin and Bering were then asked to meet with the Agent to make some written suggestions to the Open Space Plan which needed to be submitted on an expedited basis in order to be considered in time to be eligible for grants.

There was a fair amount of material in that submission that was taken from the Comprehensive Plan about Park Upgrades. The Agent also wrote a fair amount about the Charles River Restoration. The Open Space plan will be finalized shortly and a copy will be forwarded to all members of the Conservation Commission.

5) **Agent Update/New Business-**The Agent discussed that he routinely directs all project managers to make one full size copy of the plans for the file and the rest to be reduced in size in an effort to conserve paper.

Rose commended the Agent on writing his Agent Staff Reports as to the key issues of the projects for hearing. He stated that he plans to be writing them as often as possible in the future.

Negative Determination on RDA-WWO 15-4 -is entered and the project is approved.

Order of Conditions 321-0160 WWO 15-3 is entered-Conditions are discussed and reviewed by Commission members.

- Special Conditions entered for the bidding contractor to meet with the Conservation Agent 30 days prior to the commencement of any work taking place.

Meeting is adjourned at 9:30 PM.