

INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY
JANUARY 11, 2006 - 7:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX - COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Agency: Scott, Keeler, Williams, Sutphen
Alternates Ashworth and Furlong
Staff: Jones, Discordia

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Groton Highpoint Subdivision, 245 Hazelnut Hill Road

Chairman Scott called the public hearing to order at 7:34 p.m.

Keeler read the call as it appeared in The Day.

Chairman Scott read the Public Hearing procedures to the public and appointed Furlong as a voting member.

Staff noted that a Notice of Intervention has been submitted to the Agency from Groton Open Space Association. She distributed copies to the Agency members.

Clinton Brown, of DiCesare-Bentley Engineers, introduced Otto Paparazzo, owner of OJP Development; Ray Jefferson, landscape architect; and Eric Davison, an environmental consultant for DiCesare-Bentley Engineers.

Ray Jefferson, landscape architect, of 790 Farmington Avenue in Farmington, Connecticut, presented a slide show to the Agency of development he had worked on at two other subdivision sites in other towns developed by Mr. Paparazzo. The slides showed sites from The Gables, an age restricted community, and another subdivision in Farmington. Mr. Jefferson narrated the slides for the Agency. Mr. Jefferson stated that they envision 2,200 square foot homes for the Groton Highpoint Subdivision. He stated they will have an architectural review committee to review final site plans and architectural drawings for each new home, which will give them additional control over the development of this property. Mr. Jefferson stated that this will enable them to maintain the natural landscape. The stone walls on the site provide good separation between proposed development, open space and wetlands. Fort Hill Brook has a waterfall and this would all be part of the open space area that would be dedicated to the Town. Mr. Jefferson showed how they maintained vegetation on steep slopes on other sites. They plan to incorporate a water garden concept into the storm water management for this site.

Mr. Brown stated that the site is located on the south side of Hazelnut Hill Road. There are 62 and $\frac{3}{4}$ acres on this site. North of the site, along Hazelnut Hill Road, are primarily single family homes. Behind these homes and to the east is vacant industrially zoned property. To the south is Village Green Condominiums. The topography on this site generally slopes from north to south. There are several high points on the property that provide some interesting focus. The highest elevation is at 140. There are half a dozen or so high points on the property, hence the name, Groton High Point. Mr. Brown stated there are steep slopes along Fort Hill Brook. The balance of the property is essentially wooded. He stated there are also residences, outbuildings, and fences left over from prior occupation. Mr. Brown stated there are no public water or sewer facilities at the site or adjoining properties. Fort Hill Brook starts at the northeast end of the property and flows out the south end. He stated that Fort Hill Brook is a designated flood plain and flood way. There are also two intermittent watercourses on the site that feed into Fort Hill Brook. Mr. Brown stated their environmental consultant prepared a report, which is part of the record.

Eric Davison, from Environmental Planning Services for DiCesare-Bentley, stated he is a biologist and soil scientist. Mr. Davison went over the report with the Agency. He stated there are 3 parts to this report; a botanical survey, a wetland assessment and a wildlife assessment. He stated he couldn't do a complete wildlife survey because of the time of year. Mr. Davison reviewed the 3 wetland units as described in his report. On the west side is the swamp and it starts on Hazelnut Hill Road and slopes down to Fort Hill Brook. He stated it was a typical wooded swamp habitat, as it drops down the slope and has intermittent flows. The central wooded swamp is steeply sloped and starts at the tip of the open field. It has intermittent flows and it doesn't pond because of the slopes. The third system is the Fort Hill Brook that flows right through the site and is bordered in places by wooded swamp and some flood plain. Part of the Fort Hill Brook is classified as a shrub swamp. There is substantial seasonal and semi-permanent ponding, about 2 feet of water with an open canopy. Mr. Davison stated that this area floods as the brook flows increase. He assessed the wetlands function and values based on the Army Corps. of Engineers standards. Mr. Davison stated that the most significant wetland on the property is Fort Hill Brook and the adjoining shrub swamp.

Mr. Brown submitted a reduced copy of the layout to the Agency so they could follow along with the board on display. He stated that the project is a conventional subdivision, with standard size building lots and public streets to be built according to town regulations. Mr. Brown stated they will ask the Planning Commission to reduce the road widths from 30' to 26'. The project starts at the elbow of Hazelnut Hill Road and then allows Road A to come in and lots will be accessed off the main stem and off the lollipop cul-de-sac end of this road. There are 34 lots that are intended to be single family houses. Mr. Brown stated that averages 2 acres per house, whereas zoning requires at $\frac{1}{2}$ acre per house, so they are below the required density. Mr. Brown stated that there are 4 mews on site. He defined them as shared driveways of adjoining lots. Mr. Brown stated it helps clean up the streetscape quite a bit. The sidewalk system does meander through some of the open space. Mr. Brown stated that there are 33 acres of open space on this plan that

are proposed to be deeded to the Town and about 2/3 of this is upland. Another open space element is a conservation easement of 8 acres that will be held by the homeowners association. This conservation easement will not allow any clearing or cutting down of trees. Mr. Brown stated when both of these are added together, it approximates 2/3 of this site not being developed. This site has been laid out to avoid any crossing of Fort Hill Brook or infringing on the brook.

Mr. Brown stated there is no water or sewer currently serving the site. The Town regulations require that any subdivision within 1,000 feet of water or sewer be connected to them. Mr. Brown stated Meryl Court does have public water and sewer so they are obligated to connect to them for this proposed subdivision.

Mr. Brown stated that Fort Hill Brook has a designated flood way. They have designed a detention basin on the southwest corner of the property. The design of this basin also has features that would accommodate water quality objectives. He stated it would help to ensure that when water is discharged, it would not adversely affect Fort Hill Brook in anyway.

Mr. Brown stated that erosion and sediment control has been given a lot of consideration. There would be multi-phase road construction. Mr. Brown referred to the phase 1 plan that shows where all the sediment traps will be. He stated there are 3 phases altogether. Mr. Brown showed the notes to be recorded on the plan and 2/3 of them had to do with erosion and sediment control. They will have their erosion and sediment control plan reviewed by an independent third party as requested by staff.

Mr. Brown discussed with the Agency how many changes they have done to the plans since their preliminary meeting with the Agency. He showed the plan they had discussed in preliminary meetings and reviewed the changes made based on those discussions. They have reduced the lots from 38 to 34 and now have no road crossings. They have a temporary utility crossing through wetlands in open space.

Mr. Brown submitted a handout to the Agency which details the proposed wetland activity. Mr. Brown explained the table to the Agency and reviewed each impact. Mr. Brown stated that engineering staff requested that the applicant widen a part of Hazelnut Hill Road from 26' to 31' for approximately 500 feet. In this process, they encroach on the wetlands area. Mr. Brown stated that the intersection of Road A and Hazelnut Hill Road is further north than the existing driveway at the site. Mr. Brown stated that all the activity is beyond 50 feet of the wetlands for this intersection. Road A and Road B no longer have any wetland crossings. Activity for both roads is within 50 feet of the wetland area. Mr. Brown explained that the emergency access road may be required by the Planning Commission per subdivision regulations. The access road would be 15' wide and paved, with no curbs. Mr. Brown stated this road has to be usable in all sorts of weather. He pointed out where the emergency access road would cross the intermittent watercourse.

Mr. Brown stated that since they are obligated to bring water and sewer to the site, they have obtained a utility easement from Village Green Condominium Association. There is one wetland crossing with the water and sewer installation.

Mr. Brown stated there are paths presently on the site and they will be incorporated into the open space path network. They are proposing to expand this path system by making connections to the basin and out to the road. Mr. Brown stated they may use stone dust and wood chips in some locations to keep it stable.

Mr. Brown pointed out that the table shows no wetland activity within any of the building lots.

Mr. Brown stated that during staff review, they were asked to look into alternatives for a number of regulated activities. They were asked to combine the emergency access road and the sewer crossing. Mr. Brown stated they investigated this. In doing this the emergency access road would be 200 feet longer and would add another 2,000 square feet of activity in the upland review area. The slopes would be too steep to construct a road for emergency purposes.

Mr. Brown stated they looked at moving the utility easement up to the emergency access road. They run into the same problems and there would be more lots needing grinder pumps because of the topography.

Mr. Brown was asked to look at shifting Road A north, in the vicinity of lot 4. He showed a plan addressing this alternative. Significant grading would be necessary to accommodate the road. The highest point on the property is just north of lot 4 and it is one of the steepest areas of the site. To move the road northerly would require additional grading and would impact the geometry of the Road A/Road B intersection. Mr. Brown doesn't believe this intersection would meet the Town's sight line requirements for intersections.

Mr. Brown stated that the next option they were asked to look at was a cul-de-sac on the loop of Road B to reduce grading. He showed a drawing of a cul-de-sac on Road B and described how it wouldn't allow them to reduce the grading.

Mr. Brown stated that he was asked by staff to limit development of slopes over 25% and maintain 100 foot setbacks from wetlands wherever possible. He displayed an exhibit showing how they expanded the eastern most meadow and how it allows them to shorten the driveways which creates large areas they wouldn't have to grade. They also identified another area where they could put a secondary sediment trap during initial road construction. Mr. Brown stated that this suggestion has a lot of merit and hopes the Agency would consider incorporating it into the plans.

Mr. Brown stated that staff suggested that he consider bringing water and sewer to the site from Hazelnut Hill Road. This alternative would require a pump station that would

only serve this subdivision. Mr. Brown stated that he believes that the Town does not want a single serve pump station as they have high overhead costs.

Mr. Brown stated that most comments regarding the emergency access road have been negative, including the fire marshal, GOSA, and engineering. Mr. Brown stated that the subdivision regulations are such that they must leave it up to the discretion of the Planning Commission as to whether it is required or not. Mr. Brown stated that the fire marshal was satisfied if these homes have individual sprinkler systems, they wouldn't need a secondary access road.

Eric Davison discussed the two areas of direct impact. He doesn't consider the sewer line installation significant based on its location. It has a steep slope and it's rocky. They've put recommendations in the report regarding the restoration of the area after construction is complete.

Mr. Davison stated that they are hoping that the secondary access road will be eliminated. However, he stated that it is not as wide as a regular road and would have less use. Mr. Davison stated that the emergency access road would cross a narrow part of the wetland. He thought that this was the best place to put in an access road, if it is indeed required by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Davison stated that the storm water quality basin will be a wet basin with sinuous flow. They have designed some rain gardens on individual lots where it is appropriate to lessen the impact of the new impervious surfaces. He stated that the appendix of his report has a list of the habitat and wildlife that may be impacted. Mr. Davison stated that he sees minimal impact to species that travel beyond the wetlands into the uplands. He sees some minor impacts to wildlife with the emergency access crossing. Mr. Davison stated that having the conservation easements running along the back of the lots combined with the open space should minimize the impact to wildlife.

Scott asked if there was any discussion regarding the impact of sewer lines on groundwater flow. Mr. Brown stated there are check-dams in areas.

Williams requested more information on the mews. Mr. Brown stated that these mews reduce the length of the driveways, requiring less impervious surface and less grading. Williams asked if the emergency access vehicles could get in and out of these newly designed mews. Mr. Brown stated they received their design criteria from the fire marshal and they meet all his specifications.

Mr. Davison located the storm water basin in the southwest corner of the site. He stated that storm water will come down through a pipe system and discharge through a level spreader into a rip-rap area and then into a flat wetland area. This is a wet bottom design. There should be a system of berms in the basin to extend the travel flow. Mr. Davison stated they were asked to look at relocating the outfall from the east side, which is 100 feet from Fort Hill Brook, to the west side where it is 200 feet from the brook. They are

discussing adjusting the slope on the downhill side of this basin to preserve the vegetation. They were also asked to do wetlands crossing during the dry weather; save trees where possible and do some restorative planting. Mr. Davison stated there is a lot of invasive vegetation including Japanese Knotweed and Tree of Heaven. He stated they will do some restoration planting along the widening of the road bank on Hazelnut Hill Road to provide a buffer between the road work and the wetland. Mr. Davison stated they were asked to tighten up where ever possible on grading and wetland disturbance. A number of sites could have water gardens and some pervious driveways, using blocks instead of impervious paving.

Mr. Davison stated they were asked to consider remedial work behind lots 25-27. This area historically has had activity. They would push the houses as far forward as possible and plant native shrubs behind the houses.

Mr. Davison stated it was suggested to research any archaeological sites and they have retained an archaeologist.

Mr. Brown stated they have had a staff review and revised the plan per staff comments. Staff stated the revised plans are still under review.

Scott asked if the wet basin would have wetland plantings and Mr. Brown stated they have proposed wetland plants.

Williams asked for a definition of a rain garden. Mr. Jefferson described different ways they are planning to reduce impact to the wetlands areas. One was a combination of driveways, or mews, to reduce impervious pavement. He displayed an exhibit showing plantings in the basin and they also have a program of revegetation. He listed several plants indigenous to native wetland areas. In the rain garden he showed an illustration of the types of plants. Plantings for steep slopes would be submitted for approval to staff.

Ashworth questioned whether there is a minimum required distance between the emergency access road and the main entrance road. Mr. Brown stated that the emergency access road would be used if the main street were blocked, so good judgment would dictate that there is some distance placed between the two access points. Ashworth asked what the grinder pumps would do and Mr. Brown stated they were needed to pump septic waste up to the gravity sewer.

Sutphen was concerned with the slopes on this site. She asked him to identify other areas on the site that have slopes over 25% and to justify work on steep slopes within 100 feet of wetlands. Mr. Brown showed one area that sloped over 25% and there was no building being done on this area. Mr. Brown pointed out other areas 20% or less that they left alone and didn't need to grade. There was discussion of eliminating a part of Road B and creating a cul-de-sac to avoid the steep slopes and extensive grading. Sutphen stated she would like to see all of the development pulled 100 feet from the wetlands.

Furlong asked if there were places that might require blasting. Mr. Brown stated that there is a fair amount of ledge and they would have to blast for the roads and utilities. Mr. Brown stated at the Road A and Road B intersection would be the closest place to the wetlands that they would blast. Furlong stated that she thought there would be blasting for certain lots and she was concerned that many trees would be lost.

Williams asked for further explanation of rain gardens. Ray Jefferson stated that it is primarily a device for taking the storm water and infiltrating it into the ground. It would collect water from roofs and infiltrate it rather than letting it flow down the slopes into the wetlands.

Staff stated that the revised plans are still under review by various departments. She read comments from the Planning Commission and the Conservation Commission.

Martie Young, of Mystic asked if staff could re-read the Conservation Commission recommendations and she did.

Chairman Scott asked the intervenor to make their presentation.

Joan Smith, of 58 Mohegan Road is a member of the board for Groton Open Space Association (GOSA). She stated that GOSA has met with the applicants and their engineers. They based their intervention on the original plans as they haven't seen the revised plans yet. Ms. Smith requested that the hearing be kept open so they can speak regarding the revised plans at the next meeting. Ms. Smith read a letter from Margaret Jones stating that a wildlife study should be done during warm weather. Ms. Smith stated that GOSA consultant, Sigrun Gadwa, had several concerns, many of which have already been addressed tonight. The western wetland, although there were some invasive species, is a good quality wetland and the Agency will see that in her report. She is concerned that these roads are close to the wetlands. The shrubby meadow is an excellent habitat and it is self-maintaining. She wishes that some of these houses could be reconfigured and to leave more space between them. Ms. Smith read that Ms. Gadwa suggested a 24-lot subdivision is an option if the emergency access road is eliminated. She stated that the basin is too large and too close to the wetlands. She stated that one of the paths between the lots was at a 90 degree angle to the slope and she suggested making the path curvy and conforming to the terrain.

Fred Van Riper from Meryl Court stated they moved here 20 years ago and had lived through Hurricane Bob. He is concerned that he might need flood insurance now as there is nothing in the report that addresses his neighborhood and asked the Agency to look into it.

Chairman Scott stated that the Agency is very concerned with off site drainage.

Martie Young asked what would be the process for removal of the invasive species in the wetland area. Eric Davison stated that it depends on the species. They would follow the

recommendations of the Nature Conservancy and University of Connecticut. Mr. Davison stated that it depends on the type of plant and it could involve mechanical, hand removal, pesticide or all of the above. Chairman Scott asked if he meant spraying and Mr. Davison stated that it would be a hand treatment specific to each plant. Chairman Scott stated he would like to see specific materials and methods used for this removal at the next meeting.

Carl Smith from the Methodist Church was concerned about the blasting. When Pequot Medical Center was built they blasted and the church lost their well. He stated the contractor was not insured and he had to pay to have the church well dug deeper. He stated he is concerned about the neighborhood wells.

Mr. Brown stated that they did provide a complete storm water management analysis to quantify run-off from the site. Chairman Scott asked what storm event is this basin sized to and Mr. Brown responded a 25 year event.

Martie Young asked if there would be a cross-section of the storm water basin available to view. Mr. Brown stated that it's on the plan.

Joan Smith stated that GOSA supports pervious paths and narrower roads and pavers for the driveways and they would like to see language requiring these items on the plans.

Sutphen stated she would like to see a detailed presentation of the erosion control plan.

Furlong inquired about the third party review of the erosion control plan. Mr. Brown stated that they haven't had the third party review yet. Furlong asked if it would be an independent party and Mr. Brown responded it would be.

MOTION: To continue the public hearing for Groton High Point Subdivision, 245 Hazelnut Hill Road until the next regularly scheduled meeting on January 25, 2006.

Motion made by Sutphen, seconded by Keeler, so voted unanimously.

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Edith Fairgrieve of 8 Rolland Street, a board member of Groton Open Space Association, read a letter regarding the lack of expert independent third party opinions. GOSA urged the Agency to supplement their regulations to this effect. She submitted a letter to the Agency.

Sydney Van Zandt, of 3 Front Street in Noank, is the Director of the Groton Open Space Association. She reiterated the need for outside independent consultants and suggested that the fees be adjusted to cover the cost of the consultants. She submitted her letter and two enclosures to the Agency.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF December 14, 2005

MOTION: To approve the minutes of December 14, 2005

Motion made by Sutphen, seconded by Williams, so voted unanimously.

V. NEW APPLICATIONS

1. Receipt of New Applications

VI. PENDING APPLICATIONS

1. Groton Highpoint Subdivision, 245 Hazelnut Hill Road

The public hearing was continued until the next regularly scheduled meeting on February 8, 2006.

2. North East Academy, 115 Oslo St. - tabled

North East Academy was tabled until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

3. Catherine Kolnaski Elementary School, 500 Poquonnock Road

MOTION: To classify this application as a major application because the activity could have a significant impact on wetlands.

Motion made by Keeler, seconded by Sutphen, so voted unanimously.

MOTION: To schedule the public hearing for the Catherine Kolnaski Elementary School, 500 Poquonnock Road for February 8, 2006.

Motion made by Sutphen, seconded by Williams, so voted unanimously.

4. Candy Lane Subdivision, 0 Bonnie Circle

Candy Lane Subdivision was tabled until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

5. Watrous Resubdivision, 113 Fishtown Road

Staff reported that a structural engineer has determined that the existing driveway culvert can handle the additional traffic associated with a new lot.

MOTION: To classify this application as a minor application.

Motion made by Sutphen, seconded by Keeler, so voted unanimously.

6. Kanor Property, 7 Haley Farm Lane - tabled

The Kanor Property application was tabled until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

7. The Woodlands, 0 Ronald Road

A site walk was scheduled for Monday the 23rd at 2:30 p.m. They will meet at the Country Glen Apartments.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Election of Officers

MOTION: To re-elect Scott as Chairman and elect Keeler as Secretary.

Motion made by Sutphen, seconded by Furlong, 3 voted in favor, 2 abstentions (Scott & Keeler).

2. Report of Chair

Chairman Scott reported that he had applied for a grant through Avalonia and the State was going to meet him at the Moore Woodlands on Capstan Avenue on Tuesday, January 17th at 3 p.m. to inspect the site.

Williams stated she would not be able to attend the next regularly scheduled meeting on January 25, 2006.

3. Report of Staff - None

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 PM.