

INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY
FEBRUARY 22, 2006 - 7:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX - COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Agency: Scott, Sutphen, Keeler
Alternate Furlong
Staff: Jones, Stanowicz

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Catherine Kolnaski Elementary School, 500 Poquonnock Road

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

Rick Norris, Project Manager, Town of Groton, addressed questions the Agency had raised previously in the public hearing. Mr. Norris said the clean up of the polluted areas on the site is scheduled by Public Works for the '08 fiscal year. Mr. Norris also said the Birch Plain Creek culvert west of the Kolnaski site will be replaced by the Connecticut DOT. It was approved by the State in December of last year.

Greg Smolley, Architect, JCJ Architecture, distributed the CV's of Bob Russo, botanist, and Mark Friend, soil scientist, to the Agency members.

Mr. Smolley reviewed the areas of the site that most concerned the Agency members. The entrance roadway originally proposed was within 15 ft. of a Groton Utilities utility pole. Groton Utilities is concerned that blasting will cause fissuring in the rock and will impact the stability of the pole. Mr. Smolley presented a plan to move the road to the west, away from the pole, approximately 20 ft. off the property line. He noted that the Town has contacted Mr. Patel, the property owner to the west, about use of the jeep road on his land during construction. Mr. Smolley distributed maps of the new proposed roads to the Agency members. He noted that the jeep road is in a regulated area, but there will be no further impact.

Scott asked if the rock outcrop on the side toward the Patel property will be taken out. He also asked about the side toward the Eurocars property. Mr. Smolley said there will be 35 or 40 ft. of rock left after blasting on the Eurocars property line.

Furlong stated that she had reviewed the phase I and II environmental report and asked if there will be fencing on the site in the wetlands or buffer as recommended in the report. Mr. Smolley replied that it is not planned at this point. If the school or playground comes closer to the contaminated area it may be considered, but he doesn't see a need at this point. Fencing will not last very long since it can't be seen to maintain it. Furlong said that fencing behind the mini-mall was recommended by the report.

Furlong asked if any of the students will have to walk to the school. Mr. Smolley answered that since it is a Pre-k – 5 elementary school, there is much less chance of walkers, but there may be bikers on weekends. The population of the school will be coming from the City, about 1,000 ft. away. Furlong asked if there is a neighborhood near the school, and if there will likely be after-school activities. Furlong questioned the Town's policy for busing. Furlong asked if the entrance road will be too steep for young children on bikes.

Rick Norris said the students will be bused from the Eastern Point area. All students will be bused and there will be no walkers. There is no baseball field, just a rectangular play field the size of a junior soccer field. Furlong asked where the fencing on the easterly wetland would stop. Mr. Smolley said there will be fencing around the entire school. Furlong asked if there should be any visibility from the street at this site, and will the Town want the school to be visible from the street for safety reasons. Furlong was concerned that the Town may decide to take a lot of trees off this property for a line of site. Mr. Smolley answered that the Police Department, Fire Marshal, 911 Response, SWAT, and the security consultant have all been consulted and they are ready to sign off. Emergency response plans and patrol plans are being developed which minimize clearing and maximize safety. Furlong asked if they have looked at testing for chemicals. Since this site is adjacent to a research and development site for EB, there are a number of things to test for, including radiation. Mr. Smolley responded that the electromagnetic fields from power lines have been reviewed and no concerns were raised in the environmental report. The phase I and II environmental report looked at historic records for all surrounding properties in order to determine what tests should be conducted.

Staff asked Mr. Smolley to clarify if the existing jeep road, a portion of which was identified as an intermittent watercourse, will be used as an access. Mr. Smolley said Groton Utilities will not be using that road. The two poles south of the intermittent channel will be accessible by the new proposed roadway. He stated that the note regarding its use will be removed from the plan. Staff asked if there is a phased erosion control plan, and what the plan is for the initial grading and clearing for the site. Mr. Smolley said they are developing a phased erosion control plan. The first phase is to cut and fill for the access road. The next phase will be to grade the top of the hill. At the top, stockpile locations, equipment storage, temporary sediment basins and swales will be shown. Building and parking construction follows. The contractor's detailed plans will be discussed at the pre-construction meeting.

Chairman Scott asked for questions from the public.

Joan Smith asked if the hazardous materials will migrate to the groundwater as a result of the construction. Mr. Smolley said no. The coal ash on the dam behind the Electric Boat plant is inert, and poses no hazard. The site behind the strip mall is also inert. The slag along the railroad track is well away from the school and poses no groundwater concerns. Ms. Smith asked about the Birch Plain Creek and how it will be affected by the runoff

from the new road. Mr. Smolley said that the accessway is quite flat where it intersects Poquonnock Road and that sediment will not enter the creek. Ms. Smith asked where the runoff to the ponded area behind the strip mall exits. Mr. Smolley said it runs under Poquonnock Road in the vicinity of the hotel. The drainage analysis shows the drainage will not be increased greatly by the blasting of ledge because both the ledge and the new road are impervious. Ms. Smith asked for clarification of the 2 percent grade at the intersection with Poquonnock Road. Mr. Smolley said it is 2 percent for over 150 ft. Non-sand and non-salt for snow and ice could be requested by the Town.

The chairman asked the public for any other questions or comments. There were none.

Staff said Groton Utilities has reviewed the revised plan. They will drive over the riprap to get vehicles to the utility poles and have no further wetland concerns.

MOTION: To close the public hearing for Catherine Kolnaski Elementary School, 500 Poquonnock Road.

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

III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Staff announced that she has received a DEP training DVD. She would like to review it and it will then be available for Agency members.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF February 6, 2006 and February 8, 2006

MOTION: To approve the minutes of February 6, 2006 and February 8, 2006 as written.

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

V. NEW APPLICATIONS

1. Section 18 Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulation Amendment

Staff said the amendment was briefly introduced at the last meeting. The amendment is to revise the application fees and to institute a complex application fee that will be required if additional expert review is required. The hearing date must be within 90 days from today. She noted that a new fee ordinance has been prepared by the Planning Department for the Town Manager, who will present it to the Town Council. A fee ordinance passed by the Town Council will supercede Agency regulations.

MOTION: To set the public hearing date for the Section 18 Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Regulation Amendment for April 12th, 2006.

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

2. Receipt of New Applications – None.

VI. PENDING APPLICATIONS

1. Groton Highpoint Subdivision, 245 Hazelnut Hill Road

The Agency began the discussion on the subdivision. They reviewed each regulated activity. Scott said the emergency access road does a lot of damage to the wetland. It is unnecessary impact, and the fire marshal has said that he does not need it for fire protection. Sutphen noted that all testimony during the hearing was against the fill for the emergency access.

Sutphen noted that the applicant has proposed a 26 ft. road width as opposed to a 30 ft. road width. She felt that the Agency should support this. Staff said the Agency should note this to the Planning Commission in their report.

The Agency discussed shifting Road A to the north. This will eliminate Lot 4, but it will shift the road away from the head of the wetland. Scott noted that Lot 34 is increased in size, but the buffer is reduced. Sutphen said she cannot support houses within the buffer. The Agency reviewed the lots where houses are placed within 100 ft. of the wetlands. The Agency reviewed the various alternatives for Road B. They did not support Option E13 which shows a straight road terminating in a cul-de-sac, as it creates steep slopes on the adjacent lots. The Agency preferred terminating the road in a cul-de-sac as shown on drawing EO9.

Discussion turned to the location of the detention basin. It is presently shown downstream of the waterfall and dam on Fort Hill Brook. Furlong asked about the basin flooding out Meryl Court in large storms. Scott reviewed the function of the basin and the way it meters out flow during a storm. Furlong said moving the outlet west as discussed in the hearing is an improvement, but there is a question of scouring at the outlet. Sutphen said that the detention basin is out of sight, so maintenance and access are difficult to monitor. Also, blasting may change the hydrology of Fort Hill Brook. Scott said the blasting will all be uphill of the wetlands. Furlong is concerned that in the summer, the runoff will be heated up before it reaches the brook, and can change the hydrology as well.

Sutphen reviewed the table that compares the amount of regulated activity associated with each alternative. She is very concerned with the amount of activity on the steep slopes. On Lot 19 she stated that the record shows plenty of evidence to support a 100 ft. non-disturbance area.

The Agency reviewed the activity on land with a 25% slope. Furlong said that if you allow development on the 25% slope, there will be scouring and erosion during

construction. The Agency felt that they could not allow activity within 100 ft. of the central, eastern and southern wetlands, citing the quality of the wetlands, the slope adjacent to the wetlands and the presence of Fort Hill Brook. The area adjacent to the western wetland is lawn and is flat. The Agency felt that they could support a smaller non-disturbance area in this location.

Furlong suggested the Agency could permit the Road B cul-de-sac within 100 ft. of the wetlands, but keep all the activity out of the 100 ft., and allow activity within 50 ft. on the western side. Sutphen asked if the cul-de-sac could be shortened to limit work within 100 ft. of the wetlands.

The Agency discussed the widening of Hazelnut Hill Road. Staff said Public Works required it because of the additional traffic to be generated by this development. There is wetland on both sides of Hazelnut Hill. The road will be widened to 30 ft. and will allow the road to drain the way it is now. Although there was much speculation, there is no evidence of a vernal pool in this area. Sutphen asked about the open space paths in the areas 50 ft. and 100 ft. from the wetlands. Staff said the developers want it to be pervious in all areas. They may have to put in stairs in steep areas. The path goes across the central wetland. Flat walking stones could be used in the wetland area.

The Agency continued their discussion of the detention basin. Sutphen asked why it can't be put in Lots 21 & 22. Scott said both are too steep. Scott said blasting will not have any impact on the waterfall; it can't have a hydrologic affect on it. Staff said Town engineers are comfortable with the drainage calculations supporting the basin's size. There is nowhere else to put the detention basin. The Agency reviewed the exhibit showing different locations for the basin and reviewed why each wouldn't work. The one proposed will have the least impact. It can't be put right in the wetlands. Several options for placement of the detention basin were discussed. Scott reviewed exhibit EO7 which shows a low wall south of the basin that pulls activity back from the wetlands.

Staff noted the Planning Commission may limit the development to 24 lots if a second means of access is not provided. Sutphen said if there are less roads, there will be less detention needs. Staff suggested that the Agency review any change to the basin design required by the Planning Commission.

3. Catherine Kolnaski Elementary School, 500 Poquonnock Road

The Agency began discussion of the regulated activities associated with this application. Keeler said that Mr. Patel should be commended for his cooperation with the Town. Sutphen asked if the road is relatively flat, will the runoff be relatively slow. Staff said yes, and reviewed the drainage patterns. Staff said they will be using stone-lined swales along the edge of the access road. The pond behind Eurocars has an outlet behind the Howard Johnson's and under Poquonnock Road and drains eventually to Birch Plain Creek. Keeler said that at the site walk there was discussion about affecting wells or water levels in the area. Staff replied that public water is available. Scott said the

blasting should not create a fissure or affect the watercourses or the power lines. Staff said the Agency could ask the Town to not use salt on the driveway. The basins will stop 80% of sediment, but salt would be a concern. Staff said that calcium chloride is used throughout the town in sensitive watersheds. Sutphen asked about the water freezing on the road. Staff answered that the road will be pitched, so there will be positive drainage. Scott said he thinks this road will dry off pretty quickly, and it faces the south so it should be efficient at cleaning itself off.

The Agency felt that the applicant provided convincing testimony regarding the quality of the wetland, which will be filled. They had no concerns regarding the work in the regulated area along Poquonnock Road.

3. Candy Lane Subdivision, 0 Bonnie Circle

The applicant has requested a two week extension.

MOTION: Motion to grant a two week extension to the Candy Lane Subdivision, 0 Bonnie Circle.

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

4. The Woodlands, 0 Ronald Road

The applicant has requested a 5 day extension.

MOTION: To grant a 5 day extension to The Woodlands, 0 Ronald Road.

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

5. Maple Glen Subdivision, 0 Pleasant Valley Road North

Ken Petrini, Engineer, DiCesare Bentley Engineers, represented the applicant, Alan Gardener of Benajah Farm L.P. Mr. Petrini opened by reviewing the soil scientist's investigation of the water on Lot 13 and on Lots 14 and 15. He said the area on Lot 13 is just a pocket where stormwater doesn't drain and is not classified as wetland. The water flowing across Lots 14 and 15 is not a watercourse. The applicant is proposing to install a pipe to carry the offsite water under the driveway. Mr. Petrini presented the revised plans which pull the driveway further away from the wetlands for Lots 14 & 15. In the original proposal, the grading was right up to the wetlands. In the revised plans, the grading has been pulled back approximately 30 ft. from the wetlands. They also relocated the house on Lot 15 to a flatter spot on the lot. Lot 14's driveway is in the same spot. The recommendation from Jim Cowen, their wetland biologist, was to leave the stone wall as a barrier on Lot 13. The planting plan in the uplands along the Lots 14 and 15 driveway has also been added to the plan as recommended by Mr. Cowen. After grading, the area

will be replanted. Mr. Petrini noted that the open space has been realigned to connect to future open space.

Scott asked if the driveway grading for Lots 14 and 15 could be limited by a wall. Mr. Petrini said that the health code has requirements regarding the proximity of a septic system to walls that would limit the distance that the grading could be pulled back. Sutphen asked Mr. Petrini to state for the record the type of wetland this is. Jim Cowen did evaluate the wetlands. Staff will put that information in the next packet. Staff noted that there is a watercourse in wetland 2 that flows under North Pleasant Valley Road. The site has been undisturbed for many years prior to the logging. Furlong asked if they did any borings for any of the houses. Mr. Petrini said they dug test pits for the septic system design. Furlong asked how many were dug in Lots 14 and 15. Mr. Petrini said 4 bore holes and 2 perc tests.

Staff said revised plans came in late last week, and she is waiting for responses from the other agencies. Sutphen asked the distance from Lot 14's house to the watercourse. Mr. Petrini answered 80 ft. Scott said the Agency is usually looking for 100 ft. Mr. Petrini stated that a timber harvest has taken place in this area and it is pretty wide open. Sutphen commented that the houses will have lawns. Mr. Petrini said some lawns, because there will be vegetation put back per Mr. Cowen's recommendations. Furlong asked if the western side can connect to sewers. Staff answered yes, but the existing sewer lines are about 800 ft. away. This section of the site is not in the sewer avoidance area. DiCesare-Bentley is discussing the option of extending the sewer with Public Works. Sutphen asked if they did connect to sewer, would there be room for another house since there wouldn't be a need for septic. Staff said there would be the potential to create more lots.

MOTION: To classify the application for Maple Glen Subdivision, 0 Pleasant Valley Road North, as minor.

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

6. Hilton Garden Inn, 224 Gold Star Highway

Furlong stated that she has looked at site and it is completely fenced on the Wal-Mart side.

Harry Clarke, Engineer, DiCesare Bentley Engineers, represented the applicant, Kiran Parikh. Mr. Clarke explained the location of the site to the Agency. The site is currently wooded, with some old structures and old fill. The application is for a 127 room Hilton Garden Hotel, driveway, parking and related improvements. There would be no increase in runoff with the use of underground detention in the parking lot. There would be three discharge areas at the rear of the site. Reports from previous applications indicate the quality of the wetlands as being minimal. Mr. Clarke identified the 50 ft. separation from the wetland. The stormwater system will have stormceptors to remove sediments prior to discharge. Scott asked the amount of water released in the back. Mr. Clarke said less

than 2 cfs. That area is greater than 200 ft. to wetland. Sutphen asked about the drainage patterns. Mr. Clarke said they will maintain the same flow patterns post development as there are right now. The paved leak-off on Route 184 is being left. Sutphen asked how much water will be discharged from each outlet. Mr. Clarke answered 2 cfs from flared end 1, and about 4 ½ cfs will enter the wetland in total. Keeler said the condition of the wetland to the west is degraded and the trash needs to be cleaned up. Mr. Clarke said Hilton is a very landscape-driven franchise, and wouldn't allow a trashed wetland near the property. Furlong asked if the applicant considered underground parking to lessen the impervious surface. Mr. Clarke said that would increase the cost, and because of the ledge they would not be able to gain many spots. Sutphen stated she would like to see activity pulled 50 ft. away from the wetland.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Chair - None
2. Report of Staff - None

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David Scott