

INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY
JULY 26, 2006 - 7:30 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX - COMMUNITY ROOM 2

I. ROLL CALL

Agency: Scott, Sutphen and Block
Alternate Furlong
Staff: Jones, Discordia

Chairman Scott appointed Furlong as a voting member.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Mystic Woods, Fort Hill Road & Flanders Road

Block read the legal ad as it appeared in The Day.

Staff stated that the certificates of mailing were received and are in order.

Harry Heller an attorney with the firm Heller, Heller and McCoy in Uncasville, represented the owners, Hawthorne Development LLC. The project is for a 241 unit, age restricted facility. This site is approximately 104 acres which equals 2.4 units per acre. The proposed facility will be served by public water and sewer. Sewer is currently terminated on the west side of Fort Hill Brook. They are proposing to extend sewers up Fort Hill Road and into the development. The applicant would like to enhance 1,840 square feet of regulated wetland area which will change the characteristics of wetland area 4. This is the only direct impact to wetlands in this application.

The applicant has made a great effort to center the development on the project site on a plateau and to stay off of the steep slopes. The applicant would like to leave about 45% of the site undisturbed. Stormwater basins B2 and B3 are located at the bottom of a steeper slope and their construction will be a temporary disturbance. The plan proposes indirect impacts to wetlands and watercourses. All activities within upland review areas are to construct roadways, drainage basins and walking paths.

The stormwater management system has been designed to achieve greater than 90% removal of total suspended solids. The stormwater that will be released to the environment is highly treated water. Mr. Heller reviewed the location of detention basin C1. It is near Flanders Road and will discharge through a level spreader to wetland 11. In wetland area 11, REMA Ecological Consultants have identified two vernal pools. In order to create better protection for the pools and wetland, the design has been modified through the review process. The applicants have moved the water quality detention basin outside the 100 foot wetland review area. They have incorporated berms into the basin design to increase residency time of stormwater within the basin.

In conjunction with this project the applicant is requesting licenses to conduct several regulated activities. On the south side, wetland area 1 is westerly of the proposed Road A which will provide egress only for residents and ingress and egress from the site for emergency vehicles to Fort Hill Road. Primary access to the site will be on Flanders Road. Mr. Heller reviewed the design of secondary water quality basin, A2. There is a hydrodynamic separator. They have a low level leak off from that chamber that will leak out to wetland area 1. In addition, a portion of the walking trail is in the upland review area. That area will also include an installation of a sewer line which will be a temporary disturbance.

Attorney Heller stated that no activities are requested for wetland area 2.

Wetland area 3 is a finger of wetland that extends into the westerly portion of the site. They are requesting the installation of a sewer line and a walking path over the sewer line within the upland review area.

Wetland area 4 is a depression containing wetland soils in the center of the project site. It has no hydrological connection with any other wetland system on the site. This pocket is segregated and isolated. They will excavate approximately 1,849 square feet of wetland to create an 18,000 square foot pond. Attorney Heller stated that the pond will be lined with 6 inches of compacted sand. A liner will be placed over the sand and another 6 inches of sand placed over the liner. Edge wet meadow environments will be created. Wetland soil excavated from this wetland will be used for the meadow environments.

Attorney Heller stated that in wetland area 5 no activities are proposed. This is the flood plain wetland adjacent to Fort Hill Brook. There is a significant vegetated buffer maintained to protect the slopes and Fort Hill Brook.

Wetland area 6 is a finger of wetlands extending easterly from the wetland system associated with Fort Hill Brook. The applicant is proposing the installation of a sewer line and a walking path which would result in a temporary disturbance within the upland review area.

Attorney Heller stated that wetland areas 7 and 8 require license for the same activities. Stormwater flows from the northerly portion of the development into basin B1 and from the center portion of the site into B2. B1 discharges into B2 and they both discharge to basin B3. The area between wetlands 7 and 8 is extremely flat. The applicant believes that by creating an open area in this environment it will attract species of mammals and reptiles not normally found in this portion of the site.

Attorney Heller stated that wetland areas 9 and 10 have no activities.

Wetland area 11 is along the westerly side of Flanders Road and contains two imbedded vernal pools. They are proposing primary access to the site along Flanders Road. Attorney Heller noted that this parcel has relatively limited frontage. The access drive has been placed according to DOT standards. A portion of the roadway system will be within 100 feet of wetland area 11.

The applicant will install a sanitary sewer line in Fort Hill Road. There is about 8 feet of cover over the Fort Hill Brook bridge. They will be able to work entirely in the paved area of Fort Hill above the bridge. The pavement will be saw cut and the bituminous material will be removed off site.

The existing stormwater system in Fort Hill Road does not have the capacity to deal with more stormwater runoff. They will run a new system in the northerly shoulder of Fort Hill Road.

George Logan, principal environmental scientist and owner of REMA Ecological Consultants, submitted a presentation outline to the Agency and the Intervenor. He and soil scientist, Sigrun Gadwa collaborated on this report. The first document was a summary of findings and the second was back up information that was not included in the first report as well as information that had been requested during staff review.

Mr. Logan stated his firm has completed an entire year of investigation on this 104 acre property. The site is predominately forested. Referring to a map included in his report and shown on a board at a larger scale, he noted that area U1 is a maturing forest, and U2 is a hard woods forest where there used to be a pasture. U3 is shrubs, tangles and vines next to wetland area 11 and wetland area 5. Mr. Logan stated that about 14.7 acres are wetlands or 14% of the site which is an average for Connecticut. Only wetland area 4 is isolated. All the other wetlands are associated with Fort Hill Brook.

He referred to water quality data from Fort Hill Brook and the vernal pool. Fort Hill Brook has a little impairment reflected both in the habitat and the water quality sampling. The fish population is not considered robust. There are some hillside wetlands that feed the wetlands adjacent to Fort Hill Brook. Wetlands 6 and 7 are not nutrient sensitive and they only flow and discharge during the spring. Wetland 8 flows all year. Wetland area 5 is a very large and robust system. It is far away from any development activities. Wetlands 9 and 10 are forested wetlands. Wetland 11 is the more unique wetland on the site because of where it sits in relation to Flanders Road. It stays wet for most of the year. There are two tier one vernal pools, which means they found in excess of 25 wood frog and spotted salamander egg masses.

Wetlands 1 and 3 are not nutrient sensitive but they are hydrologically sensitive. Mr. Logan noted 150 species of animals on site. They were notified of a box turtle in the area although they were unable to find any. The functional quality of these wetlands is moderately high. Recharge and discharge would be moderately high.

Mr. Logan discussed the stormwater runoff and impacts to the wetlands. He noted that the basins are designed to maintain the predevelopment drainage patterns. He believes that there will be no significant adverse impact to the wetlands.

Mr. Logan discussed water quality. All the basins are oversized for water quality. His calculations show that there will be 90% sedimentation removal.

Mr. Logan went over some of the species he thought may be attracted to this site after native vegetation has been established in the basins. The wooded area where basins B2 and B3 will be created will be changed to an open area, attracting different species that will enhance the diversity of the property.

Mr. Logan stated test pits have been dug and he will produce the data when it is complete. The ground water in the area of basin B2 was at 52 inches. The soils are comprised of coarse canton soils. Refusal at basin B3 was at 6.5 feet. He may have to resculpture a portion of basin B3 because of bedrock. Basin B1 is in an area that is moderately well drained. He submitted documentation of the plantings per basin. They are proposing 4 years of monitoring to ensure that the plants are well established.

Mr. Logan believes this project will not have a substantial impact to the wetlands during the short or long term. Impacts will be of a minimal intensity.

Chairman Scott asked about the treatment of salt, motor oil, and herbicides. Mr. Logan stated that a Homeowners Association will be responsible for maintenance and landscaping and roads. The Association documents will require best management practices for landscaping and snow removal.

Furlong asked if B2 and B3 detention basins were 39,000 square feet. Mr. Logan stated that it would be a little more than that. Harry Heller stated that it was less than an acre. Furlong stated that it would be open over the basins and she is concerned that the water will get warm. Mr. Logan stated that there will be vegetation over the water to keep the water at a lower temperature and thermal pollution is not an issue here.

Sutphen asked about the Japanese Knotweed near the basin C1 and how would he make sure it doesn't invade the basin. Mr. Logan stated they are removing vegetation within 30 feet of the detention basin slopes. Sutphen asked for a plan to manage the knotweed.

Harry Heller went through the permitted criteria. Direct environmental impact to wetlands are requested for wetland area 4 only. The rest are indirect impacts. They are ensuring that the project will discharge highly renovated stormwater.

Attorney Heller stated the only other impact will occur during the construction. They have a detailed erosion and sediment control plan.

There is a phasing plan for construction so the site will not be exposed all at once. The initial stage involves the extension of the infrastructure.

Attorney Heller stated this project requires a site monitor, who will be responsible for compliance with the erosion and sediment control plan. He must be either a soil scientist or erosion control specialist. He will be required to monitor the site twice weekly.

The short term potential impact is the area when the site is exposed during construction. Long term impacts, which can occur whenever there is disturbance, will be a change in the environment. Obviously, there will be a change in the environment with this project.

Attorney Heller submitted a plan for 71 single family residential lots that the applicant considered and determined to have too great an impact on the wetlands. He submitted a second plan of 61 subdivision lots combined with age restricted housing. This plan was also determined to have too great an impact to the wetlands.

Attorney Heller stated there will be an Association to oversee the maintenance of the housing development. He noted that the project design has been modified so that there will be no irretrievable loss of wetlands on this site. He stated that there is no potential health safety or property issues. The vulnerable period is the period during construction.

Chairman Scott asked if there were any questions or comments from the audience.

Priscilla Pratt, president of GOSA stated that the application does not seem complete. She requested that they continue the hearing until the test data has been submitted. Ms. Pratt stated that GOSA will deliver their statement at the next public hearing.

Jim Zamzes of 248 Fort Hill Road asked where the scientists are entering and exiting the property. Mr. Logan stated that a driveway off of Fort Hill Road and off Flanders Road. Mr. Zamzes stated that he has seen no one in the area when it has rained or in the winter. He stated that they all have wells and he is concerned they are going to be affected by the blasting.

Greg Curtis, engineer, stated they are going to minimize any blasting.

Chairman Scott asked if he had an estimate on how much blasting there would be. Mr. Curtis stated that probably more so in the upland review areas for the detention basins. George Logan stated that there may be bedrock by C1 and probably in basin B3.

Wendy McFarland, GOSA, requested that the Agency ask for an environmental review team report. She stated there is evidence of many animal and plant species. Ms. McFarland stated that it was way too much information for the Agency or public to

assimilate. She didn't think that the enhancement of Wetland 4 necessary. She stated that Mr. Logan should be queried about the dates he has visited the site.

Jim Zamzes asked who will guarantee nothing will happen to the wells. Chairman Scott stated that there are state laws that cover that. Staff stated that the Fire Marshal issues blasting permits.

Archie Chester, of Fort Hill Road, stated he is concerned with his well. He stated it is only 75 feet deep.

Fred Fisher, of 26 Main Street asked if he could look at the files on this project. Chairman Scott stated that he could come into the office at his convenience to look at the records.

Sutphen noticed that the previous minutes stated that the Town would hire an expert to review the impact of the development on the wetlands with a complex application fee. Staff stated that the Town has hired Richard Snarski to review impact to the wetlands and expects a report by August 23. Furlong stated that she wanted a hydrologist hired by the Town. Staff stated that the soil scientist hired by the Town is looking at the impact to the wetland of the stormwater system.

MOTION: To continue the public hearing for Mystic Woods, Flanders Road until the next regularly schedule meeting on August 23, 2006.

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

III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF June 14, 2006 and July 12, 2006

Approval of the minutes was tabled until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

IV. NEW APPLICATIONS

1. Receipt of New Applications - None

V. PENDING APPLICATIONS

1. Mystic Woods, Fort Hill Road and Flanders Road

The public hearing will be continued until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

2. Groton Shoppers Mart Expansion, 923 Poquonnock Road

Staff reviewed the changes to the plan. There is no activity within 50 feet of the wetlands. The roof drain from the relocated gym will be tied into the storm drain system.

MOTION: To approve the Groton Shoppers Mart application for the following reasons:

1. There are no wetlands or watercourses being filled as part of this application and the applicant will be doing no work within 50 feet of the wetland.
2. The wetland has been heavily impacted by past activity including the construction of the shopping plaza and the railroad tracks.

This permit is subject to the four standard conditions

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

3. Sahin Property, 95 Flanders Road

Staff stated that the applicant requested an extension until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

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

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

David Scott