

**SUFFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MEETING OF TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2024**

PRESENT: **Glenn Neilson, Vice Chairman**
Norm John Noble
Beth Fanous
Pat Reilly
Gary Phelps

PARKS SUPERINTENDENT **Tom O'Brien**

CONSULTANT: **Keith Morris**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER- 7:00 P.M.

Vice Chairman Neilson stated that he would be acting chairman for the meeting in place of chairman Christian who was not present. Vice chairman Neilson called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. Consultant Morris read the agenda.

PARKS SUPERINTENDENT REPORT:

Parks Superintendent Tom O'Brien presented his report to the Commission. The water level of White's pond is low so there is no need to lower it further for the winter months at this time. The Eagle Scout project constructing the fire ring is ongoing with Mr. O'Brien occasionally checking in on the project.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION:

Eagle Scout Project – Sunrise Park

Consultant Morris stated that this topic will be tabled until a future meeting.

PLAN ACCEPTANCE:

Permit # 1715 – MJL Realty Investments, LLC - (owner) – Phase 2, Eastwoods Active Adult Housing – East Street South. This property is located on the west side of East Street South, nearest intersection being Juniper Lane. Assessor's Map 78H, Block 47, Lot 91 D.

Consultant Morris stated that this application is on the agenda for acceptance and the proposal is very similar to what was previously approved by the Commission back in 2003 that has since expired. The Commission must decide between reviewing the proposal through the application process or through the public hearing process.

Guy Hesketh, P.E., of F. A. Hesketh & Associates, Inc. gave a brief presentation of the differences in the current proposal compared to the previously approved project. Minor revisions to the wetland boundary have been made resulting in additional wetlands. Other changes include modification to the detention basin to comply with current regulations. In conclusion Mr. Hesketh stated that only minor revisions have been made to the plan compared to the one approved back in 2003.

During discussion the Commission decided that a public hearing should be held due to public interest as several residents attended the meeting and Consultant Morris stated several abutters have contacted the Planning and Zoning office inquiring about the application. Commissioner Noble made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Phelps, to accept the application and to schedule a public hearing for Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at 7:30 P.M. The motion was carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING (7:30 P.M.)

Permit # 1713 – Denishchich (owner) – Pig enclosure/fencing/manure composting - 1500 Hill Street. This property is located on the east side of Hill Street, nearest intersection being Spruce Street. Assessor’s Map 27, Block 28, Lot 61-2.

Chairman Neilson declared the public hearing open. Consultant Morris read the legal notice and stated the dates the notice was published in the Hartford Courant. He stated that the legal notice was sent out by the applicant to eight abutters via certified mail as required by the regulations and all but three green cards were received back. Mr. Morris then went over the handouts that each Commissioner has. Chairman Neilson then went over the order of speakers for the hearing.

Steve Aeschliman, from Megson, Heagle & Friend Civil Engineers gave a brief presentation of what is being proposed. The applicant is proposing to construct a 30’ by 30’ animal enclosure, which will house 20 to 25 pigs. Manure will be stored on site in a separate structure and removed periodically or once a week during the summer months. Applicant Nikolai Denishchich then handed out his proposed manure plan. Mr. Denishchich stated that he will be constructing the animal structure himself.

A discussion followed with Commission members regarding the design of the animal enclosure and the current method of storing manure. Mr. Aeschliman stated that currently manure is being stored on site approximately 40’ from the wetlands and is being removed periodically.

Town counsel Derek Donnelly then addressed the public. He stated that as per the Suffield Conservation Regulations, which are based on the State regulations, farming in wetlands is a use as of right. Therefore, pigs can be raised within wetland areas. However this situation is unique because there are public health code regulations for the raising of pigs that must be met including setbacks from adjacent houses and the pig enclosure cannot be built on marshy ground or land subject to overflow.

Attorney Donnelly concluded by stating that the Commission has limited jurisdiction over the proposal and they have no authority regarding smell, manure storage, or the slaughtering of animals and he asked the public to limit their comments to what the Commission has jurisdiction over.

Chairman Neilson then asked Tung Nguyen, Deputy Director of the North Central District Health (NCDHD) to give an update on compliance with the health code regulations. Mr. Nguyen stated that last summer he sent contact information for the University of Connecticut Dairy and Livestock Division and the United States Department of Agriculture to the applicant to assist him with developing a manure removal plan. The applicant has done nothing to this point with that information. He stated that the current plan does show that the proposed animal shelter for pigs does meet the required 300' setback from adjacent houses but that a detailed manure plan has not been submitted or approved.

Chairman Neilson opened the hearing up to the public and asked that each speaker state their name and address and limit their comments to two minutes each.

Public:

Rita Chmura, 1437 Hill Street - stated that she loves the farming community of Suffield but it appears that the property at 1500 Hill Street cannot support what is being proposed.

Dan Phelon, 1380 Hill Street – stated that he grew up in town and discussed how wetlands change over time. He does not agree with allowing a pigsty on a hill upgradient of the wetlands.

Ellen Banks, 1534 Hill Street – had concerns with the delineation of the wetlands and if the boundary changes.

Joyce Laflesh – 1678 Hill Street – asked if the right to farm on a piece of property had any limits to the quantity and type of livestock that is allowed. Consultant Morris stated that the wetland regulations do not specify animal types and amount allowed on a property.

Dan Burnham, 1510 Hill Street – referenced a court case that he said determined that any place a pig is must be considered a pigsty and therefore must be at least 300' from an adjacent home. Therefore, the submitted plan does not comply with this regulation as the proposed fenced in area is within 300' of abutting houses. He is also concerned that runoff from the pigsty will pollute the wetlands and continue downstream to the Suffield Country Club. Mr. Nguyen stated that he will look at the plan again.

Diane Phelon – 1380 Hill Street – stated that neighbors cannot sit outside due to the smell from 1500 Hill Street.

Dawn Burnham – 1510 Hill Street – stated that the application should be denied due to health concerns and discussed the manure amount that is generated from each pig.

Consultant Morris asked Mr. Aeschliman to have their soil scientist revisit the site and issue a report on the ground conditions at the proposed animal shelter location and comment on if the land is subject to overflow and the potential for polluting the wetlands from runoff from the pigsty.

After discussion, Commissioner Noble made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Reilly, to continue the public until the October 8, 2024 meeting of the Commission, at 7:30 P.M. The motion was carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

CONSULTANT'S REPORT:

Consultant Morris discussed a building permit application for a solar panel and power access proposed within a wetland area on East Street South next to Boston Neck Road. A revised plan has been submitted which shows the proposed panel to the rear of the existing home. The Commission stated that Mr. Morris can approve the revised plan through the building permit process once a soil scientist confirms that the revised panel location is not within wetlands.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 MEETING OF THE COMMISSION

Commissioner Noble made a motion to approve the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Chairman Neilson and carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Noble made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Phelps. The motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by
Norm John Noble
Recording Secretary