

Carlisle Conservation Commission
March 28, 2013

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Town Clerk, Chair Kelly Guarino called the meeting to order in the Clark Room at the Town Hall at 7:35 p.m. Also present were Vice Chair Luke Ascolillo and Commissioners Tom Brown, Tom Brownrigg, Peter Burn, Jen Bush. Conservation Administrator Willard was also present. Commissioner Lee Tatistcheff was not present.

Bills, Minutes, General Agenda Items & New/Pending or Old Business:

Minutes:

*Bush moved to approve the **February 28, 2013** meeting minutes as amended, Brownrigg seconded and all voted in favor with the exception of Ascolillo, who abstained.*

Lot 1 Hanover Hill: Rob West of Wilkins Hill Realty was present to request guidance relative to requirements for relocating a portion of a foundation drain. The existing drain pipe originates at 546 Westford Street and terminates on Lot 1 Hanover Hill, approximately 50' into the Buffer Zone. West presented a sketch provided by Stamski and McNary which reroutes the pipe to run inside the lot line at 546 West Street, replacing this portion of the existing cardboard and asphalt pipe with solid, coiled PVC. The work would be undertaken using a mini excavator so as to minimize disturbance. The project will not require any tree removal. West estimates the project duration will be approximately four hours. Crushed stone will be installed at the drain outlet, located approximately 75' from the wetland line, and a haybale siltation barrier will be installed below the outlet to prevent runoff/erosion into the adjacent wetland. The Commission discussed the option of classifying the project as an Exempt Minor Activity in that the work would be undertaken in a previously disturbed lawn area within the outer 50' of the Buffer Zone. They also noted that the replacement of the cardboard and asphalt pipe with solid PVC pipe is an improvement. Willard requested confirmation of the location of the existing septic tank and assurance that the work would not interfere with it. West confirmed it was located in compliance with setback requirements. Given the limited size and scope of the project, *Burn moved to consider the proposed drainage ditch alteration as an Exempt Minor Activity in accordance with the plan dated 3/27/2013, Brown seconded and all voted in favor.*

Cranberry Bog Agricultural Agreement Committee (CBAAC) Update: Land Steward Debby Geltner was present to inquire how the Commission wants CBAAC to view the water rights assigned to the Cranberry Bog. To facilitate the discussion, she distributed a diagram of three basic options for agricultural operations at the Cranberry Bog as follows: 1) maintain the status quo (20 acres in cranberries and 20 acres in renovation); 2) 20 acres in cranberries and 20 acres in mixed crops; 3) 40 acres in a highly commercialized cranberry operation. Each scenario included potential impact on the water rights, some of the work that would be required, and known costs. Geltner also provided aerial images that had been obtained from the USDA-NRCS showing the acreage for each of the three fields.

A discussion of each of the options followed, including profit margins, potential profit improvements if other crops were to be included, the acceptable period of time for a field to be in renovation, the potential vulnerability to Carlisle's water rights under the current scenario or other scenarios, some of the possible variations with each option and sources for obtaining additional information. After weighing each option, the Commission requested that the CBAAC further explore the option of growing only cranberries at the bog before considering other crops in order to ensure maintenance of the current water rights.

Along these lines, they are asking CBAAC to find out exactly what it will take to rejuvenate the cranberry bog and restoration fields, including actual costs, and also to identify potential grant funding sources for the restoration work. They also encouraged CBAAC to consult with Mark Duffy as well as other cranberry bog owners and organizations, and were in support of the recommendation that they join the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association. A vote was taken as follows: *Bush moved to approve the Commission's enrollment as an Associate Member of the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association, Ascolillo seconded and all voted in favor.*

Open Space and Recreation Plan: Willard reported that the OS&R Committee expects to get a draft Plan to town committees within the month.

Toward Independent Living and Learning (TILL): Willard reported having been contacted by a representative from the TILL Program in Billerica, a regional organization that provides support and services to people with disabilities. They are interested in the possibility of tending a plot at Foss Farm Community Gardens. Willard is working with Garden Manager Jack O'Connor to address the request.

Benfield Affordable Housing Update: In accordance with the Construction Sequencing Plan, Willard will be conducting a site visit to inspect the haybale/siltation installation at Benfield along with a representative from DEP on April 10, 2013, when they will also have an opportunity to address questions or concerns with the construction manager/site contractors who will be present for the inspection.

Land Use Permit: *Ascolillo moved to issue a Land Use Permit to Tom and D'Ann Brownrigg for a Woodcock Walk at Foss Farm on April 13, 2013 (rain date April 14, 2013) from 7:30 p.m. to dark, Burn seconded and all voted in favor.*

Buffer Zone Discussion: Vice Chair Ascolillo had requested time on the agenda to continue discussions relative to incorporating a setback distance policy for work within the Buffer Zone subsequent to several recent filings involving work being pushed close to the wetland line. The Commission had previously discussed several reports submitted by Brownrigg demonstrating the scientifically proven benefits of vegetated buffer zones relative to water quality and wildlife habitat protections.

Brownrigg said he had recently reviewed the revised DEP regulations and found that, although they make an attempt to better protect buffer zones, the protection occurs primarily during construction without any provisions for a permanently protected buffer strip. He said he would like to see a 25' buffer planted primarily with native plants and shrubs instead of lawn.

Willard said that the Commission could consider adopting a written policy relative to a permanent buffer strip, which would not require a change to the local bylaw and therefore would not require town meeting approval. Burn said that formalizing the Commission's normal approach would be an improvement over the current practice of taking proposals on a case by case basis. Bush said it would be helpful for applicants to be aware of the Commission's guidelines before going through the filing process.

Willard agreed to survey what other towns have in place and to look into the process for adopting a written policy. The Commission will continue the discussion at an upcoming meeting to discuss Willard's findings.

Towle Field Maintenance: Guarino noted that FinCom had approved the Commission's request for an additional \$2,000 for field maintenance in the FY14 budget. All were in agreement that Towle Field would be the likely location to increase maintenance work, since the poison ivy and buckthorn have taken over the

fields, precluding virtually all recreational and agricultural activity. Guarino noted that the Commission had been mowing Towle two times per year for the last several years, adding several additional mowings last year in an attempt to better control the invasives.

Brownrigg referenced a report he received from Mike Sawyers of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Landowner Incentive Program subsequent to a site visit to Towle Field in November, 2011. The report noted that the spread of invasive plants throughout the field has decreased the native plant diversity and changed the compositional structure of the vegetation such that the habitat is no longer suitable for Bobolinks. The report concludes that the most effective method for the control of well established invasive plant species is the use of herbicides. Burn commented that the intensive mowing approach is expensive and does not appear to be effective.

Willard reported having attended a program on managing invasive plants at the recent Mass Land Trust Conference. She learned that effective invasive plant control involves a three-step process including mechanical removal combined with chemical control in order for natural control by native species to occur. It is typically a three-year process followed by careful monitoring every three to five years thereafter. Guarino noted that the Commission currently allows the use of herbicides on some of the leased agricultural land in Carlisle. Given the projected cost of treating the entire field, Brownrigg suggested the Commission designate a test plot to be treated in order to determine the effectiveness of herbicide use. Willard asked about the possibility of requesting a CPC appropriation, since the work would be categorized as restoration, not maintenance. Ascolillo will investigate this possibility with the CPC for the next funding cycle.

The Commission determined that it would be helpful to have an opportunity to discuss the issue at an upcoming meeting in order to educate the public on the initiative and to obtain feedback. They will also sponsor a public Towle Field Reclamation Site Visit sometime in May once the plants have emerged.

9:30 p.m. *Burn moved to adjourn, Ascolillo seconded and all voted in favor.*

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Hopkins
Administrative Assistant

DOCUMENT REGISTER

Lot 1 Hanover Hill-documents relative to foundation drain relocation/redirection at Lot 1 Hanover Hill and 546 Westford Street
Towle Field Distribution Map (mowing, haying, Bobolink habitat) dated 6/19/10