

Hampton IWWA Minutes
Public Hearing and Regular Meeting – May 5, 2020
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The Public Hearing and Regular Meeting of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency were held on Tuesday, May 5, 2020 via ZOOM.

Present for the Board: Heather Bonnekson, Chairman, Peter Witkowski, Vice-Chairman; Martin Mlyniec, Stan Crawford, Glen Newcombe, Pat Cascio

Absent: Muriel Miller

Staff and Others Present: John Valente, WEO; Greg Glaude and Ian Cole of Killingly Engineering Associates; First Selectman Al Cahill; Conservation Commission Member Penny Newbury; Town Planner John Guskowski; Dayna McDermott-Arriola, Recording Secretary

Vice-Chairman Witkowski called the Public Hearing to order at 7:12 p.m.

WEO John Valente read the legal notice as follows: The Town of Hampton Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency will hold the continuance of a March 3, 2020 Public Hearing on Tuesday, May 5, 2020 at 7:00 P.M. in the Town Hall Community Room, 164 Main Street, Hampton, Connecticut. This hearing is held for the application for construction of a gravel access drive with three (3) separate wetlands crossings; each crossing includes the culverting of intermittent watercourses, total wetlands filling of 3991 square feet approximately to access upland areas of the property. The property is owned by Stonehurst at Hampton Valley, LLC, located at 119 Providence Turnpike (Route 6) and Drain Street, shown as Lot #7A, Block #27 on Assessors Map #4-10. Maps and other application information are available for review at the Hampton Town Hall Building Department. At this hearing, any interested persons may be heard and written communications received regarding this matter.

Heather Bonnekson, Chairman

Published in The Willimantic Chronicle on March 25, 2020.

Glen Glaude of Killingly Engineering Associates and Wetlands and Soil Scientist Ian Cole represented Stonehurst LLC, Craig Gates, Applicant.

Mr. Glaude reviewed the revised plans illustrated on the map of the proposed activity for a gravel drive, which entails three wetlands crossings, in order to permanently access 35 acres on the northeast section of the property for the purpose of providing opportunities for photographs for weddings the event center hosts, and to accommodate hayrides. In consideration of concerns raised by members and residents at the March 3, 2020 Public Hearing, modifications were made to include:

- reducing the width of the driveway from 12 feet to 8 feet
- counter-sinking pipes into wetlands to retain original floors of crossings
- installing rip-rap armaments on each crossing
- establishing a construction entrance on Drain Street
- creating stockpile locations for debris 50 feet away from wetlands
- spreading removed topsoil along sides of driveway to grade and seed
- employing geo-textile fabric underneath crossings
- adding turn-arounds on gravel drive
- including notes on plans that stipulate:
 - Engineer and Wetlands Agent approval prior to each culvert installation
 - Engineer to be present at the site for the beginning, and end of each day, of installation
 - culvert outlets and inverts to be staked and elevations provided
 - alternative stream diversion measures approved with the consent of the Engineer and Wetlands Agent
 - machinery and equipment not to be parked overnight or refueled within 50 feet of wetlands

Additional plans for four identified mitigation areas include:

- installation of rip-rap swale and plunge pool at Route 6 entrance
- installation of two stone check dams adjacent to the existing pond
- removal of invasive plants and wire fence
- elevation of detention basin by parking lot

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Mr. Glaude concluded that after careful review, alternate plans, which included use of the existing path, crossing the Little River, or utilizing two, rather than three, crossings, were deemed to entail more wetlands disturbance than the proposed plan. Soil Scientist Ian Cole stated that the plan as presented was carefully designed with engineers and considered all concerns raised by the public and by members of the IWWA and Conservation Commission, noting that the revised plan reduce wetlands disturbance by 17%.

Vice-Chairman Witkowski opened the floor to public comment.

Conservation Commission member Penny Newbury asked what type of vehicle would be utilized for hayrides and whether or not plantings would be monitored. Mr. Glaude stated that a tractor or a horse would be used for the hayrides, and that the planted areas, which would be limited to wildflowers, are not in the wetlands.

Vice Chairman Witkowski read a letter submitted as part of the record to the IWWA and to the Planning and Zoning Commission by Ms. Newbury that characterized the Little River and its environs as “fragile”, noting its documented ecological importance. She requested that the third crossing be eliminated. She also questioned future development that could be the consequence of accessing the 30 acres. Mr. Glaude agreed that the area is “fragile”. He stated that there are no plans to develop the area for residential use, and that any changes must return to the IWWA and the PZC.

Vice-Chairman Witkowski read a communication submitted to the IWWA by Marcia Kilpatrick which characterized the proposed activity as “destruction of a valuable piece of land” due to its impact on the wetlands. She also questioned the intended purpose and the need for three crossings. Mr. Glaude countered that the activity would not destroy the land.

First Selectman Cahill stated his opposition to reducing the drive from 12 feet to 8, noting his concern with safety based on his extensive experience with farm equipment. He advocated for no less than 10 foot widths on the crossings.

Mr. Valente stated that the reduction from 12 to 8 feet complied with the request of the IWWA, but that the applicant could consider a reduction to 10 feet. He reviewed the rationale and effectiveness of the various mitigations for the existing plan.

Mr. Glaude stated that the three crossings access the open area as well as the existing trail system and scenic overviews of the river. He confirmed that only employees will be driving the vehicles used on the trails and crossings, adding that the drive is 10 feet wide with the shoulders, and that wooden guard rails will also be installed. First Selectman Cahill stated that pedestrian safety was his primary concern. Mr. Glaude and Mr. Valente will continue to discuss this issue.

Vice-Chairman Witkowski invited Agency members to comment.

Chairman Bonneksen expressed her appreciation for everyone’s work and stated that the continuance of the hearing next month will allow for further discussion points. Vice-Chairman Witkowski also thanked everyone for their efforts, adding that the many issues raised were substantially addressed. Glen Newcombe expressed his satisfaction with the improvements. Stan Crawford and Pat Cascio agreed with First Selectman Cahill with respect to widening the crossings to 10 feet.

Motion: Martin Mlyniec, seconded by Glen Newcombe, to continue the Public Hearing to the next Regular Meeting of the IWWA on June 9, 2020. Motion carried unanimously.

The Public Hearing closed at 8:07 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Witkowski called the Regular Meeting to order at 8:10 p.m.

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Present for the Board: Heather Bonneksen, Chairman; Peter Witkowski, Vice-Chairman; Martin Mlyniec; Stan Crawford; Glen Newcombe; Pat Cascio

Absent: Muriel Miller

Staff and Others Present: John Valente, WEO; Dayna McDermott-Arriola, Recording Secretary

Item 1: Audience for Citizens: none.

Item 2: Additions to the Agenda: none.

Item 3: Old Business:

Item 1: WP0120-01: Stonehurst at Hampton Valley, LLC, Craig Gates, Applicant; 119 Providence Tpke, Hampton, Ct. Proposed Activity: To access an area for wedding photographs and other wedding venues, crossing of three intermittent watercourses and approximately 3900 square feet (in total) of wetlands, location 1/3 mile south on Drain Street just past the Little River and adjacent to power lines.

No further discussion.

Item 5: New Business: none.

Item 6: No Permit Necessary: none.

Item 7: WEO Report

7.1 Monthly Report: John Valente updated members on the progress of the Solar Panel Field, stating that he has visited the site twice in the last two months and that the number of retention basins has been increased. He also stated that two applications are anticipated: the development of a residential property that includes a wetlands crossing for the driveway; and the construction of a pond.

7.2 Duly Authorized Agent Report: none.

Item 8: Communications: none.

Item 9: Approval of Minutes – March 3, 2020

Motion: Martin Mlyniec, seconded by Glen Newcombe, to approve the March 3, 2020 Minutes of the Public Hearing and the Regular Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Item 10. Discuss and Act on Any Other Business: none.

Item 11. Audience for Citizens: none.

Item 12. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Agency, Vice-Chairman Witkowski adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dayna McDermott-Arriola
Recording Secretary

It was noted after the close of the Public Hearing that the Motion on the Continuance of the Public Hearing erroneously identified June 9 as the next Regular Meeting date; the next Regular Meeting date, scheduled for the second Tuesday of the month, is June 2, 2020.