

**GLASTONBURY CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
(INLAND WETLANDS & WATERCOURSES AGENCY)  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022**

The Glastonbury Conservation Commission (Inlands Wetlands & Watercourses Agency), along with Ms. Suzanne Simone, Environmental Planner, in attendance held a Meeting via ZOOM video conferencing.

**ROLL CALL**

**Commission Members-Present**

Frank Kaputa, Chairman  
Mark Temple, Vice-Chairman  
Kim McClain, Secretary  
Brian Davis  
Anna Gault Galjan

**Commission Members – Excused**

James Parry  
William Shea

Chairman Kaputa called the meeting to order at 6:31 P.M. and explained the public meeting process to the applicants and members of the public.

**I. INFORMAL DISCUSSION**

**Proposed building addition, parking lot expansion and reconfigured parking at St. Paul Church – 2533-2577 Main Street and Assessor’s Lot W-38A Main Street properties – in areas that encroach upon inland wetlands and upland review areas – Town Center Zone – Megson, Heagle & Friend, C.E. & L.S., LLC – Davison Environmental, consultants – Alter & Pearson, LLC**

Attorney Meghan Hope of Alter & Pearson, LLC stated that the proposal is for a 2-story building addition, parking lot expansion and reconfiguration. She reviewed her narrative, summarizing the history of the Commission’s review of this project. The project is within the Town Center, the Town Center Village Overlay and the Flood Zones. The wetlands area was indicated. Ms. Hope explained that Mr. Eric Davison, Certified Wetland Scientist completed a vernal pool study and determined that there are no vernal pools on the site. Ms. Hope pointed out the existing cell phone tower and noted that they explored the possibility of creating a parking circle around the cell phone tower; the Town Plan and Zoning Commission (TPZ) did not like the idea. She explained that initially the project was proposed in 2 phases and TPZ did not approve. The TPZ asked for everything to be built and permitted at the same time, including the parking requirements. Ms. Hope explained that the Architectural and Site Design Review Committee (ASDRC) did not want the Knights of Columbus building taken down. Ms. Hope pointed out the invasive Japanese knotweed and the ponded area.

Ms. Hope explained that the stormwater runoff will flow into the proposed rain garden and stormwater basin to allow for treatment. She noted that currently there is no treatment on site for the runoff. Ms. Hope said that they plan to add shade trees. She noted that currently there are no shade trees and the parking area consists of all blacktop and parking spaces. Ms. Hope said that Mr. Friend has added islands to the design plans. Ms. Hope noted that they would mitigate the impact of paving over the wetland area by enhancing the area and plantings. She explained that they would address the invasive Japanese knotweed. Ms. Hope explained that Mr. Friend found areas in the back of the church that will be turned into green space. Ms. Hope directed the Commission to the plans and noted that the area around Main Street will be reconfigured. She reiterated that they went before the ASDRC and were told that the Knights of Columbus building could not be demolished. Ms. Hope explained that they propose 283 parking spots and the Building-Zone Regulations require 288 parking spots. She stated that they plan to request a 2% parking waiver from the TPZ. Ms. Hope explained that Mr. Friend had reconfigured the plans to add more parking spaces. She noted that they have submitted more finely-tuned building plans from the architect. The proposed conservation easement measuring approximately 1.2 acres was indicated. Ms. Hope explained that she drafted the conservation easement agreement which allows the applicant to go into the easement to maintain the wetland enhancement area and to eradicate the Japanese knotweed.

Mr. Mark Friend of Megson, Heagle & Friend, C.E. & L.S., LLC began reading Mr. Davison's wetland soil report. Mr. Friend stated that the report indicates no presence of vernal pools and added that it is unequivocally firm based on 2 breeding seasons. Mr. Friend said that the function and value of the wetlands have been disturbed and added that a significant amount of Japanese knotweed is growing in the site. He explained that the proposed mitigation plan and stormwater management system will have little negative impact on the wetland area due to the current degraded conditions. Mr. Friend stated that they looked extensively at the soils in the area and added that he delineated the soils in 2017. He said that there were 5 FAA towers on-site at one point, which were interconnected and resulted in underground disturbance. Mr. Friend pointed out that the Town has two sewer mains that also traverse the site. Mr. Friend said that all this activity has resulted in poor soils and added that the remnant wetland soils that remain are in the Walpole series. Mr. Friend noted that this Commission had requested for a peer review of the wetland delineation. He explained that Mr. Richard Snarski, Soil Scientist and Professional Wetland Scientist, reviewed the wetland delineation in July 2019. Mr. Friend noted that Mr. Mocko was there and they had monitored the groundwater conditions and ended up modifying the original delineation. Mr. Friend noted that this information has been included in the material submission. He explained that they propose to put in a stormwater management system that incorporates best management practices and utilizes low impact techniques. Mr. Friend noted that the proposed drainage system is not going to change much. He explained that they will be removing pavement and adding pavement and noted that he expects the amount of impervious coverage to be about the same as in the last report.

Mr. Friend stated that they propose to put in a 6-foot-wide rain garden. He pointed out a band of vegetation on the easterly side of the building and explained that the area will pick up some of the runoff. Mr. Friend said that the stormwater management system will treat about 93 percent of the runoff. He noted that currently there is no stormwater treatment on site. Mr. Friend

explained that they have incorporated catch basins into the design plans and reiterated that 93 percent of the runoff will be treated. He stated that the design will meet the MS4 requirements. Mr. Friend noted that because this is an existing site and it will retain 50 percent of the water quality for the entire site, it meets the standards of the MS4 requirements. He said that the Town Engineering Department reviewed the plans in 2021 and approved the stormwater system with very minor modifications. Mr. Friend explained that the stormwater plans they will submit will be virtually identical to what was already submitted.

Mr. Friend stated that they propose a conservation easement measuring approximately 1.24 acres to mitigate the wetland disturbances. He noted that they can trim down the access drive by 6 feet which will allow sheet flow to the west. Mr. Friend pointed out the stormwater management basin and explained that the wet bottom is conducive to create wetland conditions. He noted that large canopy shade trees will be added in the parking area. Ms. Hope said that they have a lighting plan which will match the existing light posts. She explained that they will be 16 feet high and added that they are dark sky compliant fixtures. Ms. Hope stated that the plant list was created a few years ago and they are open to include more native plants and pollinators. She noted that she leaves this up to the Commission. Ms. Hope said that they spoke to the architect about solar and geothermal energy and it was determined these features would not be pursued. She explained that geothermal energy will not have the return that will sustain the upfront cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Ms. Hope said that geothermal energy is used more in schools and in places where there is continuous use throughout the day. She noted that the architect does not see this fitting into the plans.

Ms. Hope said that bike racks are proposed for the site. Some of the bike racks will be in the front and some will be in the back. Ms. Hope noted that there are two access points. The main entrance point is on Main Street. Ms. Hope stated that they will put in the infrastructure for EV charging stations. She noted that they are looking for feedback and can answer questions. She said that any questions for Mr. Davison can be passed along.

Chairman Kaputa noted that he is disappointed that the request to pave over wetlands is coming to the Commission for the fifth time. He remarked that, otherwise, it is a fine plan with an excellent plant list. Mr. Kaputa noted that the woody trees and shrub selections are the best they have seen. He pointed out that Mr. Davison's report was done for one season and not two. Mr. Kaputa remarked that there are things that can be done in order to avoid paving over the wetlands which only results in a loss of 10 parking spots. He remarked that he thinks it is possible. He asked Ms. Hope about the waiver that was granted for Eric Square. Ms. Hope stated it was a 30 percent waiver. Mr. Kaputa noted that a waiver of less than 10 percent would be needed in order to avoid paving over the wetlands.

Vice-Chairman Temple asked what the plans would look like if the wetlands were not paved over. He asked Ms. Hope and Mr. Friend to check with the Town Engineering Department to see if they could eliminate some of the driveway from the southerly end, which may result in parking spots. Mr. Kaputa asked if the number of parking spots can be reduced. He noted that he understands that these wetlands are degraded and there are disturbances. Mr. Kaputa explained that any disturbances this Commission has approved were small and temporary. He

noted that this application is a radical departure from what they have approved before. Mr. Kaputa stated that, legally, this Commission has to be consistent. He remarked that he would like to see the plans work and added that houses of worship are great assets. Mr. Kaputa said that, otherwise, it is a great plan. Secretary McClain stated that she agrees with the Chairman. She noted that precedent is something to keep in mind. Ms. McClain asked about the parking count on an average Sunday and not a holiday. Ms. Hope explained that there is a shortage of parking and added that the congregation has expanded since COVID. Ms. McClain asked how many spots will be added. Ms. Hope said that currently there are 153 spots, which will increase to 283 spots. Ms. McClain noted that it seems like an enormous leap. She asked if it was feasible to park on grass pavers. Mr. Friend said that Father Mark would not agree to that and added that it poses a risk to people in high heels twisting their ankles. He explained that it is problematic with a high level of maintenance.

Commissioner Davis said that he understands it is a balancing act and asked the applicants if they can find another 10 spaces. Mr. Kaputa asked Ms. Hope when the large addition would be used. Ms. Hope explained that it would be used for wedding receptions and also rented out for non-church related events, like a retirement party. She noted that there will be a commercial kitchen on-site to provide catering for events. Mr. Kaputa noted that it seems that the addition would not be used at the same time as a mass or church service. He remarked that a wedding would not be at 10:00 am in the morning. Ms. Hope stated that the zoning regulations require applicants to assume that the whole site is in use. Mr. Kaputa noted that this point can be used to argue for a waiver. Mr. Davis agreed and noted that the overlapping would be rare. He suggested the consideration of occasional parking across the street at the bank parking lot. He explained that it is unlikely for the bank to be open during the same times an event is scheduled. Mr. Davis noted that many of those bank spots are closer than the rear spots of the church property. Ms. Hope explained that the sharing of uses is not addressed in the Glastonbury regulations. She explained that TPZ would still have to grant the waiver and added that they may not have the votes to get a waiver.

Mr. Kaputa asked if the TPZ membership has changed. Ms. Hope said that there is one new alternate. Ms. McClain questioned the projected need for the new parking, as the church service would not be conducted at the same time as an event. Mr. Kaputa stated that he believes there is a strong argument for a waiver. Mr. Davis noted that a statement from the Commission can serve as justification. Several Commissioners expressed agreement. Mr. Temple asked if it is possible to come back with a design plan that does not pave over the wetlands. He asked the applicants to discuss the options with the Town Engineer. Mr. Temple reiterated that the Commission would like to see an alternative design that meets the approval of the Engineering Department.

Mr. Temple suggested a formalized drop-off area for the elderly parishioners. He explained that he has seen seniors get out of vans and others trying to navigate the area, which can be chaotic and dangerous. Mr. Temple remarked that he is fearful an elderly parishioner might get run over. He asked the applicants to give it some thought and reiterated that the Commission would like to see an alternative plan that does not pave over the wetlands. Mr. Temple asked the applicants to discuss the logistics with the Town Engineering Department. Ms. Hope asked if

there was any amount or zero amount of area that the Commission feels comfortable paving. Mr. Kaputa explained that, historically, the Commission has only approved small or temporary wetlands disturbances. He noted that they do not approve filling in the wetlands. Mr. Kaputa reiterated that, legally, the Commission must be consistent. He explained that an environmental lawyer informed him that the Commission may be liable. Mr. Kaputa remarked that other applicants may request to pave over wetlands and added that he is in favor of zero paving of the wetlands.

Ms. Hope asked the Commission if they would allow the elimination of some of the shade trees. Ms. McClain replied no and explained that it would be a sea of blacktop. She added that it is not sustainable and they have to keep in mind climate change. Commissioner Gault Galjan asked how many parking spots would result from removing a shade tree. Mr. Friend replied about 2. Ms. McClain suggested solar canopies to be incorporated in the plans. Mr. Temple asked if there were any thoughts about moving the 3-bay garage. Mr. Friend and Ms. Hope responded that the church uses the garage. Mr. Temple stated that the shade trees should be kept on the plans. Mr. Kaputa remarked that it is good to discuss the issues even if there is no agreement. Mr. Temple recalled that, in the past, the Commission approved a removal of a wetland. Mr. Kaputa explained that the wetland was manmade and the area was turned to grass. Mr. Temple remarked that, in this situation, a sewer main runs through the wetlands and added that there is some give and take. He noted that this is a great plan that would tremendously enhance the water quality.

Ms. Gault Galjan asked if there is an overall net positive that will result from the development. She asked if there was any attempt to return part of the wetland to a functioning wetland. Ms. Gault Galjan noted that she is not convinced that the addition is for the parishioners and added that it looks like the purpose is to generate income. Mr. Kaputa noted that Ms. Gault Galjan raised good points and added that he does not think they can always look at the net gain. Ms. McClain noted that 80 percent of the week the church is empty, adding that it is not like Stop & Shop. Ms. McClain noted that this plan is better than what they saw before in terms of mitigating the heat gain from the parking area. She suggested that the applicants obtain a waiver and added that it is the most practical and responsible thing for the community. Mr. Davis noted that granting a waiver has very little downside. The Commissioners discussed parishioners having to cross the street. Ms. Hope noted that St. James Episcopal Church is across the street and both churches have services at the same time. She explained that they had spoken to TD Bank, CVS and other neighboring properties and were unable to get anyone to sell them an easement. Mr. Temple suggested for the applicants to obtain a parking waiver. Ms. Hope said that she thinks she can get a small waiver. She explained that a TPZ commissioner told her that, after the Eric Square waiver, they would not grant waivers again. Several Commissioners pointed out that the church has a significantly different use than Eric Square. Mr. Temple noted that the vegetative strip might result in 10 parallel parking spots. He remarked that, once the church addition and parking are built, St. Dunstan's Church might close.

Mr. Kaputa noted that it is very unlikely for church service and an event rented out by the center to occur at the same time. Mr. Temple reiterated that the applicants should come back with a redesign after discussions with the Town Engineering Department. Mr. Friend said that they will

talk to the Engineering Department. He noted that the regulations allow for some compact spaces which will result in some gain. Ms. Hope noted that she is not sure if TPZ will allow this. Ms. McClain feels the regulations are out of date. Mr. Temple noted that Mr. Kaputa and Ms. McClain made solid points about when the space would be used. He explained that more people will attend service on high holy days and added that the parking lot will not be full during regular Sunday service. Mr. Davis noted that the parking lot must be designed to allow people to turn around if the parking lot is full. Mr. Friend stated that, in the current plans, the parking area is 12 feet wide with a one-way drive out.

Mr. Kaputa noted that there are two properties south of the church. Ms. Hope explained that it is one lot and the land is leased to the bank. Mr. Kaputa said that GIS shows two properties. Ms. Hope explained that they tried to buy land and were not able to get a neighboring property owner to sell it. The Commissioners discussed the possibility of the applicants purchasing land from the former gas station south of the church. Several Commissioners mentioned that they had seen a for sale sign. Mr. Davis noted that the ASDRC would not approve parking on that corner. The Commissioners agreed that the best solution is for the applicants to obtain a parking waiver and to submit new plans based on discussions with the Town Engineering Department.

Mr. Davis reiterated that the Commission should create a statement that would help secure a parking waiver. He also suggested for one of the Commissioners to attend the relevant TPZ meeting. Ms. Simone noted that the minutes should be included with the submission to TPZ. Ms. Hope said that this Commission has made recommendations, some of which were overridden by TPZ. Ms. Hope said that it might be more impactful if a Commissioner was present at the TPZ meeting. Mr. Kaputa asked how the process works. Ms. Hope explained that TPZ has informal subcommittee meetings and the issue can be brought up then. She noted that the TPZ subcommittee meets up to twice a month, on Wednesday mornings. Mr. Kaputa asked Mr. Friend to come up with a design. He remarked that a 10 percent waiver might be doable if Mr. Friend comes up with a different plan. Mr. Temple noted that there could be some compromise on the slope and added that it does not have to be 2:1. Mr. Kaputa stated that he is willing to discuss the issue.

Ms. McClain thanked the applicants for including EV charging stations in the plans. She remarked that she would still like to see solar canopies and added that she does not agree with the argument that solar is too expensive and will not work in the building. Ms. Hope said that she can ask the architect for more details. Mr. Davis brought up the issue regarding the battery storage and explained that the building is used intermittently and not on a daily basis. Mr. Kaputa remarked that he is not sure he agrees with that and added that it does not matter if the church is empty or full. Ms. McClain noted that the lighting plan is missing from the application materials she received. She asked the applicants if they can include it for the next meeting. Ms. Gault Galjan noted that she has not seen a commitment to native plants. She remarked that she will study the plant list and asked the applicants to consider putting in native grassland, which would do a better job on vertical slopes. Ms. Gault Galjan asked who would maintain the rain garden. Ms. Hope explained that the church would maintain it and added that they have included a 3-year maintenance plan that also addresses the Japanese knotweed. The Commission thanked the applicants for their presentation.

## **II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Regular Meeting of September 1, 2022**

The minutes were accepted as presented, 4-0-1, with Ms. McClain choosing to abstain because she was not at the meeting.

## **III. COMMENTS BY CITIZENS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS – NONE**

## **IV. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **1. Chairman's Report - NONE**

### **2. Environmental Planner's Report**

Ms. Simone updated the Commissioners on the beaver activity in the Glen Lochen area. She explained that some of the birch trees have been chewed down in a matter of days. Ms. Simone noted that a maple tree was also downed. She explained that the water level appears fine and there are no other issues. Ms. Simone asked the Commission members if they had any insight to share on how landscape damage from beavers has been previously addressed. She noted that she will continue to monitor the situation and provide updates. She stated that she has looked at previous minutes and found that the Commission has previously discussed beaver activity resulting in damage to buildings and pipes. Ms. Simone noted that there has been a lot of damage to mature trees in just a matter of days and reiterated that she will keep the Commission posted.

With no other business to discuss, Chairman Kaputa adjourned the meeting at 8:09 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Nadya Yuskaev*

Nadya Yuskaev  
Recording Secretary