

## MEMORANDUM

To: Town Plan & Zoning Commission

From: Suzanne Simone, Environmental Planner



Date: September 22, 2022

Re: Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency Informal Review for parking lot expansion and reconfiguration and new building addition at The Community of Saints Isidore and Maria at St. Paul Church, Main Street.

At the September 15, 2022 meeting of the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency (meeting minutes attached) the proposed parking lot expansion and reconfiguration and new building addition at The Community of Saints Isidore and Maria at St. Paul Church was discussed.

The plan (dated August 1, 2022) proposes the filling and paving of 5,500 square feet of wetland soils in order to accommodate parking lot expansion in the western portion of the property. The proposed permanent loss of this wetland area did not receive support from the Agency and the applicant was advised to reconfigure the proposed parking lot expansion to avoid the filling and permanent loss of any wetland area.

**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.

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

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

## **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*

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Recording Secretary