MEETING MINUTES
ASHLAND CONSERVATION COMMISSION
February 24, 2020

Present:  Cathy Van Lancker (Acting Chair)
Carl Hakansson
K.G. Narayana
Greg Wands
Gabriel Toledo

Absent:  Gene Crouch (Chair)
William Moulton (Vice Chair)
Maeghan Dos Anjos (Agent)

Call to order:  7:05 P.M.

7:06  95-849, Extension Request, Town of Ashland, River Walk trail project
Discussion, Town of Ashland, Pine Hill Road, Mill Pond Improvements

Jen Ball (Assistant Town Manager) handed the Commission two draft engineering plans
showing the design for improvements to Mill Pond park. She explained that the draft
engineering plans are to be used for the construction bidding process in May of this year that
cover unfinished elements of the Sudbury River walk project within Mill Pond Park, as well as
new work for Park restoration. Under the existing extended Order of Conditions for the
Sudbury River Walk project, the two timber bridge approaches, boat launch, and parking lot
still need to be completed. New work to the park (in need of permitting) include installation of
landscape planting and stone dust walkways. Ms. Ball described that bidding for the 6.5 to 7-
million-dollar Downtown Streetscape project could include all remaining work on the Sudbury
River Walk project; and new Mill Pond revitalization work for the purpose of better
construction pricing as a single package. Ms. Ball’s question to the Commission was the
following: Could the proposed landscape plantings and stone dust walkways at Mill Pond Park
be permitted within the River Walk projects Order of Conditions through an amendment; or
should there be a new Notice of Intent filing. The Commission agreed that an amended Order
of Conditions for the Sudbury River Walk Project was appropriate for permitting the additional
revitalization work at Mill Pond park.

Ms. Ball also made a request to the Commission. She asked for a two-year extension to the
pending 95-849 Amended Order of Conditions (Sudbury River project) in order to allow for
enough time to complete all the work at Mill Pond Park. After some discussion, it was agreed
that the hearing will remain open to the next meeting (March 23rd) for the purpose of reviewing
the proposed new work in greater detail with the Town’s consultant (BSC Group).

Mr. Narayana made a motion, seconded by Mr. Toledo to continue the hearing to March 23rd.
Motion passed 5-0-0.

7:25  NOI, Town Forest Committee, 0 Oak Street, trail maintenance and invasive
species
Rob St Germain (64 Winter Street) and Mike Jones (665 Main Street) from the Ashland Town
Forest Committee presented an improvement project within the northwestern portion of the
Town Forest that consists of the following work: construction of a rain garden and trail, three
bog bridges, one boardwalk, a new connector trail, and bridge for a stream crossing. Work
within the Notice of Intent are separated into 6 locations, referred to as locations A through E.
Mr. St Germain spoke of the need to improve the hydrological conditions within the northern
Town Forest access point between the Oak Street apartment complex (Location B).

Apparently, the construction of the Oak street apartments 50+ years ago disrupted the
hydrology in the area, causing excessive ponding and runoff which poses a danger to public
safety near the forest entrance. Mr. St Germain described how construction of a 3,500 sq./ft
rain garden within a pre-existing swale will mitigate the poor drainage by increasing ground
infiltration, as well as provide a Town owned rain garden example to the public. Spoils from
the excavation will be used to form a dyke trail for better access from that entrance to the town
forest trails. Mr. Jones, a retired landscape architect, reviewed the sketches of the rain garden
and plantings with the Commission. Also discussed were the sources of funding for rain
garden construction, monies will be used form the Storm Water fund for construction and new
plantings and will be funded through the CPC. The Ashland DPW plans to perform the
construction for the rain garden this spring and volunteers from the Appalachian Mountain
Club and the Bay Circuit trail Alliance will build the bridges with grant money from REI Inc.
Mr. St Germain and Mr. Jones reviewed the sketches of the various bridges as well as materials
and construction methods to the satisfaction of the Commission. Mr. St Germain spoke to how
this new work ties into trail improvements performed from the previous year. Since portions
of the proposed work will occur within 25-foot-do-not-disturb zones of wetland resource areas,
the Commission agreed that the proposed work meets the standard of an Ashland Wetlands
Bylaw waiver because the project preserves and enhances wetland interests.

Mr. St Germain spoke about plans to reduce invasive plant species within the town forest, with
emphasis on combating Asian bittersweet, Japanese barberry and Japanese knotweed. With a
$1,300 from the Sudbury Valley Trustees, the Town Forest Committee plans to hire students to
mechanically remove invasives through pulling and mowing, starting in June of this year. For
the more difficult Japanese knotweed, two years of mowing will occur, class 3 herbicides (root
growth inhibitors) will be applied by injection to the stem systems. Since the application of
herbicides are restricted for use on Town property, the Forest Committee has sought a waiver
from the Ashland Board of Health. Significant amounts of invasives occur within wetland
resource areas and herbicides will be applied by a licensed professional (LP). After discussion,
The Commission was satisfied with the actions and project phasing for the Notice of Intent.

A motion was made by Mr. Narayana to close the hearing and seconded by Mr. Toledo.
Motion carried 5-0-0.

7:30  95-878, Kelly Engineering Group, Request for Extension, Cirrus Road, and
Detention

Dave Mackwell, representing Kelly Engineering Group, came before the Commission seeking
a one-year extension to the 95-878 Order of Conditions at the Cirrus apartments on Cirrus
Road, near the Ashland MBTA station. Mr. Hakansson opened the discussion by summarizing
the failures of the drainage system on that site during apartment construction in 2017. Mr. Mackwell agreed that the summary was accurate and then continued with a description of the corrective work that has occurred since. The large detention pond has been stabilized by bringing the structure up to grade with sand and stone, as well as cleaning out the bottom of excessive silt. Mr. Mackwell stated that the removal of the silt makes the pond drain much better and now functions as it is supposed to, fully draining stormwater within a three-day period. A one-year extension was granted last year; however, Mr. Mackwell feels that current extension will not allow for enough time for further stabilization with vegetative regrowth. Another extension to the Order of Conditions should allow enough time for the new vegetation to establish. Mr. Mackwell confirmed to Mr. Hakansson that Ms. Dos Anjos has been out to the site to inspect the new work.

Mr. Narayana made a motion to close the hearing, seconded by Mr. Wands. Motion carried 5-0-0. Mr. Toledo made a motion to grant an additional one-year extension to the Order of Conditions, seconded by Mr. Narayana. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Other Business:

Review meeting minutes from 2/24/2020

Mr. Narayana made a motion to table the 2/24/2020 meeting minutes and review them at the next meeting on 3/23/2020. Motion was seconded by Mr. Toledo. Motion carried 5-0-0.

Review Template Standard Conditions for an Order of Conditions
To be reviewed when Conservation Agent is present

Review Template Checklist for Stormwater Management Permit Application
To be reviewed when Conservation Agent is present

Member Prerogative:

Mr. Hakansson brought out the topic of re-occurring dog issues in Warren Woods. He recounted a recent incident where he witnessed a large barking dog chasing multiple deer out of Rocky’s field into the Eliot St field. The off-leash dog was around 200 yards away from the owner and completely out of control. There was discussion among the Commission about the frequent problems with irresponsible dog waste management as well as the poor compliance and attitudes towards the “all dogs must be leashed” rule in Warren Woods. Also discussed was the fact that the Warren Woods Conservation Restriction (CR) is held by Mass Audubon and managing the property as a wildlife refuge is a CR priority. With the coming of spring, Mr. Hakansson proposed protecting Warren Woods wildlife by banning dogs for the birthing season of animals. The measure would consist of closing the parking lot gate with a chain and posting signage explaining why dogs are temporarily not allowed, starting April first.

Mr. Hakansson made a motion to give the Land Stewardship Committee the authority to restrict dogs when needed for the birthing season of animals in Warren Woods. Mr. Toledo seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0-0.
Citizens Participation

Mr. St Germain returned to the meeting to speak regarding the region wide problem with invasive plant species. He feels as though there are bureaucratic blocks that prevent effective invasive species management on Town lands and other conservation properties especially when invasives occur in wetlands. He seeks to find “middle-ground” or “lowering the barrier” for allowing, with limits, activities in reducing invasives. Mr. St Germain spoke to his involvement with the Sudbury Valley Trustee’s Collaborative Invasive Species Management Association (CISMA) and how he was authorized by the Town Forest Committee to sign a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding to address the problems of invasives in a greater regional context. Mr. St Germain mentioned that all larger land trusts are signatory to this memorandum and gauged the Commissions interest in involvement with CISMA as well.

Mr. St Germain also presented an initiative of holding a public forum with speakers, and creating a pamphlet, with the goal of developing invasive species management policies for Town land and other conservation properties. The Commission was supportive of these ideas and agreed that further investigation was warranted.

8:37 Adjournment

Mr. Narayana made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Toledo. Motion passed 5-0-0.

Documents Reviewed by the Conservation Commission on 3/9/2020

- Plan entitled Ashland Downtown Streetscape Improvements: Landscape Plan, sheet 1 of 7
- Plan entitled Ashland Downtown Streetscape Improvements: Construction Plan, sheet 1 of 7
- Current drainage map of Cirrus Apartments for 95-878 OOC extension request