

**COVENTRY INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY
MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021**

By: Mathieu

Time: 7:02 p.m.

Place: Virtual

1. ROLL CALL:

		PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	Martin Briggs	X	
	Suzanne Choate	X	
	Patricia Laramee		X
	Lori Mathieu, Chairperson	X	
	Thomas Woolf, Vice Chairman	X	
ALTERNATE MEMBERS:	Barbara Pare	X	
	Mike Powers	X	
STAFF:	Todd Penney, Town Engineer/Wetlands Agent	X	
STAFF:	Mindy Gosselin, Wetlands Agent Assistant	X	

Powers was seated for Laramee.

2. AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS (2-minute time limit):

No one was present to speak.

3. OLD BUSINESS:

A. 20-51W – South Street Reconstruction and Pedestrian Improvements – Applicant: Town of Coventry; Owner: Same; Agent: Todd Penney – South Street Reconstructions and Pedestrian Improvements.

Eric Davidson, Soil Scientist, and Ken Radziwon, BL Companies, were present.

Penney said the Members should have a full set of 50% design plans. Penney said details get ironed out once the project is past the 50% design stage. RW-1, RW-2 are the sheets that pertain to the wetlands and the upland review area. Some wetlands impacts have been reduced. Penney said in 2017 the Town initiated this project for roadway and pedestrian improvements with a permit application but it died due to lack of funding. The project starts

at the Daly Road round-about and ends just past the curb cut at the Nathan Hale Homestead. Public Works did put on a shim coat to facilitate snow plowing. There was significant rutting to the depth of six inches. The Town applied for and received a LOTCIP grant with funding administered through CRCOG. The road and swale will be improved and a sidewalk will be added. The pedestrian connectivity from South Street to the Homestead will facilitate walking access to the Farmer's Market in the summer, the historic museum, and the vast trails that are in the forest. John Ianni, Soil Scientist, did the wetlands flagging; he is now retired.

Eric Davidson took over presenting the project to speak about the wetlands. The wetlands flagging was recertified. Davidson wrote a report, dated December 13, 2020, of his findings. There are two types of wetlands in the project limits – native forested wetlands (shown as green on the plans) on the upslope side of the road. Water collects and discharge to the south side of the road into the large headland wetlands. Bordering each side are roadside drainage ditches that run alongside the road. These roadside wetlands extends passed the Fife And Drum property and where manmade with machinery. They are typically wet because the cut was made to the depth of the ground water. The ditches transport road runoff into the large wetlands complex. There is nothing of significant value about these wetlands. The large wetlands is intact and of high quality. The hydrology is saturation with classic shallow groundwater sheet flow. The initial plan design impacted 5,600 sq. feet of wetlands, which is a significant amount. It also creates a major issue by pushing it into another level of permitting through the Army Corps of Engineers. One goal of the project is to keep wetlands impact below the level, a 5,000 sq. feet threshold, requiring Army Corps of Engineers involvement. Permitting through the Army Corps of Engineers is lengthy and costly that we want to avoid.

Therefore, Mr. Davidson made recommendations to get below the impact threshold. The drainage ditch wetlands don't have a lot of function. Those will be preserved to capture the storm water runoff. Davidson's recommendation focus minimizing impact on the main, highly functioning wetlands. Comments include treating the open drainage swale as a linear rain garden using check dams to slow the flow and promote pollutant removal. They become a storm water treatment feature that might function better than the current roadside ditches that are not treating water before discharge into the large wetlands. The swales will be designed to control peak flow so there is not stream bank erosion. Where the swale has an inlet to the culvert a 3-side box will be placed to help reduce downstream scour. Culvert generally increase flow velocity and creates scour. Because the headwater wetlands complex drains to the Skungamaug River the recommendation is to do this project in the low flow period, generally July and August, with the appropriate erosion and sedimentation controls.

Ken Radziwon, Registered Engineer, presented next. Mr. Radziwon has worked with Penney and Davidson to create these plans. They have been in communication with the people that run the Homestead and they like and are on board with the design. The rutting in the road is due to subbase and asphalt failures. The asphalt will be ground up, reclaimed, and put back in place. This will create a nice subbase for a new overlay of pavement that will have a 20+ year life. The road footprint will remain as it is now. A wood guideline will be installed near the Homestead where there are currently wooden posts. The sidewalk will be moved to the east where an intermittent watercourse exists. The stonewalls will be cleared and grubbed to bring them back to pristine condition. A retaining wall with fencing will be used for the sidewalk as it passes over the top of the wetlands. A grass lined swale will be between the sidewalk and the road with domed manholes every 100' to collect water. This

will be a gentle swale as opposed to the 2' deep ditch. During design we have been mindful of the aesthetics of this scenic corridor.

Penney said a reconnaissance survey for the State archeologist will be taking place in the next couple of months. This will involve digging pits every 50' or so to be able to collect any 17th-18th century dumping artifacts.

Radziwon said the sidewalk will have a gravel resin surface. This is brown pea stone epoxied together to give it a vintage feel through the corridor. The boulder will be maintained to keep the feel of what is out there now. The shallow swale will be the snow shelf. Overall, the plan opens the sight lines and will enhance the safety of the corridor.

Penney said the impact table shows a total of 4,910 sq. feet of permanent impact; 2,880 sq. feet of that is the swale wetlands. Impact was reduced by 150 sq. feet from a previous design. This area has been occupied by our settlers for a long time and they influenced the road network. The IWA determined this project would have significant impact; 4,900 sq. feet is significant. The consideration of the most prudent and feasible alternatives is where Mr. Davidson's comments apply. The Council agrees that the project is not changing the feel of this historic corridor that has a scenic road designation. The pedestrian corridor was reviewed by the Northcentral Conservation District; they feel the feasible and prudent course would be to put the sidewalk on the other side of the road. But we all know South Street is an old, main road in town with significant traffic volume. Measuring pedestrian safety and the intent to bring walkers to the Homestead having the sidewalk on this side of the road facilitates both. Otherwise, we would have to entertain a pedestrian crossing. The best spot for that has terrible sight lines and people would not want to try to cross there. Also, the historic stonewall would be impacted if the sidewalk was put on the other side of the road to bring the sidewalk to the driveway for the field parking where a better sight line is. The DPW does not maintain the roadside ditch. With the grass swale they could mow the area in the spring and fall each year.

Briggs says the plan lays out the proposed improvements nicely. He uses the Nathan Hale area weekly. This would be improving connectivity such as in the Village area. It will be a net benefit. Mathieu said in general she sees this as an improvement. The roadway has interfered with the natural wetlands. These improvements are needed for safety. We see this with a lot of roadways with wetlands being manipulated with. Mathieu likes the roadway swale. Choate feels the alternative of having the sidewalk on the other side is not feasible and prudent due to safety. Choate does think this project is a net positive with the design to mitigate the wetlands disturbance. She is concerned about people parking on the grass swale; they park in the ditch now. Mr. Radziwon said the No Parking signs will remain as a measure to preclude people from parking here. It is an enforcement issue if people are parking there. The police patrol the area during high traffic times; the No Parking signs are up to the Sprague House.

Choate asked about the mitigation for the net loss of ~2,000 sq. feet. Penney said the design team talked about expanding the westerly wetlands by taking away the upland material and put some of that to make the westerly wetlands larger. That may get 500-800 sq. feet back. Choate said shouldn't be concerned about getting rid of a function we should be returning function. Penney said not every project warrants a one-to-one compensation.

Mathieu said we have heard that the roadside swale will be constructed to increase its

function. The ditch does not have any function as is. Water runs off and there is no water quality treatment to it. The function is being increased tremendously with water quality treatment as long as it is maintained. It is going to be a tremendous improvement. She is not a fan of expanding wetlands. Mathieu sees incredible improvement here given what we have heard.

Penney said there will be no road curbing to maintain the historic, scenic look. Davidson's agrees with the thought of not creating wetlands for the sake of numbers. The proposed vegetated swale will work better than the ditch. The margins of the wetlands are of lower value because of the road shoulder. Cleaning of the domed drains and the check dams will be a maintenance item for the DPW.

Powers said good and creating thought has been had to solve the problems of the road being in bad shape, improving the drainage swale, and improves the environmental value of what we get from it. The check dams help to settle out suspended particles. He does not see it impacting negatively with the forested wetlands.

Pare said this is an amazing project to improve the area. The plan is well thought out and it will be beautiful.

Mathieu said she has the same thought process as Powers. The overall view is improving the function as opposed to the ditch. The project is mindful of the roadway drainage and the swale will be an improvement. Mathieu said maintenance of this beautiful swale is going to be key to its function. For five years it will look beautiful. Then plows will be plowing over it and cars driving over it. She would love to see a really good, strict maintenance plan. Mathieu asked if the sidewalk surface will be pervious or impervious. Radziwon said it is more impervious than pervious with the use of epoxy. Permeable asphalt would be a great idea in maintaining the hydrology but that may not meet the scenic road designation.

Penney said he likes the idea of an Operations and Maintenance Plan. More information will be gathered of the plantings and the stone check dams, the possibility of doing the sidewalk to a texture and color that is pervious in the area of the wetlands. The more natural looking the better, but also for the function of it.

Public Comments:

No one was present to speak.

The consensus of the IWA was to keep the public hearing open.

The public hearing will remain open.

Penney will provide information at the next meeting on the seed mix, material for the sidewalk, and the Operations & Maintenance Plan. He did not detail the Erosion and Sediment Control plan he will go over that also.

4. NEW BUSINESS:

A. 21-01W – 35 Tedford Drive – applicant: Michael Dixon – Juliano Pools; Owner:

Ryan LeClaire; Agent: None – Construction of a 22 x 36’ in-ground pool and patio within the Upland Review Area.

Melissa and Ryan LeClaire were present as well as Eric from Juliano Pools.

Gosselin noted the application was filled out using the online system; she filled out the paper form for the Members. This is noted on the back of the paper forms. Penney said this application is for an inground pool within the 75’ upland review area. The IWA will be receiving it this evening for inclusion on the next meeting agenda.

Eric said the best location for the inground pool was sketched in due to the well and septic system. The proper and necessary erosion and sediment controls will be used.

Penney said the pool is being shown in the rear of the property. The owners had previously gotten a permit for a garage/shed on a gravel base; an apron was installed also. The septic system is hindering where this pool might go. Penney will look at the plan closer and provide a memo for the applicant and the IWA for the next meeting. Buffer friendly plantings may be suggested.

Mathieu asked if there is no other place on this lot to put this pool? Eric replied based on required setbacks and the septic there is no real place to put the pool unless a smaller pool is placed near the footing drain. Mathieu asked about the reserve area for the septic or is that off limits? Mr. LeClaire said that is where the oversized shed is going and it is on a steep hill. But that is an alternative site said Mathieu. Penney said the shed/garage is in the process of being built with a permit issued in 2018. That can be plotted on the plan.

Penney said off the property is a big forested wetlands. Penney will provide a map with arials from 2016 at the next meeting. There is an abandoned right-of-way for Eversource. Mathieu would like to see if there are alternative locations for this pool.

Choate confirmed with Mr. LeClaire that the septic system is located as shown. The health department has separating distances for a reason particularly downstream. Choate would like to see the grading needed for construction of the pool, the elevation of the pool, grade changes, and access to the pool. Eric said he can provide that for the next meeting.

Pare asked how this plan is impacting the wetlands. Penney said the IWA is concerned with wetlands and the upland review area. Any activity or disturbance in the upland review area is a regulated activity. The regulated area is protected because it buffers the wetlands. Pare asked about the plans to drain water off the top of the pool cover. The applicants must consider how they would discharge that water. Penney said we do need to be mindful of that and asked the applicant to provide the type of cleaning system to be used and where will any discharge go.

Mathieu said there is an incredible effort to stay out of the 75’ upland review area when subdivisions are created. Overall, the house and leaching field are where they are, in part, because the lot was looked at and reviewed with leaving this area open for a reason. The upland review area is a special place. This is a significant wetlands area.

Briggs said additional mapping the size and type of wetlands here will be helpful.

Penney said construction of the pool will require cutting into the slope with possibly a retaining wall around it. There will be more activity than just the pool rectangle. The grade would be in the reserve area and it would be steeper where the outbuilding is going.

Powers said you never want to put anything permanent over the reserve area.

B. 21-02W – 86 Stonecroft Lane – Applicant: Chris Stacer; Owner: Same; Agent: None – Construction of an 18 x 36’ in-ground pool, 12 x 24’ pool house, and 36 x 44’ cement patio within the Upland Review Area.

Christopher Stacer and his wife were present.

Mr. Stacer said the plan is to move the fencing back. The original plan shows where a future pool could be. The Stacer’s want to move that back from the house foundation over fear constructing a pool could damage the foundation. They are proposing this plan to see if it is possible. He’s has never seen the river flood up to his property.

Penney said the questions the IWA members asked for the Tedford Drive pool proposal are similar here. Penney can provide some aerial mapping to show where the river and wetlands are. This lot is a lot flatter than Tedford Drive. The Stacer’s have setback issues and lot coverage concerns to have to be addressed.

Choate asked if this property is in the river aquifer zone and if the IWA has jurisdiction if so? Penney replied the IWA does not have aquifer jurisdiction. Choate made the suggestion to consider using pervious pavers surrounding the pool to cut down on lot coverage.

Mathieu noted the subdivision plot plan has a future pool purposefully approved outside of the 75’ upland area. She feels stronger about keeping out of the 75’ upland review area because it was approved that way. The Stacer’s should look at alternative locations and alternative materials. The zoning issues can be taken care of before coming to the IWA.

Penney said he got a legal opinion from Rich Roberts, Town Attorney – technically the IWA permit is heard first and then it would go to ZBA. The IWA should be more consistent in this with having wetlands approval happening first. The ZBA has a much stricter charge than the IWA does. Penney said the Stacer’s should think about pulling the pool closer to the house as was approved. Is that the best spot for the pool house? Try to get the activity away from the upland review area. Add in permeable concrete to lessen your footprint. The job of the applicant is to make the presentation and/or hire an engineer to layout the structures and look at alternatives.

Mathieu asked how the pool will be maintained. Does the pool house need to be that size? Make sure the grading is shown on the plan. Minimize the disturbance in the 75’ upland area. Gosselin said there is a pencil mark in the pool area that is the 25’ separation line. Mathieu said these are the alternatives to consider. Perhaps the applicants can have a Zoom meeting with the Wetlands Agent and Zoning staff to try to find a compromise that serves the applicants’ needs, meets zoning, meets the health code, and complies with wetlands regulations.

5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

there are no surprises. Gosselin has been to the property to view the current condition. This is not a professionally laid wall. Penney said the modification can also be conditioned with coordination of a meeting with the Wetlands Agent before the start of work, standard erosion and sediment controls are in place, work the disturbance on one side of the stairs and finish there before the other side is disturbed, and the Wetlands Agent will have oversight during the activity.

Pare asked what will happen to the rocks in front of the lake wall as seen in the photo? Penney said the owner is not asking to change any of that area. The proposed activity is consistent with what the IWA has permitted for other nearby properties.

This matter will be on the February agenda under Old Business.

A. Storm water Feature Inspection Form

Gosselin created this inspection form. Inspection report putting in permit conditions. Based off what she found in Texas and modified by CT stormwater guide. Provided to everyone with this for conditions and submit by 5-1 each year. Conditions of great, good, and poor. Easy one page inspection report. Serve as a reminder that their feature may need work. If the condition is poor - On the back side there is an area to list a date or additional plans to bring the feature up to par. Requiring photos being submitted.

Woolf – the owner of the property has to fill this out? This is provided to the owner and submitted to Staff. Including as part of the conditions. They are aware this form is required to be filled out yearly. Reminder system that this needs to be submitted.

Penney – we might have ½ dozen now. If they don't do it they will be in violation of the permit. Overall criteria are applicable to all kinds of infrastructure. Members look at this over the next month and affirm this or a variant of this.

Gosselin – may be some of the large towns. Choate has not seen this in her travels.

B. Standard Conditions

Motion says to standard conditions. Gosselin created by going through permits and complied that were repetitive. All of the other conditions varied somewhat. Look at again and look at the recent ones, especially Durkin. IWA to review and discuss at the next meeting.

Fire ponds that are in neighborhoods. Add to the list that need some attention. Open space the town owns it. Taken over by the invasive vegetation. The fire department will clean up where the truck plugs in. Used to look much nicer. Some of the invasives are good habitats. Might be some staffing restructuring in the future. Natural resource/environmental planner may be added. And open space that person may be responsible for.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: I move the Coventry Inland Wetlands Agency adjourn at 9:56 p.m.

By: Choate

Seconded: Pare

Respectfully Submitted,

Yvonne B. Filip

Yvonne B. Filip, IWA Clerk

PLEASE NOTE: The minutes are not official until approved by the Inland Wetland Agency at the next Agency meeting. Please see the next Agency meeting minutes for approval or changes to these minutes.