

**Town of Freetown
Conservation Commission**

Minutes of the Monday, December 11, 2023 Meeting
Held hybrid, at the Police Station Community Room, and over Zoom

Present in Person: Charles Sullivan, Margaret French, and Steven Tripp

Absent: Christopher Mather

Call to Order: Charles Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Request for Extension of Order of Conditions – 3 Quarry Drive

Mr. Sullivan explained the reason for extension was due to reviews with Eversource.

Motion was made by Steven Tripp, seconded by Margaret French, to approve the extension of order of conditions for three years. The motion carried unanimously.

Proposed Modification to Approved Site Plan – 1 Thomasset Way

Robert Naser was present with property owner, Brian Thomasset. Greg Drake from Outback Engineering explained that they proposed to move the solar array 17-feet to the South. There is no change to any erosion control, riprap, and no additional tree cutting. The reason to move it down is for the owner to have additional space for farming. Mr. Naser added that the change is only due to the owner's preference.

A motion was made by Margaret French, seconded by Steven Tripp, to approve the modification. The motion carried unanimously.

Request for Determination of Applicability – 51 Point of Pines Road

Robert Berube of Pro-line Engineering, explained that the project is a septic system repair. The house is in the middle, well is over to the west, and existing tank is where the new tank would be. The field would not be 100-feet away from the wetlands, closest point is 67-feet away. The erosion control would be on the southwest corner of the field to protect the resource area.

A motion was made by Steven Tripp, seconded by Margaret French, to issue a negative determination #3. The motion carried unanimously.

Continued Notice of Intent – 30 Island Road Extension

Victoria Alfaro explained that the engineer requested a continuance to the next meeting. The reason for continuance was to respond to comments from Natural Heritage.

Mr. Sullivan called the hearing to order.

Motion was made by Margaret French, seconded by Steven Tripp, to continue to January 8, 2024 public hearing at the Police Station. The motion carried unanimously.

Continued Notice of Intent – 90 South Main Street

Mrs. Alfaro explained that Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had made comments about mitigation. They would need to revise plans due to those comments. They have re-notified abutters and met that deadline.

Motion was made by Margaret French, seconded by Steven Tripp, to continue to January 8, 2024 public hearing at the Police Station. The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion and Take Action Relative to Betsy Taber Wildlife Sanctuary No Hunting Signage

Mr. Sullivan explained that there was a discussion a few years ago on this topic. No decision or action was made then. There had been a resident in the area that had expressed concern about hunting activity on the property. Mr. Sullivan added that the property was donated to the Conservation Commission years ago.

A motion was made by Margret French, seconded by Steven Tripp, to carry out signage to properly post no hunting in Betsy Taber Wildlife Sanctuary.

Discussion and Take Action Relative to Wetland Violation – 11, 12, and 14 Janice Marie Way

Mr. Sullivan explained that the commission had visited the site last Saturday for inspections for the Soil Conservation Board. They saw what appeared to be a potential wetland violation at the very back of the property. There are piles of material within 100-feet of the wetlands.

John Mello, property owner, explained that it is used for a constant water supply. It is dredged constantly but had not been used in the last couple years. It is a working work area. He stated that it should not be considered a vegetated wetland. Mr. Sullivan expressed the concern of piles of material that have been brought to the property and are within 100-feet of wetlands. Mr. J. Mello added that it is a working supply water area and they go in with machines and clean it out. He said that now that it has been brought to his attention, he would maintain it. He added that the area was high ground and he had dug it out. He stated that he had gone through DEP to establish the water runoff and to suck water out for dust control. Mr. J. Mello referenced a prior lawsuit with KRR and other residents on Braley Road. It had been agreed upon with Army Corps of Engineers and DEP to designate five acres. Mr. Sullivan asked for confirmation of the area that was replicated in relation to berm. Mr. J. Mello explained the area. Mr. Sullivan asked for agreement that the north west area, that was referenced, is wetlands. Mr. J. Mello agreed. Mr. Sullivan expressed the concern that, at present, there is no way to block material to wash into that area. Mr. J. Mello explained there was supposed to be a slope so that it was not draining into that area. Mr. Sullivan asked for erosion control to be installed between the wetlands and the area where the piles are. Christopher Mello and Mr. J. Mello both are in agreement with the erosion control. Mr. J. Mello stated that he will of course address it. Ms. French asked about the wetlands to the right, that had a berm. They made references to the online maps. Mr. Sullivan further explained that he would like erosion control along the north west area where the wetlands are. Mr. C. Mello commented to put a road around the back along the other side. Mr. J. Mello stated that they have been doing a lot of work for the railroad and have become flooded with product recently. Mr. C. Mello agreed that they can address the erosion control. Mr. J. Mello stated that he was acting chair for the Conservation Commission. Mr. C. Mello added that they are a community family, want to be here for the community and looking to be good neighbors. Mr. Sullivan stated that all they are asking for is to do the best they can and to install the erosion control.

Discussion on the Conservation Commission Budget

Mr. Sullivan stated that they were to look through the current budget and see if the board had any questions. Ms. French stated that this is the third year for \$25,000 and asked if they are going to use it. She added that the budget is for a professional and tech consultant but was for a part time commissioner in the past. Mr. Sullivan and Mrs. Alfaro have discussed. He does not think that they will be able to get a part time employee at that amount and would not have 19 hours weekly for them. He suggested to acquire someone that would want to be a per diem technical assistant. Mrs. Alfaro explained that the employee would do site visits and prefer someone that has more experience. There would not be office hours and would be temporary. Ms. French asked how many hours per month would be needed. Mrs. Alfaro responded that it all depends and that is why per diem would fit best. Ms. French questioned if the \$25,000 would be too much. Mrs. Alfaro would reach out to more people. She added that someone was interviewed prior to the funding but at that time, it was not what they needed. That was thru a company and this time around would be an individual that would want part time work. She will research the costs more. Mr. Sullivan further explained that what we are looking for, we would pay approximately \$50 an hour, roughly \$1,000 a month if we can get someone at that hourly rate. Mrs. Alfaro would do more research, reach out to other towns, and look to see if internships have been hired and what their rates were. Ms. French is looking for more details toward that part of the budget.

Mrs. Alfaro suggested to combine the soil board and conservation board budgets since they are now both combined. Ms. French asked if we do advertising or mailings for the soil board. Mrs. Alfaro stated that renewals are usually mailed out each year but this year they were emailed. Hard copies of permits are mailed out; only five are mailed each year. Mr. Sullivan suggested to add training into the budget. Mrs. Alfaro stated that training

is already in the budget for herself and for members of the board. Ms. French stated that she is good with the budget and suggested if there is any more detail to let the board know. Mrs. Alfaro asked if they board would want to carry the same numbers. Ms. French asked about the mailing costs. Certified mailing is almost \$9 each. The postage is budgeted at \$500 and a little over half had been expended. It is higher than normal due to mailing out letters to catch up on past projects. Ms. French commented that the budget numbers are reasonable. Mr. Sullivan asked about the gatekeepers and their responsibilities. They do open and close the gate, monitor, and pick up trash. They also let the commission know if anything had happened, such as fallen trees. Currently, there are two gatekeepers and they are paid minimum wage. The board further discussed any line items in question.

Minutes

A motion was made by Margaret French, seconded by Steven Tripp, to approve the 11.27.2023 meeting minutes as submitted. The motion carried unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made by Margaret French, seconded by Steven Tripp, to adjourn meeting. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

This is a True Record by me

Attest: _____
Nicole DeMoranville, Senior Clerk