

**TOWN OF WELLESLEY
NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
July 15, 2014, 6:30 PM
NRC Office, Town Hall**

Attending: Heidi Gross, Chair, Stephen Murphy, Vice Chair, Raina McManus, Joan Gaughan, Janet Hartke Bowser, NRC Director

Absent: Lise Olney

Guests: Kathy McMahon, Joel Seeley, SMMA, Chris Racine, SMMA, Peter Lukacic, SMMA, Matt King, Chair Permanent Building Committee, Andrea O'Toole, DWMP, Leslee Brody, Stanley Brody, Scott Decker, Scott Szczebak, Ann Groccia, Jenny Zannetos, Caren Parker, Lynn Younger, Liza Near, Laura Fragasso, Elisa Romano, KC Kato, School Committee, Stanley Brooks

Public Voice

No one attending the meeting spoke at Public Voice.

Discussion Re: Town's Performance Evaluation Process and Drafting Effective Annual Goals

Mr. Scott Szczebak, HR Director, attended the meeting to review the Town's employee performance evaluation process and outlined best practices in drafting effective annual goals.

Public Shade Tree Removal Hearing Related to the Fiske School Improvement Project

Documents reviewed for this discussion:

- Fiske Elementary School Improvements-Request for Tree Removal Hearing letter, by Christopher Racine, P.E., Symmes Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA) dated June 30, 2014.
- *Fiske Aerial Locus Map, Figure 1*; Fiske Elementary School Renovations; prepared by SMMA dated June 30, 2014.
- *Fiske Existing Tree Removal Plan, Figure 2*; Fiske Elementary School Renovations; prepared by SMMA dated June 30, 2014.
- *Fiske Proposed Layout & Planting Plan, Figure 3*; Fiske Elementary School Renovations; prepared by SMMA dated June 30, 2014.
- *Fiske Planting Plan; C-141*, prepared by SMMA
- Fiske Elementary School Tree Removal Hearing, PowerPoint presentation; prepared by SMMA dated July 15, 2014.
- Fiske Elementary School Memorandum Re: Proposed Public Shade Tree Removal-description of existing trees; prepared by SMMA dated July 15, 2014.
- Public Comment Email Re: Fiske Tree Removal Opposition, from Ann Groccia dated July 15, 2014.
- Public Comment Email Re: Fiske Tree Removal Opposition, from Laura Fragasso dated July 15, 2014.
- Public Comment Email Re: Fiske Tree Removal Opposition, from Bridget Bettigole dated July 15, 2014.

This project is being proposed by the Wellesley School Committee and is being overseen by the Permanent Building Committee. The consultant to the PBC on this project is Symmes Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA) and three representatives from the firm, Joel Seeley, Chris Racine, and Peter Lukacic, attended the meeting to discuss the project. Mr. Seeley stated that the Fiske Elementary School, located at 40 Hastings Street, requires a number of site improvements including a reconfiguration of the existing front parking lot, an access loop and the widening of Hastings Street in front of the school. He stated that the proposed

improvements will require the removal of five (5) trees considered Public Shade Trees under MGL, Ch. 87. He stated that three (3) of the trees are located on the Hastings Street Right-Of-Way line and two (2) of the trees are located just a few feet outside of the Hastings Street Right-Of-Way. He stated that under existing conditions, Hastings Street and its intersection with Sheridan Road and Cedar Street experience significant congestion in the afternoon pick-up procedures at the school. He stated that this is the result of insufficient queuing space on-site for parents, which leads to queuing along Hastings Street that sometimes extends to the Cedar Street intersection. He stated that the queuing line prohibits unobstructed two-way traffic and hinders access for emergency vehicles. To improve this condition, SMMA has proposed an improvement project to the front parking lot and access drive that will reconfigure and widen Hastings St. in order to provide an area for parent queuing outside of the travelled way when queuing extends beyond the reconfigured access drive. He stated that in total, the combination of proposed improvements is projected to decrease street queuing in the travelled way by approximately thirty (30) vehicles and will provide six (6) additional on-site parking spaces in order to help alleviate the current congestion problems.

Mr. Peter Lukacic, a Landscape Architect with SMMA, reviewed the type and species of public shade trees proposed for removal and discussed their condition. He stated that the following trees are proposed for removal: One (1) - 12" caliper Crab Apple Tree; One (1) - 10" caliper Crab Apple Tree; One (1) - 26" caliper Norway Maple Tree; One (1) additional 26" caliper Norway Maple Tree; and One (1) - 16" caliper Norway Maple Tree. He stated that, in his opinion, all five trees are in acceptable condition relative to health and vigor and are representative of the typical characteristics of the species. He noted that the Norway Maple Trees are considered an invasive species. He stated that to comply with the NRC Policy, Laws and Regulations Handbook, that five (5) new tree plantings are being proposed in close proximity to the Hastings Street Right-Of-Way to replace those being removed. The new trees to be planted include: Three (3) - 2.5" to 3" caliper October Glory Maples and Two (2) - 2.0" to 2.5" caliper Red Sunset Maples. He noted that there are other tree and shrub plantings being proposed around the site as well as bioretention areas and vegetative screening to enhance the quality and aesthetics of the site. Mr. Lukacic referred to the site plans and the PowerPoint document that were distributed to the NRC, which identified the site's existing conditions and the location of the five trees to be removed as well as a site plan showing the location and types of trees to be replanted to replace those being removed.

Mr. Seeley stated that on behalf of the PBC and School Committee, SMMA is requesting the NRC's approval to remove the five (5) Public Shade Trees. He stated that they must also meet with the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals for site plan review and the ZBA meeting is scheduled for July 24th. Mr. Seeley reviewed the seven (7) design alternatives that were considered by SMMA as part of their site analysis. The seven (7) circulation alternatives that were considered, but eliminated, were reviewed with the NRC. Mr. Seeley stated that the project construction schedule for the building work will start in the Summer of 2015 and that the site work, including the new queuing lane that necessitates the removal of the five (5) Public Shade Trees, would start in the Summer of 2016 in order to limit impact on the functioning of the school while it is in session.

Mr. Matt King, Chair of the PBC, stated that the overall goal of this project is to improve the overall condition of the school building and the site area. He reviewed the permitting schedule for the project and the issues and criteria to be used for that evaluation. He stated that the ZBA will need to issue a site plan permit for the project and they are scheduled to appear before the ZBA as a major construction project on July 24 at 7:00 p.m. He stated that the PBC is going before the Planning Board on July 21st to ask for their recommendations on the project, which will be submitted to the ZBA prior to its review of the project on July 24th. Mr. King stated that the project has been before the Design Review Board and that their comments should be received shortly. He stated that no traffic study was required to be done, but that visual counts were done during student pick-up and drop-off times as part of the evaluation of alternatives.

Ms. Gross stated that the only issue related to the project for the NRC to decide is whether or not to allow the removal of the five (5) Public Shade Trees. She stated that the NRC's goal is to not allow the tree canopy in the area to be diminished or to negatively impact the character of the neighborhood. Ms. Gross asked the

consultants how much green space was being added to the site and Mr. Seeley replied that a green buffer area was being added in the southern parking area and that several small bioretention areas were being added, but that these improvements did not create a substantial increase in green space.

Ms. McManus stated that she is a past Fiske School parent with experience dealing with the car queuing lines and that her observation is that while she experienced occasional back up on Hastings Street and on Sheridan Road, her primary concern is the lack of notification to the neighborhood about the project resulting in reduced opportunity for their involvement and review. She voiced concerns that the proposal to widen Hastings Street will result in a loss of green space and that the proposed tree removals will have a dramatic and negative impact on the street tree canopy and neighborhood character.

Ms. Gaughan inquired as to whether traffic experts were used in evaluating the problems at the site and designing the improvements. Mr. King stated that no traffic experts were used in the design of the plan and that it was not a requirement of the project to conduct a traffic study. Mr. King stated that generally the PBC does not solicit public feedback on improvement projects such as those being proposed at the Fiske School. Mr. King stated that conducting a traffic study for this type of project would cost upwards of \$35,000 and that there is no budget for such a study.

Ms. Laura Fragasso stated that she had submitted a letter by email today, which was circulated to the NRC. She stated that she is the parent of two (2) former Fiske students. She stated that the trees in this area have substantial value adding to the neighborhood character and that in her opinion the proposed queuing lanes will negatively impact the environment, including increased exhaust, and she questioned the proposed circulation pattern and whether it is actually needed. She encouraged the PBC to evaluate other options that will allow for the preservation of the trees and asked if all alternatives had been adequately vetted. Ms. Fragasso stated that the recent effort by Wellesley Green Schools to urge residents to comply with the State anti-idling law, which prohibits idling for more than five minutes, needs to be reinforced in order to cut emissions and limit exhaust and its impact on public health and the environment, and she encouraged the PBC to reevaluate its extra space proposal for adding a queuing lane that will increase idling. Ms. Fragasso stated that the neighborhood was not notified by the PBC about the project and that many feel that they have not been adequately communicated with and she encouraged the PBC to reach out and notify the neighbors about the project and the public hearings that will be held on the project. The audience was asked to raise their hands to show the number of people who were there who were opposed to the removal of the Public Shade Trees and eight (8) people raised their hands.

Mr. Stanley Brooks stated that he was attending the meeting not as a neighbor, but to observe the meeting as a member of the Town Government Study Committee and that he has no position on the proposed removal of the Public Shade Trees.

An unidentified woman stated that she feels more work needs to be done by the PBC to evaluate the root cause of the problem, which she feels is simply inadequate parent driving behavior and that other options should be evaluated to change the drop-off and pick-up times or stagger them rather than making a dramatic change to this area.

Ms. Caren Parker, a town resident, stated that perhaps the PBC could evaluate ways to change parking and drop-off behavior rather than constructing a new parking/queuing area to accommodate what is a peak traffic problem.

Mr. King stated that based on the feedback from residents this evening that he would like to request a continuance of the Public Shade Tree Removal hearing so that the PBC can further review the comments it has received and reevaluate the design of the project in order to try to limit impact on any trees. Mr. Murphy stated that he would support continuing the hearing to allow for the project to proceed to the ZBA for further review. **After further discussion, a motion was made and seconded and the NRC voted 4-0 to continue the Public**

Shade Tree hearing for the Fiske Elementary School Project while the project proceeds to the ZBA for further review and the hearing was continued to a date to be determined.

Discussion Re: Dept. of Public Works Request for an Integrated Pest Management Policy Waiver from the NRC to Treat Poison Ivy at Town Hall with Herbicides

Document reviewed for this discussion:

- “Email message Requesting Permission under the NRC’s IPM Policy to Use Herbicides on Poison Ivy at Town Hall from Mike Quinn of the DPW dated June 19, 2014 to the NRC.”

Ms. Bowser reviewed with the NRC the document from Mike Quinn from the DPW requesting approval from the NRC to spray areas in the back portion of Town Hall abutting the railroad tracks with a herbicide to control poison ivy. Mr. Quinn’s email referenced an email from Suzy Jordan of the DPW indicating that she feels that for the first time use of herbicide spraying for poison ivy behind the Town Hall is necessary. She indicated that before poison ivy starts to seed and grow for the season, it would be good to spray it and that in addition, the DPW has planted several native shrubs in the back of Town Hall and the poison ivy is starting to compete with those plantings. Ms. Jordan indicated that the DPW has pulled and cut a large amount of poison ivy off the trees in this area so it is now growing more laterally and closer to the pedestrian path and that she has tried to weed whack these areas, which has not successfully eradicated it. She indicated that she is hand pulling small portions of it around the duck pond and that once they are able to use herbicides and get a handle on the poison ivy growth, they should be able to hand pull it in the future. Ms. Bowser stated that, in accordance with the NRC’s Integrated Pest Management Policy, dated 2002, no pesticides or herbicides are allowed to be used on NRC land in order to protect the health of the Town’s residents, the Town’s drinking water supply and the environment. She stated that there is an emergency waiver provision that allows a one-time waiver of the policy if an environmental health situation warrants the use of pesticides which would otherwise not be permitted under the policy. If the NRC determines that such a situation exists, it has the authority to grant a temporary one-time waiver if: 1) the pest situation poses an immediate threat to environmental health and 2) viable alternatives consistent with this IPM Policy do not exist. The policy states that if pesticides are used under the emergency waiver provision, then the area treated shall be conspicuously sign posted as soon as possible after application and for a period of at least 48 hours. The NRC discussed this request by the DPW and concluded that the poison ivy qualifies as an immediate threat to environmental health since poison ivy can affect the diversity of the area as well as trail usage and concluded that viable alternatives consistent with the policy do not exist in this case since the DPW has tried to hand pull and weed whack in this area, but that the poison ivy has grown to the level where additional treatment is necessary. **After a motion was made and seconded, the NRC voted 4-0 to approve a temporary one-time waiver of the NRC IPM Policy to allow for the application of a herbicide to eradicate poison ivy in the back of Town Hall and that such situation poses an immediate threat to environmental health and viable alternatives consistent with this IPM Policy do not exist.**

The NRC also reviewed a request from Mike Quinn for possible permanent revision to the NRC’s IPM Policy which would allow them to use herbicides for the control of poison ivy in any area utilized by the public. The NRC stated that they feel this request needs more consideration and background information in order for them to consider it and it will be discussed at a future meeting.

Discussion and Review – NRC Report Re: Wellesley College’s Sale of Open Space

Documents referenced for this discussion:

- “Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest,” from NRC’s Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan;
- Map Titled “Existing Open Space” from NRC’s Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan with parcels identified by numbers corresponding to the Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest;
- Map Titled “Developable and Unprotected Land” from NRC’s Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan;
- Chart showing Open Space/Ratio Comparisons between Concord, Lexington, Wellesley as prepared by J. Bowser.

Ms. Gross stated that the North 40 Steering Committee has requested that all interested boards submit a report outlining their “wish list” that identifies how they would like to see the North 40 Land used or preserved if the land is acquired by the Town. Ms. Gross stated that she asked Ms. McManus to help in the drafting of the report and asked Ms. Bowser to compile data on Wellesley’s open space and how it compares to open space in comparable Towns. Ms. Bowser stated that she contacted the Conservation Director in Needham to secure the open space data from that town and that she received an email back from the Director stating that Needham does not have a current Open Space and Recreation Plan and that the most recent plan is dated 1988. Ms. Bowser circulated the document sent to her from the Needham Conservation Director, which was Needham’s Open Space and Recreation Plan dated 1988 with insufficient and old data that would not be able to be used. Ms. Bowser stated that she will work to secure additional data as needed.

New Business/Continuing Business/Liaison Reports

Update Re: Outdoor Lighting and Noise Study Committee Ms. McManus, the NRC’s representative to this Committee, stated that the Committee has now had four (4) meetings and that Mr. Ethan Parsons, the Assistant Planning Director, is working on a draft list of recommendations that the Committee will be making to the Planning Board.

NRC Vote to Approve FY15 Trails Committee Membership

Document reviewed for this discussion:

- “Email dated June 26, 2014 from Miguel Lessing requesting the NRC’s approval of the current and new members for the FY15 Trails Committee”

After a motion was made and seconded, the NRC voted 4-0 to approve the following members of the Trails Committee for Fiscal Year 2015: Bob Brown, Diane Hall, Miguel Lessing, Denny Nakoney, Jared Parker, John Schuler, Joan Gaughan (NRC Liaison) and new members John Barlow and Ekaterina Zemlyakova.

Mr. Lessing indicated that Trails member Bob White has decided to retire from the committee after 16 years of productive work. The NRC commended Mr. White for his significant contributions to expanding and improving the Town’s trail systems and for helping to keep the Town’s natural resources and trail system clean and accessible. It was noted that he will remain a friend of the Trails Committee who may be called on to assist with projects when necessary.

Formation of a NRC Subcommittee to Pursue Town Ban on Single-Use Plastic Bags

Ms. Gross stated that she had been contacted by NRC member Lise Olney, who was unable to attend tonight’s meeting, regarding a new NRC initiative to reduce and/or eliminate single-use plastic bags. This initiative evolved out of the NRC’s environmental film program and discussion on plastics reduction. Ms. Olney and Ms. McManus offered to serve on the NRC subcommittee to further study this issue. **After a motion was made and seconded, the NRC voted 4-0 to approve a new NRC initiative regarding single use plastics reduction/elimination and to form a subcommittee that will work with other organizations in Wellesley with the same interest.**

Director’s Report

Update on Perrin Park Playground Improvement Project

Ms. Bowser reported that Mr. Quinn from the DPW had secured the services of a second vendor that will provide a quote on this project since the first vendor’s quote came in very high. Ms. Bowser stated that the project is still on schedule and that the new equipment will be installed by the end of September 2014. Ms. Gross indicated that as long as the new quote comes in under budget and the equipment is substantially the same as the original design that was previously approved by the NRC, that the NRC does not need to further review or approve the design.

Hunnewell Athletic Field Basketball Courts Restoration Projects Schedule

Ms. Bowser reported that the DPW is doing most of the installation work on this project except for the court surface which will be done by an outside vendor. She stated that work has proceeded and that the site is being staged and prepared and she will keep the NRC updated on the project.

Fuller Brook Park Preservation Project Construction Update

Ms. Bowser stated that the Town's contractor on the project, R. Bates, is currently reviewing all permit requirements and working to prepare all required submittals for the federal, state, and local permitting. Construction will begin once all permit submittals are completed, which is anticipated to be early to mid-August. She stated that the new Fuller Brook Park Committee has met and that the project management team will also be meeting with the contractor and that Jim McNulty has been hired as the new DPW Engineer who will serve as the Town's project manager.

Update on Playing Fields Task Force Issues and High School Stadium Project

The High School Stadium Task Force has suspended its meetings in light of uncertainty as to whether or not Wellesley College's North 40 land and the 900 Worcester Street land will be purchased by the Town. It is expected that the Task Force will resume meeting in the fall when the land purchase decisions have been made.

Update on Morses Pond Comprehensive Management Plan

Ms. Bowser provided an update on the status of the weed harvesting and phosphorus inactivation system work. She stated that the level of phosphorus is relatively low and that all reports from Dr. Wagner show that the nutrients in the pond and the algae levels are relatively low. The NRC asked that Dr. Wagner provide an update in writing and Ms. Bowser will request this and circulate it as soon as it is available.

Next Scheduled NRC Meetings

The next NRC Meetings were scheduled for July 30 and August 14 at 7:30 PM in the NRC office.

Adjournment

After a motion was made and seconded, the NRC voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Hartke Bowser
Janet Hartke Bowser
NRC Director