

**INLAND WETLANDS COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting of July 9, 2014 at 7:30 pm**

Council Chambers, Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

*These Minutes are Subject to Approval by the Inland Wetlands Commission*

**Present:** Mary Curran, Craig Ferris, Kristen Hammar, Anne Peters and Sharon Salling; **Staff Present:** George Benson, Director of Planning and Land Use; Rob Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning and Land Use; Steve Maguire, Land Use Enforcement Officer and Tammy Hazen, Clerk

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**IW # 14-10 12 Dickinson Drive, Town of Newtown Public Building and Site Commission.**

Application for Sandy Hook School.

Ms. Hammar read the Public Hearing notice for the meeting. Ms. Curran explained the hearing process.

Julia McFadden, Architect and Project Manager with Svigals introduced Aimee Uluski and Ray Gradwell, Civil Engineers with BL Companies; Raina Heubner, Soil Scientist with BL Companies; and Bill Richter, landscape architect with Richter & Cegan, Inc. out of Avon CT. Ms. McFadden provided an overview of the progression of the Sandy Hook Elementary School project.

Mr. Richter reviewed the school's landscaping plans. Although the school will be on the same site, it is being configured differently on site and that the driveway entrance will provide an enhanced experience. They explained where a portion of the driveway will cross the wetlands. A bio swale will be created in front of the school to provide an educational experience. He explained where the two playgrounds are planned as well as a recreation area for a soccer field and Little League baseball field. There will be a perimeter walkway and three courtyards (outdoor learning spaces) in the back of the building. Mr. Richter explained the area of impact in the wetlands and upland review area. The filling of 1/10<sup>th</sup> of an acre will be mitigated with 1/10<sup>th</sup> acre. Invasives will be removed and other areas will be enhanced.

Mr. Gradwell reviewed the storm water management system and groundwater recharge. A drainage section near Riverside Road will be cleaned out and improved. Water quality on site will be improved. The area of the wetlands crossing will include a box culvert that will be filled with a natural bottom for amphibians or other animals to cross. He explained the reason for widening the driveway and adding lanes for safety. Mitigation will include native plantings, enhancing the wetlands along the driveway, and providing an overall enhancement to the functions and values on the site. The E & S controls include temporary sediment traps, silt fences, inlet protections, hay bales, and E & S blankets. The wetlands flagging previously completed by another consultant were confirmed with some minor changes.

Ms. Huebner provided information on the wetlands functions and values. She noted that Wetland #1 in the Wetlands Report refers to the wetlands on the north end of the property and relates to Wetlands 1 & 2 in the storm water management report. Wetlands #2 in the wetlands report is on the southern side of the property, includes a watercourse, and relates to Wetlands #3 in the storm water

management report. The plans include returning shade to the area and adding native plants and another layer of habitat.

Ms. McFadden said they had investigated other ways to enter the site. The current proposal keeps the impacts low for the overall system. She said the project's theme is "water" for several reasons with one being the sensitive habitats in the area. The bio swale will have native plantings and provide a habitat that the children can learn from. Two cisterns on site will collect water. One will collect roof water that will be directed into the bio swale. The second cistern is underground and will collect water for use to irrigate the ball fields.

Mr. Sibley asked the applicant to walk through the planting schedule with the commissioners, detailing the mitigation. Mr. Richter explained the mitigation plantings which include ground cover, shrubs and accent trees. Ms. Peters asked about specifics of the plantings. Ms. Huebner provided some of the common names and said all plantings were chosen for hardiness, visual appeal, and providing layers of habitat. Ms. Hammar said she was concerned that the existing canopy will not provide light for shrubs. Ms. Huebner said the trees will be spaced enough to allow light for other plants. Ms. Peters asked for more specifics about mitigation. Mr. Gradwell explained the proposed new wetlands area.

Mr. Benson asked the applicant to provide the commissioners with more information on the four bays. Mr. Gradwell explained the purpose is to provide a final polishing for the storm water before the water enters the wetlands. A maintenance schedule is included in the plans. Mr. Benson then asked them to explain the level spreaders for the public. Mr. Gradwell said there are four on site, they are contoured to the land, and they allow water back into the ground in a more natural and safe manner

Ms. Salling asked about pervious versus impervious surfaces, specifically how it is different from what was there previously. Mr. Gradwell said there is an increase in impervious surfaces of 3/10ths of an acre because of the additional parking and hard surface play areas but that in all models the run-off from the site will be reduced overall. Ms. Salling asked about the comparison of the footprints of the old and new buildings. Ms. McFadden said the footprint is decreased from 70,000 sf to 64,000 sf. Ms. Curran asked who would be responsible for monitoring storm water management. Mr. Gradwell said during construction it is the contractor's responsibility but post construction management is handled by the Town's public works.

Ms. Peters asked about the change of grade in the play area in the southeast corner and with it being moderately steep right up to the wetlands, would it change the functionality of the wetlands. She also asked about the effects of fertilizer usage. Mr. Gradwell explained that the grading in that area will be less steep than what exists. They made sure to have gentle slopes. Ms. Huebner said the functions and values will not be affected with the grass. The water leaving the site will be captured and treated. An integrated pest management document for mowing and management of schools was provided. Play areas will be fertilized but are on the west end away from the wetlands. A dry swale will capture run-off. Mr. Sibley said the new ball field will provide less activity than what was there previously.

Mr. Ferris asked if the mitigation area will be excavated. Mr. Gradwell said it will be excavated down to a level that would sustain a wetland. Mr. Ferris asked the applicant to review why they couldn't minimize further wetlands impact. The applicant explained that the proposed area is where there was an existing woodland road and provides the smallest crossing of the wetlands. Mr. Benson said the driveway was proposed for security reasons and improved traffic flow. The traffic lanes were tapered back as far as possible to minimize impacts.

Ms. Hammar asked about the method to remove Fragmites and noted it extends beyond the boundaries of the project. Ms. Huebner said they will use an excavator which will stay on the road and that the Fragmites off the property will not be touched. Ms. Hammar was concerned it may return to its original state. Ms. Heubner said it will take about five years to completely restore and grow back naturally.

Ms. Curran then opened it up to public comment. No members of the public wished to speak.

Mr. Benson said the applicant has demonstrated an improvement to the storm water management previously on site. After all questions were answered, Ms. Hammar motioned that the public hearing be closed. Ms. Peters seconded the motion and all were in favor.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES** – Ms. Peters motioned to approve the minutes of June 25, 2014, which was seconded by Ms. Hammar. “Hammar” was misspelled. The minutes were approved as amended.

**ADJOURNMENT** – Ms. Salling motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Hammar seconded the motion which was approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tammy Hazen