

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

LOWELL, MASSACHUSETTS

May 11, 2022

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For further detail, video recordings are available at the Pollard Library, second floor reference desk or online at www.LTC.org.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held both in person and virtually using Zoom.

Members Present: Chairwoman Varnum, William Lovely, Weston Standish, Kevin Dillon, Perry Downs,

Members Absent: Stephen Laput, Vice Chair Buitenhuis

Others Present: Peter Cutrumbes, Assistant Planner

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Varnum called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

CONTINUED BUSINESS

Aravind Srinivasan

34 Arcola Street

Lexington, MA 02420

DEP# 206-0783

Project Location: 87 Lafayette Street 01854

A Notice of Intent has been filed by Anka Homes, LLC to construct a single-family home and driveway within the 100-year floodplain.

On Behalf:

None

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

None

Motion

Weston Standish motioned to continue the project to June 8th, with Perry Downs seconding. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

NEW BUSINESS

Request for Determination of Applicability

Kenneth A. Dews

4 Melody Lane

Chelmsford, MA 01824

Project Location: 51-57 Shirley Avenue 01854

A Request for Determination of Applicability has been filed by Kenneth Dews to clear vegetation in the FEMA 100-Year Flood Plain.

On Behalf:

Kenneth Dews. Mr. Dews said the lot was cleared around 10 years ago besides a few trees, and the ground was left completely bare. Now, all sorts of invasive species have grown, such as Japanese knotweed and bittersweets. Mr. Dews says he wants to clear out the invasives and compost them on site. L. Varnum asked how he would do it. K. Dews said he has a small compact tractor with a grabber for the plants and turf tires to prevent soil disruption.

Speaking in Favor:

John Hamblett of 495 Varnum Avenue spoke in favor of the applicant's "surgical strike" plan, which would be targeted clearing and not a clearing of the whole lot. He said the plot is one of the lowest lots in Pawtucketville and that it floods frequently from Clay Pit Brook. Even when it is not flooded, it fills with water with any heavy rain. He would like to see the 2015 restoration plan adhered to. Mr. Hamblett then provided a copy of this restoration plan to the Commissioners, the applicant, and to DPD staff.

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion: L. Varnum said that there was a violation there 10 years ago, to which Mr. Dews had referred (the clear cutting). The applicant was required to plant trees. Mr. Dews said he will look out for those trees. L. Varnum asked how much disturbance to the soil would be expected, and also expressed concerns about the birds living there because it is nesting season. K. Dews said he will avoid the birds and that there should be minimal soil disturbance. L. Varnum said she was encouraged that they finally have someone who is knowledgeable about the situation. W. Lovely asked if there would be a change to the grade or the ground. K. Dews said that there would not be. W. Lovely suggested adding some conditions for approval at the end to get more detail. W. Standish asked for seeding to be put down on the disturbed area. W. Standish also asked if herbicides will be used, to which K. Dews said no. K. Dillon

asked to specify what the plants are. K. Dews said grape vines, knotweed, and bittersweet, but that 90% is knotweed. K. Dillon suggested leaving the grape vines if they are not causing a problem, and K. Dews agreed. W. Standish suggested using a riparian buffer seed mix after clearing. K. Dillon pointed out invasives will sprout every spring, to which W. Lovely said he will try to capture a maintenance plan in the conditions. L. Varnum mentioned being notified before cutting happens. K. Dews saw the restoration plan for the first time and said he doesn't think there is that amount of trees there currently. L. Varnum said she'd like to keep the restoration plan in place for the time being. K. Dews said eventually he intends to build a small home and will be reapplying for an NOI.

Motion:

W. Lovely motioned for a positive 5 determination with the following conditions:

- Selective removal of invasives by precision equipment or by hand to minimize disturbances
- Onsite composting of removed invasives in a secure location, with current grades maintained and offsite disposal of any trash or debris.
- Restore disturbed areas with a riparian buffer seed mix
- Provide a maintenance schedule moving forward to prevent invasives growing back
- Compare plantings observed during work with the original planting plan and note discrepancies
- Work shall not proceed without prior notification to the Commission

This motion was seconded by W. Standish. The vote was unanimous (5-0).

OTHER BUSINESS

Minutes:

April 27, 2022

Motion to approve by P. Downs, seconded by W. Standish. The vote was unanimous (4-0 with W. Lovely abstaining).

Motion to adjourn the meeting by W. Standish, seconded by P. Downs. The vote was unanimous (5-0) and the meeting was adjourned at 7:44.