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Message 823 of 861 | [Previous](#) | [Next](#) [Up Thread] | [Message Index](#)

From: "Lynne Eckardt" <midfarm@bestweb.net>
Date: Sat Jul 31, 2004 4:58 pm
Subject: SE Conservation Commission Recap 7/27/04

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Msg #

Hi All,

I've been sitting on this recap for three days now. And, believe it or not, I've done a lot of editing. Because this really was the most discouraging meeting I've been to in a long time the following recap is not for the faint hearted. It's really long, too. Think about using that delete key now.

Just for fun I thought I'd look up the definition of 'Conservation.'

Conservation> noun 1. **Preservation or restoration of the natural environment and wildlife.**

What about this is difficult to for our Conservation Commisssion to understand?

Last night started on an auspicious note and slid quickly into the usual cess pool of wetland buffer encroachment and developer double speak. The point is, in almost two years of regular attendance at CC meetings I have rarely seen much in the way of wetland buffer 'conservation'.

In any case, below you'll find my recap of the Conservation Commission meeting Tuesday night. As always the comments are my own observations. Official minutes will be available within 2 weeks.

The one thing I'd like to add is this: I sincerely believe that the majority men and women who serve on the various Southeast Boards are good people. And I'm sure it's not easy being on the other side of the desk. Many give a great deal of time and put in the effort required to do a good job. When I see them around town or before and after a meeting they are unfailingly polite and a lot of the time even gregarious. Probably no mean feat when dealing with me. So when I write the way I do part of it is with tongue firmly planted in

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cheek and part of it is deadly serious. I try to write for the many residents in Southeast, and I believe, Putnam County who would like to see sweeping changes made in the way we look at and approve development.

The coveted 'Chutzpa' award this month is going to Northwater Group. Northwater Group wants to have, yes, you guessed it, another landscaping business, on Fields Lane.

Northwater Group actually does 'wetland restoration work' yet is proposing to enlarge a 500 sq. ft. pump house to 3000 sq. ft. all within the wetland buffer- because the buffer has been 'destroyed'. Great idea! Instead of wetland mitigation, that you're presumably expert in, just slap another building up so the aesthetics are improved.

By the way the newest in developer speak is the 'ATV Defense'. It was trotted out three times Tuesday evening and seems to work quite well. Ingenious! Congratulations!

I'm saving the best for last here. Terravest 3 or simply T3 as it was referred to on the agenda (a friend of mine asked if the CC was actually going to 'Review' Terminator 3- The Movie- if only...) At any rate I'm saving the diatribe for comments. The irony here is fantastic.

PUBLIC HEARING:

NORTHWATER GROUP: Fields Lane;

This was a long public hearing. Basically the site is 11.5 acres with buffer disturbance on 5 acres. Including some septic fields. There will be 6 buildings the majority the applicant will lease out. One will be for educational purposes. There will be outdoor storage. Gravel, topsoil, mulch and plant material. The drive and parking area will be pervious.

The Commission asked discerning questions here. They asked to see some of the applicants 'wetland restoration work.' The applicant said he could provide photographs but because all his work was on private estates a physical inspection would be impossible. The use of fertilizer (Osmocote) was questioned.

REGULAR MEETING:

1. Acceptance of May and June minutes.
2. PALAZETTI WAREHOUSE, Fields Lane: Engineer Harry Nichols

An absent member of the board e-mailed that she had questions on this project but was unable to attend the meeting.

An 8000 sq. ft warehouse on 2 acres with 1 acre of wetland buffer disturbance. Don Cuomo moved to hold off a vote on this until Harry Nichols could provide documentation that it was not possible to move the septic and building to mitigate some buffer disturbance. Board member Tringali felt that Harry Nichols was an expert on this and that his word was good enough. There was no second for Mr. Cuomo's motion.

Chairman Fasano asked that a new motion be made. There was a minute of silence. Then Mr. Hauser moved to make a positive determination which was seconded and passed by a vote of 5-1. Mr. Cuomo cast the sole dissenting vote and spoke briefly, wondering aloud what the CC's job really was.

3. VIGLIOTTI, Ice Pond Road Continued review.

The owner wants to erect a bridge over a stream for his horses.

4. ROSS ALLEN: Salmon Daily Brook Farm

Soil test results are still needed.

5. BAROODY: Farm to Market Road Engineer: Harry Nichols

Chairman Fasano explained that he would need a letter from the DEP (who has withdrawn any support on this two lot subdivision) stating that they were satisfied with this project. A public Hearing was set for August 24th.

6. SARKAS PROPERTY: Enoch Crosby Road

A Public Hearing was set for August 24th. This recently built house has septic fields and driveway buffer incursion.

7. TONETTA RINK: Tonetta Lake Park Engineer: Terri Hahn LADA

Although Mr. Cuomo felt that there should be a Public Hearing on this there were no letters from the public. The Board voted to waive the Public Hearing. There is wetland buffer encroachment on this project.

8. LAWS CONSTRUCTION: North Main Street (across from Kobackers)

This is the staging area for the Village sewer project. The CC voted that this project was of 'minor significance'. The Board voted a Positive determination. 6-0

NEW BUSINESS:

1. VITA SUBDIVISION: Brewster Hill Road Engineer: Putnam Engineering

A 3 lot subdivision (1 existing house and recently built cottage) Septic and well in wetland buffer. Pond on property. Site to be flagged.

2. TERRAVEST 3: Senior Housing. Engineer: Terri Hahn

This 87 acre site will have just under 9 acres in wetland buffer disturbance. Although both entrances cross wetlands they were constructed 'Who knows, how many years ago.'

according to Ms. Hahn. As this was a sketch review there were not too many questions asked.

COMMENTS:

NORTHWATER:

Well, what can I say. The 'ATV Defense' was trotted out as justification for buffer incursion. Apparently ATVs have done significant damage to the property vis a vis trails throughout. Outdoor storage, Landscaping business (this will make three on Fields Lane) in an Office Park 1 zone. And almost half the site in the buffer. For some reason, because the applicant is saying that the 'pumphouse' building will be used for 'educational' purposes, all of this seems to fly.

When asked if the display gardens and 'education center' would be open to the public during regular business hours the answer I got was: 'within reason.' Hmmmmm, what exactly does that mean. And what kind of educational programs will be run there? Any for the general public or just possible clients?

And, of course are there any guarantees that the 'education' building will remain just that.

2. PALAZETTI WAREHOUSE:

The 'ATV Defense's had worked so well in the previous Public Hearing that Engineer, Harry Nichols, immediately glommed on to it here. Harry, 'A' for observatory skills but 'C' for originality. Still this seemed to do the trick.

Although Mr. Cuomo was outraged by this project (he indicated that it would not be difficult to move most of project out of the buffer) he couldn't get a second on his motion to defer for documentation.

A really, really awkward silence followed. Maybe the rest of the Commission was a tad embarrassed as, Mr. Cuomo is, after all, a hydrologist by trade. So this little gem this sailed through as is.

5. BAROODY

Although only a 2 lot subdivision this is so ghasltly that even the DEP pulled the plug. Mr. Nichols mentioned that his clients needed the two lots because they had bought it 20 years ago and paid taxes on it ever since.

Huh? Doesn't that mean they probably paid a laughingly small sum of money for the land? My other guess is that the taxes have been fairly benign.

7. TONETTA RINK:

Town owned property and project that will include buffer incursion. Imagine that... Sets a good example for local developers to follow. Oh right, they already do.

8. LAWS CONSTRUCTION:

I know, I know, the village needs a staging area albeit that there may be buffer encroachment.

So on this one I'm just going to do a prediction: I believe that this property is owned by John Petrillo. In the recent past Mr. Petrillo has proposed giving this piece of land to the town for 'ball fields'. Over the next few years the land will be 'destroyed' by construction equipment and Voila! Ball fields will actually fly for 'aesthetic' reasons. This is the site where a ton of highway construction debris has been dumped.

TERRAVEST 3:

As promised I've saved the absolute best for last.

First of all Ms. Hahn's comment that the entrances had been in for 'who knows how many years' was a classic. Well, Ms. Hahn I can tell you exactly how many years the emergency access drive has been in as I have a 'temporary driveway permit' signed by the applicant himself and approved by our Highway Superintendent in January of '00. Now you're probably a lot younger than me so maybe four years seems like a long, long time to you but really, I promise, it isn't.

I love that part of the promised Town recreation fields will encroach in the buffer- nothing new here. I mean, look at the Lake Tonetta Rink.

But my personal favorite is that the restroom facilities will be built in the buffers as well. Finally, Southeast residents can literally do to the buffers what the local Boards and developers have been figuratively doing for years. The irony wasn't lost on me.

As always please feel free to e-mail me with any questions or comments that you may have.

With Best Regards,
Lynne Eckardt

Message 823 of 861 | [Previous](#) | [Next](#) [Up Thread] | [Message Index](#)

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