



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD
Inland Wetlands Board
WEB BASED MEETING VIA ZOOM

APPROVED/REVISED MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not a verbatim transcription.

August 22, 2024

Members present: Susan Baker, chair; Tim Bishop, Carson Fincham, Alan Pilch, Secretary; Chris Phelps

Members absent: David Smith

Also present: Caleb Johnson, Wetlands Agent; Aarti Paranjape, Recording Secretary, Robert Jewell, Pete Romano, Brian Carey, Seelan Pather, Jason Klien, Andy Soumeledis, Anthony Zemba, Robert Hendrick, Peter Olson, Kate Throckmorton.

I: Call to order:

Ms. Baker, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

II: Public Hearing(s):

1. IW-24-21; 599 Branchville Road; Plenary Ruling application for a stream crossing and related site work for an accessway/driveway with some related drainage work within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses.

Owner: Moreton Binn. Applicant: Robert Jewell

<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/97450>

Mr. Johnson read into the record the documents submitted pertaining to this application.

Mr. Jewell gave an overview of the project. The property is approximately 19.92 acres in 2 acres zone. In past property has been operated as an animal rescue which now no longer exists. The property has never been a nature preserve or called the Branchville preserve. He said that the application is for crossing and related work to serve the rear lot. The existing crossing is not suitable for emergency and other heavy vehicles, it was used for small vehicles when rescue animals were sheltered. The new crossing will be improved to be used by the emergency vehicles. The proposed bridge with abutments will be outside of wetlands and watercourses.

Mr. Jewell presented various possible scenarios of what could be done at this property and why the currently proposed project is most feasible and prudent. He said the property is eligible for first cut as per the subdivision regulations. He said the property could be subdivided or a Planned residential development can be proposed at this site. However, the project they are presenting is most prudent and feasible with less disturbance.

The scope of work bridge crossing, the abutments are 8-10 feet away from the wetlands and which is the closest work to wetlands. Project includes luxury apartments comprising two buildings. Two and one bedroom apartments shall be for sale only with a number set aside as affordable. As far as amenities, there will be only walking trails no pools or sports courts are proposed, which could cause more disturbance. The closest distance from the wetlands is 108.6 feet and all work proposed is outside of upland review area. Driveway is 67 feet away and just inside of review area. There will be temporary impact which will be mitigated with native plantings.

Mr. Romano gave an engineering overview of the project. A bridge with concrete abutments is proposed. It will be a spanned bridge with no center column piers in the stream. Twenty-two-foot roadway will lead to the two buildings. There will be 40-covered parking and 36 outdoor parking spaces. Underground storm drainage system will address the one-, ten- and hundred-year storm and will meet the requirements of Town's regulations. The septic system is

proposed per the State code and will stay under the limits of 7500 gallons per day per property which will be good for 58 bedrooms. Proper erosion and sediment control system shall be installed as per Town's requirements.

Mr. Carey gave a brief overview of the wetlands and its boundaries on the property. He added that the plan includes robust native plantings, which includes large deciduous trees, shrubs. Invasive species shall be removed and replaced by native vegetation. He said there is no evidence of threatened or endangered species.

Discussion ensued and members inquired about the stormwater system and its proximity to wetlands. Mr. Bishop expressed concerns about the stormwater downgradient and its construction near the wetlands shown in the center between the two buildings. He also inquired about number trees which shall be removed and that a site survey will be helpful.

Mr. Pilch inquired if the bridge will have piers in the crossing. Mr. Romano confirmed bridge would be clear span. He also addressed the concern raised by Mr. Pilch at last meeting about the extensive wall. Mr. Romano said they might tweak the plans to include a terraced wall instead.

Mr. Fincham stated that the proposed activity of the bridge crossing in wetlands is significant activity and that the significant work is proposed in flowing water, hence supporting the decision of raising to Plenary ruling. He inquired about the current crossing and if the applicant proposes to keep it.

Mr. Pather presented the architectural aspect of the buildings. The parking will have electric chargers as per the requirement of regulations; the proposed luxury apartments will have one or two bedrooms.

Ms. Baker inquired if there are any offsite wetlands within the hundred feet.

Applicant will revise the plans and address the concerns raised by members at the next meeting.

Public hearing continued to September 12, 2024.

2. IW-24-19; 27 Abbott Avenue; Plenary Ruling application for the construction of a 10 residential town houses with associated drainage and landscaping within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner: Veton Alimi. Applicant: Brian Carey.*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/97127>

Mr. Johnson read the documents submitted on the record.

Ms. Baker announced that the Board received intervention from Mr. David Sachs and that Board will have to acknowledge and grant the status on intervenor to Mr. Sachs. Since the intervention was submitted few hours before the start of public hearing and members didn't had time to review, the intervention status shall be addressed at the next meeting.

Mr. Klein gave an overview of the application along with brief history of the prior application which was denied due to the impact on wetlands caused by the activity within the hundred foot upland review area. He added this new application has been reduced from 14 homes to 10 homes, which enabled the increase of the buffer with more natural and vegetative habitat and reducing impervious surfaces from the prior application.

Mr. Soumedelis presented the application. The proposed building will have 10 units. There are no wetlands or watercourses on site and in not in flood plain. The site is in heavily urbanized area of the town. Scope of work includes stormwater system, retaining walls and robust planting of seventy-five-foot buffer. The impervious surface is reduced from 15,600 to 10,800 square feet. Only 420 sq ft of impervious surface is in upland review area, including limit of wall. The amount of fill in upland review area is 220 cubic yards. The Stormwater drainage system includes roof leaders and driveway runoff collecting into catch basins which

will be piped into hydrodynamic separators to promote infiltration which would go over the seventy-five-foot buffer before it enters wetlands. Erosion measures per town's requirements shall be installed during construction. The disturbance is pulled away from wetlands. He addressed the comments submitted by third party engineering review.

Mr. Zemba, Wetlands Scientist with LandTech, talked about the wetland plantings. He added the proposal includes significant plantings which will provide multiple benefit to wildlife and decrease footprint in the upland review area. There is no direct impact to wetlands. Plantings include native trees like red maples, black gum, flowering dogwoods, shrubs like black chokeberry, Sumac, American holly, sweet pepperbush, herbaceous plants. The plantings which is full of fragrant pollinator plants which will attract the wildlife.

Mr. Bishop acknowledged the improvement in plans as compared to prior application, He inquired about the invasive plant management. He asked if any protection is proposed to avoid accidental mowing by the maintenance companies. He suggested signs showing clear marking to avoid accidental mowing.

Mr. Pilch expressed concerns for the access to the maintenance of the plantings due to the construction of wall, which will hinder the tools to manage the overgrowth of invasive species.

Mr. Fincham inquired about the snow removal. He reiterated concerns raised by Mr. Trinkaus during prior application submission regarding the erosion measures installed properly. He added a weekly monitoring plan for erosion and sediment control shall be helpful.

Public hearing continued to September 12, 2024. Applicant will address the comments submitted by Biological peer review and engineering peer review.

III: Discussion (s)

1. IW-24-24; 17 East Ridge; Summary Ruling application for new construction and related appurtenances and site improvements of single-family dwelling damaged by fire, within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner/Applicant: Robert Hendrick.*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/97816>

Mr. Olson presented the application and gave a brief history. He mentioned the dwelling was destroyed completely due to fire in March of 2024. The homeowner proposes a complete demolition of dwelling and rebuilding hardscapes in the same footprint. There is a manmade pond and wetlands extend in the back of the property. All of the proposed work is in upland review area. The impervious surface is under the allowable threshold and hence no stormwater system is proposed.

Ms. Throckmorton said that the existing roof drains are directly discharging into the pond. The proposed plan will eliminate that and will daylight around the new stonewall which will eventually drain across the lawn and buffer before entering the pond. Part of the existing driveway shall be converted to lawn. Grading will be done for the new driveway which will be shorter and away from the pond. The pond has woody and mixed vegetation which will stay along with the two aerators systems. Pond discharges to the Ridgefield brook and ultimately to Norwalk River. On the eastern side are town drains which directly discharges into pond. No change is proposed for that.

Existing extensive garden will remain; however, the patio will be reconfigured. Throughout the project proper erosion and sediment controls measures will be installed. She added that plans will be finalized per Board's suggestions.

Discussion ensued and Mr. Bishop suggested to reduce the manicured lawns. The lawn extends to the edge of pond and no mow buffer plantings will be enhancement in between the pond and house.

Mr. Pilch asked if the plans could quantify the amount of impervious surface existing in upland review and what the new plans proposes. He agreed that riparian buffer along the eastern portion of pond and no lawn at the edge of pond will be good.

Discussion continued to September 12, meeting where applicant will present the revised plans as per Board's suggestions.

Applicant requested due to time sensitivity they appreciate if the discussion can be held earlier on September 12.

IV: Applications for Receipt(s):

1. **IW-24-25; 84 Old South Salem Road;** Summary Ruling application for installation of a 10x16 fiberglass inground swimming pool, and patio within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner: Jeffrey Hansen. Applicant: Samantha Brant. For receipt and scheduling a sitewalk and discussion.*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/98006>
2. **IW-24-26; 845 North Salem Road;** Summary Ruling application for existing pond restoration within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner: Bruce Michel. Applicant: Ross Nazzaro. For receipt and scheduling a sitewalk and discussion.*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/98011>
3. **IW-24-28; 9 Kendra Court;** Summary Ruling application for construction of a patio, retaining wall, stone steps, shoreline stabilization, trenching of existing utilities, deer fence, and native wetland mitigation plantings within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner: Andrew Roman. Applicant: Tracy Chalifoux. For receipt and scheduling a sitewalk and discussion.*
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/98030>

Mr. Pilch motioned and Mr. Phelps seconded to receive the three applications. Motion carried unanimously.

The sitewalk is scheduled for September 22 and discussion on September 26, 2024.

V: List of Ongoing Enforcement by Agent:

None

VI: Other Business:

1. **IW-21-47; 6 Millers Lane - Planting bond release**

Mr. Johnson updated Board that plantings are well established with hundred percent survival rate.

Mr. Bishop motioned to release the bond in full. Mr. Fincham seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2. **IW-21-15; 41 Governor Street – Planting bond**

Mr. Johnson explained that the bond amount for Wetlands was released instead for Planning & Zoning Commission. The plantings are doing well. Some area looked sparse and he has asked the Boys and Girls Club to restore the area. Board members agreed to reduce the bond, releasing \$25,492 and retaining \$35,960 for another year until the site is fully stabilized and plantings grow for another growing season.

Mr. Bishop motioned to reduce the bond to \$35,960. Mr. Pilch seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3. IW-21-53; 26 Hessian Drive – Planting bond release

Mr. Johnson updated Board that although plantings were good, homeowner had mowed five-foot no-mow zone.

Board agreed not to release the bond until the homeowner maintains back the no-mow zone. Mr. Pilch suggested clearly demarcating the no mow zone.

Mr. Johnson will inspect and update the Board if no-mow zone is created and maintained before the release of bond.

VI: Approval of Minutes:

- **Inland Wetlands Meeting: July 25, 2024**

Mr. Phelps motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Pilch seconded. Mr. Bishop and Mr. Fincham abstained. Motion carried 3-0-2.

- **Sitewalk Minutes: August 18, 2024**

Mr. Phelps motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Fincham seconded. Mr. Bishop and Ms. Baker abstained. Motion carried 3-0-2.

VII: Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Ms. Baker adjourned the meeting at 10:10 PM.

Submitted by

Aarti Paranjape
Recording Secretary