

WEST TISBURY
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING
March 19, 2024

The meeting was held via Zoom in accordance with the Governor's order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A sec.20. Public participation will be via remote participation (Zoom) pursuant to M. G. L. Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Present: Fred Barron, Geraldine Brooks, Whit Griswold, Angela Luckey (arrived at 5:20pm), Chris Lyons, and Ernie Thomas

Absent: Peter Rodegast and Michael Turnell

Staff Present: Maria McFarland

Also present for all or part of the meeting: Harrison Keisel, Kris Horiuchi, and Reid Silva

Whit Griswold called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

Minutes:

A motion was made by Geraldine, seconded by Ernie, to approve the minutes of the February 27, 2024 meeting as revised. Roll Call Vote: Chris-aye, Ernie -aye, Geraldine and Whit -aye.

Public Hearings

Maps 12 and 15 Lots 31,32 and 3.1/ SE79-464: a public hearing under the requirements of G.L. Ch.131 § 40, as amended, and West Tisbury Wetlands Protection Bylaw and regulations to consider a **Notice of Intent** filed by the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank, for a project to implement management activities at Christiantown Woods and Arrowhead Farm for a new trail system that will connect two isolated pieced of conservation land. At Christiantown Woods there will be three boardwalks to cross two intermittent streams and at Arrowhead Farm there will two raised boardwalks over the Mill Brook. New trails will be installed within the first fifty feet of the Buffer Zone and the Riverfront Area. The project may include invasives species control and habitat management. The project is located at 68 and 72 Christiantown Road and 174 Indian Hill Road.

Harrison spoke for the Land Bank. He showed a plan showing the parcels and the trials the Land Bank would like to add to the two properties above. There was some confusion about which property has the intermittent stream running through it and which has the Mill Brook.

The raised boardwalks will each have Fiber grate decking and will use the pin foundation system so the smallest amount of ground disturbance. Often there is no flow in the channel of the intermittent stream, it is mostly surface water. Harrison displayed photos. One of the crossings at Arrowhead Farm will incorporate the timbers that we once part of a horse jump.

Commissioners Comments/ Questions:

Whit asked Fred and Geraldine to comment as they were the only members who attended the site visits. First hand observations.

Fred said that there is one issue about the privacy of the neighbors at the Christiantown Preserve. He said that any impacts should be minimized. When asked about this, Harrison replied that where the trail runs tightly between two homes, the Land Bank will put up split rail fencing. Harrison has had discussions with one of the neighbors about the Land Bank providing some screening of the trail. Where the Christiantown trail meets the road, the Land Bank will place boulders.

Chris said he noticed that at the Christiantown locations the flow is usually from storm events. He asked if there will be signage at the Christiantown Church. Harrison needs to check with the Christiantown Road association.

Ernie asked if the Land Bank does the construction on site or if they do it off site and carry the boardwalks into the location. Harrison said the Land Bank pre-builds the framing and carries that to the site. The decking is cut to length. The fiberglass grating will also be carried to the site. Assembly is done at the site.

There being no further discussion, Whit closed the public hearing.

A motion was made by Geraldine, seconded by Ernie to approve this project as presented with the usual conditions. Roll Call Vote: Angela – aye, Ernie -aye Geraldine -aye, and Whit-aye. Chris abstained.

Map 43 Lot 1.2/ SE 79-465: a public hearing under the requirements of M.G.L. Ch.131 § 40, as amended, and the West Tisbury Wetlands Protection Bylaw and regulations to consider a **Notice of Intent** filed by Vineyard Land Surveying & Engineering, Inc., on behalf of Nancy Go and Lobster Coop LLC for a project to cut and prune brush and trees to create one new view channel within the Buffer Zone to Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage, Coastal Bank and Priority Habitat. The project location is known as **98 Watcha Club Road**.

Reid and Kris presented the project. Fred and Ernie attended the site visit.

Kris said that she has prepared a plan showing a comparison of the original two view channels and the single view channel now being proposed. The view channel has now been flagged and trees to be removed have been flagged. The plan shows the 8 trees to be limbed or removed and outlines the scrub oak area.

Kris said they waited to file an NOI for the view channel because the Commission prefers to review view channels once the house is substantially complete, they filed a new Notice of Intent.

The revised plan shows one view channel, the mature trees and the area of understory that they would like to prune or cut down. The area to be cut is scrub oak with huckleberry under it. Kris filled the Commission in on the techniques the landscaper will use. The view channel stops at the edge of the 25 ft. No-Disturbance Zone. The land drops down and off the bank so that there is nothing that needs to be managed in this area.

Reid described where the view will be seen from. There is a pavilion that is about 2 feet off the ground. Standing there one will look over most of the understory and look under the tree canopy for the view. There is a natural channel below the canopy aside from the cluster of scrub oak and the few trees they want to limb or cut down.

Maria read the definition of vista pruning in the state regulations; “Vista pruning is the selecting thinning tree branches or understory shrubs to establish a specific “window “to improve visibility.

It does not include the cutting of trees which would reduce the leaf canopy to less than 90% of the existing crown cover and does not include the mowing or removal of understory brush. No mowing of the ground cover and the understory.”

Fred said that Cody said at the site visit that the scrub oak would be cut down to the height of the huckleberry. Whit asked how high the huckleberry is now. Kris responded that it varies from 3 to 5 feet in height. They are not proposing to mow to create a meadow. They want to manage the vegetation that pops up over the understory. Kris said they wanted to have a maintenance plan for the scrub oak. Kris is aware that the Commission does not like a hedge or buzz cut look. They want to be selective in how they manage it.

Ernie said that Caleb Nicholson, the landscaper, told him at the site visit that the trees shown on the plan would be completely removed. One large tree could have a limb removed. Ernie thought that would impact the crown. Most of the undergrowth in the area within the green string are going to be cut to the ground. He is concerned about cutting the trees that would impact the crown.

Kris said it appears that the Board is not clear on what the applicant would like to do to establish this view channel. Whit agreed and suggested another site visit. Reid said the site visit will give the members some level of comfort with what they are being asked to approve.

A site visit will be held on March 25 at 1:00 PM.

Chris asked if the wording of the NOI is correct that the applicant wants to cut the shrubs and understory to no less than 48 inches within the Buffer Zone. Reid said that the wording Chris just read was a cut and paste error on his part. He added that Kris’s description is more accurate.

Maria asked if they refiled with NHESP for the portion of the view channel that is within Priority Habitat. Reid said they filed the original project but not this one yet. They will.

A motion was made and seconded to continue the public hearing on this project to March 26 at 5:45 PM. Roll Call Vote: Angela -aye, Chris-aye, Ernie -aye Geraldine -aye, and Whit-aye.

New Business: None

Old Business:

Brandy Brow: Maria will schedule a site visit with Andrew Lester any time before March 26.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:26 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maria McFarland
Board Administrator