

Town of Ayer Conservation Commission

Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432 * 978-772-8249 * 978-772-8208 (fax)
Minutes for 7/23/2015 – Approved 8/13/2015

Location: Ayer Town Hall, 1st Floor

Members present: Bill Daniels (BD, Chair), George Bacon (GB, Vice-Chair), Takashi Tada (TT),
Jessica Gugino (JG, Clerk)

Not present: Vacancy: CA, Conservation Administrator; Member

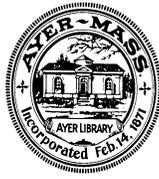
APAC taped: Yes

7:05 PM – Open Meeting

- **Confirmation of the Agenda**
 - GB moved to confirm the agenda as posted; TT 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

- **Approval of Meeting Minutes**
 - GB moved to approve the minutes for 7/9/2015 as written; TT 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.

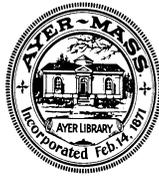
- **Public Hearing: NOI – 255 Snake Hill Road, Ayer Gun & Sportsman’s Club, MassDEP # 100-0385**
 - Alan Griffin and Barry Schwarzel were present for the Gun Club.
 - Mr. Griffin presented the green card proof of abutter notification as well as a check to reimburse the cost of the legal ad.
 - The proposed project entails the construction of a 322 sq. ft. building expansion at the back of the Gun Club, as well as the relocation of an existing deck on the same side.
 - NHESP and MESA notifications have been filed and the Gun Club is awaiting a response.
 - The dimensions of the addition are 14’ x 13’7”.
 - Steve Sears, of David E. Ross Associates, delineated the wetlands on 7/13/2015.
 - Mr. Griffin presented a revised site drawing showing specific distances between the bounds of the addition and the wetland flagging.
 - The closest point of disturbance is approximately 87 ft. from the wetlands.
 - For the addition, the 3 new walls will be excavated down to 4 ft. for the construction of footings and a knee wall foundation.
 - Approximately 40 feet of an erosion control line, haybales and silt fencing, is planned.
 - The corners of the addition have been staked out.
 - BD scheduled a site walk for Saturday, 7/25, at 1 p.m.
 - Some of the things to be looked at on the site walk are where excavated soils will be stored and the travel path for heavy equipment.
 - From the audience, John Cadigan, a resident of Autumn Ridge Farms, said that Autumn Ridge, an abutter of Gun Club property, had not received abutter notification.
 - BD reviewed the certified list of abutters provided to the Gun Club by the Town Assessor’s office.
 - It appears that the Gun Club owns several parcels of land.
 - The building expansion is on a parcel that does not directly abut Autumn Ridge and is, in fact, at considerable distance from the retirement community.



Town of Ayer Conservation Commission

Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432 * 978-772-8249 * 978-772-8208 (fax)
Minutes for 7/23/2015 – Approved 8/13/2015

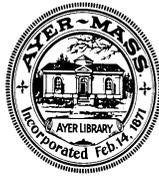
- It was surmised that this was the reason why the Assessor's office did not include Autumn Ridge on the certified abutter list.
 - On reviewing the Gun Club plans, Mr. Cadigan agreed that the proposed addition would have no impact on the Autumn Ridge community.
- GB moved to continue the Public Hearing to 8/13/15; TT 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.
- **Discussion: Comprehensive Survey of Ayer Ponds**
 - Robert Hartzel, of Geosyntec Consultants, was present.
 - Also present for a posted joint meeting were members of the Pond & Dam Committee: Chair Chuck Miller, Marina Giovannini, Don Rzasas, and DPW Superintendent Mark Wetzel.
 - BD expressed appreciation to Mr. Hartzel over the current draft material and stressed that ConCom and Pond & Dam were especially looking for clear recommendations from which to construct a management plan and budget for residents to review at Town Meeting.
 - Mr. Hartzel noted that each of Ayer's ponds is, in effect, "a different animal" in terms of management goals and recommendations and that the Town will need to assess what is a realistic goal for each.
 - Mr. Hartzel then proceeded to present a slide-supported overview of the survey project and results.
 - He stressed that data collection for a survey like this is essentially an isolated "snapshot in time" that limits information on trends for each pond.
 - BD and Mr. Wetzel discussed the need for the Town to develop an ongoing future sampling plan.
 - BD said suggestions from Geosyntec on what locations are best for a sampling program will be necessary.
 - Mr. Hartzel said Geosyntec would recommend duplicating the sampling locations used in their survey.
 - He also said Geosyntec would be able to provide a recommended sampling plan.
 - Mr. Hartzel then reviewed the draft material on Water Quality; Phosphorous Budgets and Modeling; Aquatic Vegetation Assessment; Field Watershed Investigation; and Grove Pond Risk Assessment.
 - BD noted that in reviewing the draft material, ConCom and Pond&Dam members had referenced the Scope of Work for the project in generating questions and comments.
 - Highlights of various points and comments are noted below:
 - A future sampling plan should prioritize measuring 1) total phosphorous; 2) chlorophyll A; and 3) Secchi disk clarity.
 - These three provide a "trophic index" that shows where each waterbody is in its aging process.
 - A perfect scenario would establish a baseline by taking water samples once a month for an entire year, or at least from the time of ice-out through October when water is more uniformly mixed.
 - In deeper waterbodies, samplings should be taken from the surface, middle, and bottom.
 - Eutrophication is the natural process by which nutrients, organic matter and sediments gradually accumulate in the aging process of a pond.
 - Nutrient levels are at their peak in late summer and early fall.



Town of Ayer Conservation Commission

Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432 * 978-772-8249 * 978-772-8208 (fax)
Minutes for 7/23/2015 – Approved 8/13/2015

- BD noted that Flannagan Pond and Pine Meadow Pond, both flooded wet meadows, showed big differences in sampling results.
 - Mr. Hartzel said ponds in general tend to be dominated either by plants or by algae.
- Mr. Miller asked if the “dog bone” shape of Flannagan pond affects measurements given that the east end of the pond is far denser in plant growth than the west end, almost as if it were two separate ponds.
 - Mr. Hartzel said the key factor was water flow and that therefore this wouldn’t affect results.
- Mr. Hartzel said that Robbins Pondweed is a native aquatic species that is good for habitat and its presence suppresses the growth of invasives.
- Regarding Balch Pond, Mr. Hartzel noted the oily sheen, likely petroleum-based, that was observed the previous year and is still present.
 - Geosyntec notified MassDEP at the time and assumed that ConCom would be following up on it.
- For Grove Pond, fanwort was observed as an apparently new infestation.
 - The Town will have to consider whether it wants to expend resources to manage this, but Mr. Hartzel cautioned that waiting too long could result in a ‘carpet’ of invasives that one could almost ‘walk across’.
- Long Pond was singled out as a regionally-significant example of a healthy and diverse pond.
 - Mr. Hartzel suggested a high priority should be given to rapid identification of problems in this pond so as to maintain its current excellent condition.
- Regarding Pine Meadow Pond, Mr. Hartzel noted that the pond has a history of previous weed treatments.
 - From vague information provided in the past, it wasn’t clear, however, what was the driver for those treatments.
 - For example, past reports indicate the pond was being treated for milfoil, but information was not provided as to how dominant the milfoil actually was.
 - BD recalled that previous management focused on spot treatments of pockets of milfoil.
 - Mr. Hartzel encouraged the Town to work toward defining ‘what a significant pocket means’ and evaluate what its goals are for treatment of this pond, i.e. maintenance of boating channels for recreational use.
- For Sandy Pond, fanwort has been found at the inlet stream area.
 - The Town should consider the use of DASH (diver assisted suction harvesting).
- Geosyntec would be able to provide a ‘field guide to species in Ayer ponds’, something it has developed for lake associations in other communities to assist with sampling programs.
- BD said an overall goal of the survey is to be able to develop a clear picture of where the Town wants to be in terms of the state of its ponds, as well as recommendations for how the Town gets there.
 - A goal-oriented approach for each individual pond would make the most sense.
- Mr. Wetzel sees the survey as providing useful information for developing management budgets through the Capital Planning Committee.



Town of Ayer Conservation Commission

Town Hall * One Main Street * Ayer, MA 01432 * 978-772-8249 * 978-772-8208 (fax)
Minutes for **7/23/2015** – Approved 8/13/2015

- JG asked that the draft contain more basic information so that the layperson can understand the meaning or importance of various measurements and findings.
 - Along that line, Mr. Miller asked for the survey to provide an explanation, for example, of why residents should care about something like phosphorous loading.
- BD talked about future public outreach, tailored especially to homeowners.
- Mr. Hartzel said he would be working on revising the drafts later in August, after he returns from vacation.

- **Office Updates**
 - Office closing
 - The ConCom office will be closed on Friday, 8/7, for carpet replacement.
 - BD suggested 11 a.m. on Sunday, 8/2, for packing up office material.
 - Cains spill
 - The office received a message from MassDEP Circuit Rider Judy Schmitz about a slight overflow from Cains' wastewater tank on the previous Saturday, 7/18.
 - Superintendent Wetzel said that the DPW had been notified and that the spill was processed wastewater that did not include any pathogenic content.
 - MassDEP's Emergency Response Team was notified by Cains, and Ayer Fire Chief Pedrazzi also was notified.
 - ZBA Review
 - A request for comments from the ZBA for a project at 41 Nashua Street was reviewed.
 - BD indicated that ConCom had no issues.
 - Autumn Ridge Conservation Restriction
 - John Cadigan, of Autumn Ridge, said their copy of Steve Smith's Baseline report has gone missing.
 - He asked if ConCom could provide them a copy from its version.

- **10:08 PM – Adjourn Meeting**
 - GB moved to adjourn; TT 2nd.
 - Motion approved unanimously.