



TOWN OF BEDFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

MINUTES

SITE WALK AT SAINT ANSELM COLLEGE – TRACK AND FIELD STADIUM

December 4, 2023

A meeting of the Bedford Conservation Commission for the purpose of a site walk to view the proposed Track and field Athletic Complex 96 Rundlett Hill Road, Tax Map 42, Lots 26 and 01, was held Tuesday, December 4, 2023 at 3:00 pm.

Present: Pat Grogan (Chair), Brian Labrie, Joanne Smith, Stephanie Jones, Deborah Evans

Also Present: Kathleen Ports (Town of Bedford), Chris Danforth (KNA), James Robinson and Nick Golon (TF Moran), Bill Furlong and Johnathon Woodcock (Saint Anselm College).

Members of the Public: Mr. and Mrs. Alger

The Commission met at the end of Rundlett Hill Road, which is adjacent to the project site. Ms. Ports explained that the site walk was a public informational meeting to view the site and wetlands. She explained that meeting minutes would be prepared in accordance with Right to Know Law (RSA 91-A) procedures. Ms. Ports stated that participants should refrain from side conversations, and the group will have a question and answer session at the end of the walk. She explained that the site walk is occurring at the invitation of the landowner and the terrain is rough. Participants are walking the site at their own risk.

Mr. Robinson provided an overview of the site on a large map to orient the participants. Ms. Evans asked him to point out the exact location of the concerned abutter's property. Mr. Labrie asked if the specifications on the turf field were available. Mr. Golon stated he is working hard to get them. Mr. Danforth, wetland scientist, then led the walk.

The group first viewed Wetland 6, which is the primary wetland affected by the project. The wetland is approximately 18,000 s.f. and approximately 12,000 s.f. would be filled. The wetland blends with its surroundings and is difficult to discern. Mr. Danforth explained that it was a marginal wetland and difficult to delineate. It is his opinion that the wetland largely formed due to the fact that as an active agricultural field there is a compacted plow layer that holds water near the surface creating the hydrology and soils indicators of a wetland. The group asked:

1. What effect would the fill have on the remaining 6,000 s.f.?

Mr. Danforth stated that he believed the project would not affect the hydrology of the remaining wetland and might even create a bit more hydrology to the wetland.

2. What types of wildlife use this wetland and whether there were wildlife corridors on the property?

Mr. Danforth explained that wildlife using the wetland are likely there due to the surrounding agricultural habitat. Deer bed in the field but any corridors are more likely associated with the forested features to the east. The group discussed tree removal at the eastern edge of the property and it was stated that the bump out area would be cleared but in general they would limit clearing to the extent that they could.

3. What is the depth of glacial till and how permeable is it?

Mr. Danforth explained that the till is approximately 2 to 5 feet in depth and is permeable but not highly permeable like a sand might be.

4. Were there aerial photographs of the site prior to its agricultural use and did they provide any indication that this area was historically wetland?

Mr. Danforth did review aerial photos but found none that pre-date the agricultural use. He doesn't think it was historically wet.

5. Ms. Evans asked if (1) the discus, javelin etc. could be located in the center of the field and the track shifted in a NW to SE orientation, or could the track be shifted and the discus, javelin etc. be relocated nearer the road.

Mr. Furlong stated that having the events in the center of the field would not safe for the other athletes. Mr. Golon answered even if we shift the field, there is not enough room or the right topography to relocate the other events nearer the road.

The group discussed the effects of the new basin on wetlands 4 and 5. Mr. Danforth stated those are an odd situation where you have a slope wetland that is not a seep. The characteristics are similar to wetland 6 in that is it likely supported by the plow layer. Mr. Danforth was not concerned about indirect impacts to wetlands 4 and 5.

The group then walked to the northern end of the property through the parking lot to the NE corner. On the way they viewed the natural turf soccer field and discussed the maintenance challenges and limited season with these fields, which is why the College wants synthetic turf. It was also noted that the soccer team is the last college in its division to play on a natural field. The Algiers joined the site walk at 3:40 pm. At the SE corner of the parking lot, the group discussed tree clearing and it was stated that the row of white pines and other trees along the S. boundary of the parking area would be removed. The group discussed other tree clearing requirements to expand the existing basin.

The group moved to the location of the impact to the forested wetland. The area was clearly flagged. Ms. Ports asked, specifically why is this impact needed? Mr. Golon stated that over time the northern basin has lost some of its function. This impact will improve how the first basin both holds runoff and then drains it to the second basin.

Ms. Jones asked about impacts to migratory birds. She stated that she imagined that this type of habitat is both limited and important for migratory birds to forage. Mr. Golon stated that they did not look into migratory birds and that some of the habitat would be maintained at the very SE corner of the property.

Mr. Woodcock stated that the College and St. Benedictine conducted a large forest restoration project on the other side of campus nearer Rte 114. They worked with a scientist to develop and implement the plan and removed invasive plants, planted trees and other layers.

Mr. Algers stated that 10 years ago the agencies reported that his property supports an endangered species, specifically it was a bird, but he can't remember the species. He wanted to know why that wasn't captured on the project searches. Mr. Danforth stated that species' status changes as we learn more about them. He isn't sure what bird it would have been. Mr. Alger said he would try to find the information. Mr. Danforth stated that the state NHB search includes the vicinity of the project and would have captured anything present at Mr. Alger's property.

Mr. Labrie stated he wanted to look at one more thing as the group walked back to their cars. Mr. Golon stated that the purpose of the site walk was to answer questions and address concerns. He wanted to confirm they did that. The group indicated it was very helpful to see the site. The group started back to the cars but again stopped at the SE corner of the parking area and NW corner of the basin. Mr. Labrie noted ponded water beyond the delineated wetland and stated he understands that doesn't mean it is a wetland but that a similar area on a site he has seen was identified as wetland. Mr. Danforth explained his soil probing process and stated that it just did not meet the criteria.

On the return to the cars, Ms. Grogan asked Mr. Danforth about wildlife use of the filled wetlands. Do they support turtles? He stated that turtles were unlikely to be able to make their way through those fields and the wetlands were not ponded long enough for turtles. She asked if there was any wildlife that would specifically use that wetland. Mr. Danforth stated most species occurring in the wetland are there for the agricultural field. Rodents are likely abundant in the fields, but less likely in the wetland. The rodents attract hawks, fox, coyote, and other predators. The terrain and lack of ponding water does not support turtles or any of our vernal pool amphibians. The wetland may provide some different vegetated food sources but did not specifically support anything different from the agricultural field.

The group returned to their cars and discussed next steps. Ms. Smith departs. Mr. Labrie stated that he can't make a decision about the project without the field specifications. Ms. Ports asked if the applicant would be ready for the December 12 meeting. Mr. Furlong stated he would have the information tomorrow and would like to remain on the agenda.

The site walk adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen Ports