



**TOWN OF BRISTOL
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

*Department of Community Development
235 High Street, Bristol, Rhode Island*

Tuesday, December 5, 2023 @ 5:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 2023 MEETING MINUTES

Members Present:

*Tony Morettini
Ray Payson
Lindsay Green
Craig Fisher
Jay Maciel*

Staff Present:

Ed Tanner

Members Absent:

*Glenn Donovan
Lee Ann Freitas*

2024 JAN 17 AM 7:52

TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
BRISTOL, RHODE ISLAND

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Morettini at 5:35 p.m.

1. Minutes: A motion to approve the November minutes was made by Mr. Payson and seconded by Mr. Morettini. Vote: 5-0.
2. Tree Program: Mr. Tanner said that tree planting was finished last week and that all trees for the current tree planting cycle are in. Mr. Morettini said that there is no update to the tree study project that is currently in progress. Mr. Tanner mentioned that a final report from the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC), who is performing the study, should be received by the end of the year.
3. DEM Notice for Gooding Avenue Hotel: Mr. Ted Spinard of 35 Dartmouth Street, was in attendance at the meeting and provided his position on the proposed alteration of wetlands needed to develop an 80-room hotel on Gooding Avenue. He began by stating that 50,000 square feet of wetlands currently used for flood storage would be filled in by construction of the hotel. Citing the flooding that takes place in the Silver Creek watershed a common occurrence when it rains, Mr. Spinard said that the project would make what is currently a bad situation even worse. Mr. Spinard continued by saying that DEM denied an application in 2016 for a proposed hotel at the same location, and that the sitting Bristol Conservation Commission had sent a letter to DEM stating its serious concerns about the project at that time. Mr. Spinard said that State and Federal laws protecting wetlands have value and asked the Commission to join in and oppose the wetlands alteration permit currently in front of DEM. Mr. Spinard left the meeting and discussion ensued about the hotel project, along with a review of engineering plans submitted by the developers to DEM, which included a proposed underground detention and infiltration system. Mr. Tanner explained the 50-foot jurisdictional wetland perimeter, as well as how a biologist looks at plants, soil, and surface features to determine wetlands. Mr. Payson said that the ecological values of the land should not be undervalued. Ms. Green cited the increased occurrence of more intense storms and their impact on recent flooding.

TOWN COUNCIL	continued
FEB 7 - 2024	
MEETING	



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DECEMBER 2023 MEETING MINUTES, continued

A review of the DEM Notice was performed, including the objection criteria put forth in the Notice. Mr. Payson made a motion that Chairman Morettini draft a letter based on our discussion to DEM in opposition to the proposed wetlands alteration, to be submitted to Conservation Commission members for its review prior to sending to DEM. Mr. Fisher seconded the motion and it passed, 5-0.

4. The next Conservation Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.
5. Mr. Payson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mr. Fisher, and the meeting ended at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,


Jay Maciel

SEE ATTACHMENT 1

December 7, 2023

To: RIDEM Freshwater Wetlands Program
Martin Wencek, Program Supervisor
From: The Bristol Conservation Commission
Re: Application 22-0264

Dear Mr. Wencek;

The Bristol Conservation Commission has reviewed the noted application to alter freshwater wetlands in order to build a hotel on Gooding Avenue in Bristol. After extensive review, we have concluded we cannot support Application 22-0264 as currently proposed.

In our view, the proposal to build on almost 50,000 square feet of swamp and wetlands would seriously and negatively impact the function and value of that wetland, as it will no longer protect the subject property, nor properties downstream (Silver Creek runs just to the East). Significantly, one of those properties is the location of the current and future Mount Hope High School.

The extensive engineering work proposed, in our view, doesn't mitigate wetlands impact, it effectively destroys that portion of the wetlands it will be constructed in. It is also not clear that, with storm frequency and intensity increasing, it will sufficiently handle extreme events. The potential for the man-made system to be regularly overwhelmed would create an ongoing hazard for downstream properties.

We have, therefore, concluded that the risk of this alteration, effectively a "re-architecting" of nature, to adversely impact a wetland and surrounding properties is far greater than any benefit it may promise. Protection of our wetlands, and their benefits, is of paramount concern. We are very concerned this proposal not only doesn't protect or even "alter" a wetland, it destroys a large portion of it and, with it, will cause more problems downstream.

Respectfully,



The Bristol Conservation Commission
Tony Morettini, Chair