1	Exeter Conservation Commission
2	January 14, 2025
3	Nowak Room
4	10 Front Street
5	7:00 PM
6	Draft Minutes
7	Diait Williutes
8	Call to Order
	<u>can to Order</u>
9	1. Introduction of Mambara Present (by Pall Call)
10	1. Introduction of Members Present (by Roll Call)
11	Dresent at taxiaht/a maasting ware. Chair Dave Chart Vies Chair Canar Madisan. Andrew Koff Traver
12	Present at tonight's meeting were: Chair Dave Short, Vice-Chair Conor Madison, Andrew Koff, Trevor
13	Mattera, Keith Whitehouse, Valorie Fanger, Alternate Kyle Welch, Alternate Bill Campbell, Alternate
14 15	Michele Crepeau, Alternate Sean Torrez, Alternate Don Clement (remotely) and Select Board
15	Representative Dan Chartrand
16 17	Staff Drosant, Kriston Murphy, Consonyation and Systainability Dlannar
17 18	Staff Present: Kristen Murphy, Conservation and Sustainability Planner
19	Chair Short called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and introduced the members. Alternate Kyle Welch
20	was activated.
21	was activated.
22	2. Public Comment
23	2. I ubile comment
24	Chair Short asked if there were any public comment outside of agenda items and there was none.
25	chair short asked if there were any public comment outside of agenda items and there was none.
26	Action Items
27	
28	1. Site Plan Review and Wetland Conditional Use Permit for a Mixed-Use Neighborhood Development
29	project at 76 Portsmouth Ave (and Haven Ln.) at Tax Map 65, Lot 118. (Paige Libbey, Jones and Beach
30	
31	Paige Libbey of Jones & Beach Engineers presented the application on behalf of the applicant for site
32	plan review and wetland conditional use permit for a mixed-unit neighborhood development project at
33	the 6.7-acre parcel on 76 Portsmouth Ave which was the former site of Fisher Auto. She noted that
34	Jenna Green from Green & Company, John O'Neill and Jim Gove were also present.
35	
36	Ms. Libby described manmade drainage and ditches which bisect the property and plans for two phases
37	of development, beginning with the 36-townhouse unit phase in the back of the property and then the
38	36 one-bedroom apartments in a four-story building.
39	
40	Ms. Libby noted the plans had changed after the Technical Review Committee review and review by
41	DPW, the Planning Board and Fire Department. She noted a second access was added off Haven Lane
42	and two wetland crossings and a pedestrian crossing from the rear of the parcel to the front and
43	connectivity for the water line from Haven Lane to Portsmouth Ave required by the DPW. She indicated

this would keep the function of the wetlands and adhere to NHDES and town stormwater drainage with drainage using porous pavement, underground filtration and retention which will be treated before outlet to the wetlands.

Ms. Libby described buffer impacts for the parking and structure and limited use impacts. Ms. Fanger asked the square feet of buffer impact and Ms. Libby indicated the limited use impacts to be 18,800 SF and the parking and structure to be 22,400 SF. Ms. Fanger noted the impacts were larger to the buffers than compared to the design at the conceptual meeting. Ms. Libbey explained that the previous proposal had larger buildings, and the state doesn't allow as much fill, and they wouldn't be able to fill the central ditch. There is less wetland impact. Ms. Fanger noted the upper right portion of the property drains to Wheelwright Creek.

Ms. Libby noted there was a landscaping plan along the edge to provide a buffer.

Mr. Koff asked to clarify the reason why a significant portion of upland, buildable area, was not being utilized and this design spreads impact to buffers right up to the wetland boundary. He noted the upland should be buildable. Mr. Gove explained that NH DES does not allow, in residential development, to do anything other than cross wetlands. There was a time we could argue that point and now it's just about square feet of their jurisdiction and avoidance and minimization. If it were commercial, then the approach is to minimize what you're going to hit. He referenced their booklet on avoidance and minimization. He agreed it might not seem rational, but he has been trying to make the same argument with them for a long time. Mr. Gove reviewed his report and noted the low function of the wetland buffers and no wildlife habitat and man-made ditch. He reviewed flood flow rates and seasonal runoff.

Mr. Koff referenced the upland area to the north of that and asked why not try to fit a few units there and Ms. Libbey noted since the previous proposal the layout had the building shifted over along with the driveway. At the TRC meeting they wanted two access points on Haven Lane. Ms. Libbey noted a pond in the corner, off the property, which she noted impacts this property. The wetland drains to the pond. She noted 15" and 48" culvert which outlets to Portsmouth Ave. She noted the natural flow of the site and high points.

Mr. Koff noted that porous pavement needs well drained soil and asked about snow removal, and Ms. Libbey noted the infiltration rates were checked and the pavement drains to the porous pavement.

Ms. Fanger noted the amount of buffer impact is worrisome, it is too much of an impact.

Mr. Clement asked how much buffer is being lost with this development and Ms. Libbey repeated the square feet of impact for parking and structure and limited use impacts and referenced Sheet C-3. Mr. Clement noted there is 40-50,000 SF of buffer impacts on seven acres. Mr. Clement noted that the buffers were not created to be thrown away like they don't matter, and noted he had a lot of trouble with those. Ms. Libbey responded that there is a large area not developed that receives stormwater runoff and will be a vegetative buffer and that they were adding stormwater management.

Mr. Koff asked if there were places that were not impacted and noted he would never approve of all the buffer on this site being impacted.

Mr. Whitehouse noted he was concerned with residents having water in their basements. Ms. Libbey reviewed the stormwater analysis, peak flow volume leaving the site and a blocked 15" culvert that needs to be resolved which is not on their property – there is nothing coming out of it when it is full and it will be resolved as part of this project. It may be blocked with sediment. Mr. Koff noted it could be causing backup onto wetland A. Mr. Whitehouse asked if it would be replaced, if needed. Ms. Libbey noted it is not on their property only the inlet is on their side. Chair Short asked if there was any discussion with the property owner and she indicated not yet but felt like it would drain if it were cleaned out. Chair Short indicated it would be helpful to know you have the property owner's permission to make the culvert functional again.

Mr. Koff noted he was concerned with the level of buffer impacts and having buildings right up against the wetland boundaries and with how people living there will control that. He noted it was not practical for a wetland to be maintained with people needing space around their homes that isn't already provided. He noted one deck extends onto the wetland boundary. Mr. Koff explained that impacts are greater in real life than shown here. He noted there is no stopping people from cutting and filling around those and wetland B connects to Wheelwright Creek and Squamscott River making an impact to wetland and wildlife. He noted grading impacts were significant and not reasonable in the real world of how people live. He noted he was least comfortable with #4, #5 and #6. He noted if those went away it would seem more reasonable to preserve the highest quality wetland and buffers. He noted that the slopes and grading into the wetland is a lot.

Mr. Mattera noted the slopes seem extreme and asked how they are held back. Ms. Libbey indicated by the wall of the building which will act as a retaining wall. Building 5 and 6 are graded as walk out basements. She noted on #4 the furthest left unit is like that, but others are not.

Mr. Whitehouse asked the size of the decks and Ms. Libbey indicated 6' deep and 10'x12 depending on which building.

Mr. Madison asked about the bottom right buffer and existing parking lot and tree line between the buildings. Ms. Libbey referenced sheet C-1 and noted that the tree line is on the abutting property so she assumes it will stay. Mr. Madison echoed the concerns of the buffer impact concerning wetland B. He noted if they could minimize it even further it would be ideal. He asked if the plans had been submitted to the state yet and Ms. Libbey indicated no. Mr. Madison noted he had concerns with the sheer amount of buffer impact.

Mr. Mattera asked why the switch from porous, and Ms. Libbey noted the separation to the water table. She noted they put it in areas where it will work.

129 Chair Short opened the hearing to the public for comments and questions at 7:47 PM.

Michael Hauck and Danielle Frank of 31 Haven Lane indicated their property abutted the parcel on two sides. He provided a handout with emails of other residential abutters who were all in opposition to the project and the wetland conditional use permit. Chair Short noted these were received and distributed to the Commission this afternoon. Mr. Hauck expressed concerns with the impact to his property and the environment and requested the Commission deny the wetland CUP.

Ms. Frank read a statement which she noted she adjusted her comments to what she has learned tonight. She expressed concerns with the importance of the wetland for flood control, etc. and how climate change is increasing flooding. She expressed concerns with wildlife habitat and resources, treating stormwater. She disagreed with the report which said there was no appreciable impact. She noted impacts to air, animal habitat, and light and noise reduction. She opined the project would contribute to heat build up on the Jady Hill neighborhood and that the neighborhood already experiences flooding. She asked who takes responsibility for the negative impacts where there is already a problem. She asked where was the buffer between this project and our properties? She noted they considered the presence of these mature trees and plants when they purchased their home. She requested the CUP be denied.

Ryan O'Brien of 20 Haven Lane stated that he had a couple of letters to read written by abutters who couldn't be here, the first from Catherine and Craig Boudreau of 11 Bonny Drive concerning environmental impact and wildlife, the water table, removal of natural drainage and flooding. The second was from Tania Lampey and Timothy Real of 7 Bonny Drive who had concerns with groundwater, wetlands and flooding. They recounted speaking with the town engineer and believed underground springs had been exposed. A generator and two-tiered pump system were installed. There is still an abundance of water year-round and substantial wildlife. They felt there was a corridor that stretched between Haven and Bonny and the project will negatively impact the character of the neighborhood and diminish a woodland in their "tree city." Mr. O'Brien provided photos and indicated he was opposed to the CUP and there was no hardship. He expressed concern with 50% of the units in the wetland buffer and complete disregard of the regulations. He noted the animals, wetlands and stormwater conveyance. He provided video of bobcat in a fenced area in August of 2023. He showed coyotes at 11 Bonny Drive on 1/10 and 1/13 and noted there were large predators. He noted turkeys, deer herds, fox birds and other small animals. He stated that Gove said it will not cut off any wildlife corridor provided that exists, the two wetlands A and B are connected by a small piece of land. The whole property is a cohesive system of animals and water. He addressed the channel and drainage to Wheelwright Creek and the ocean and the partially "crushed" 15" culvert. He noted buffers exist to help with the effect of human interference there and you can't build this close without negative effects. He did not want to see additional water problems created in their neighborhood and asked not to create a problem in the first place.

Diane Sam of 5 Bonny Drive agreed with wildlife including racoon and possum and expressed concerns with flooding and did not see that improving with this development going in.

Len Medlock of 11 Haven Lane noted there were frogs and other amphibians and must be a vernal pool somewhere.

Steve Taylor of 30 Haven Lane noted the project started as MUND (mixed use neighborhood development) but is now two projects with a five-year waiting period. He noted this plan pushes the houses further into the wetlands.

Jim Gove responded that perhaps he needed to go back and look at the analysis and that the photos and comments were great. He explained that the animals photographed were upland species and he was tasked with analysis of animals associated with wetlands, protected species such as Blandings Turtles, Spotted Salamander and certain species of snakes found in a wetland edge in a wetland habitat, species that are on a list that they are to consider provided by the Army Corp of Engineers. They aren't to consider deer and coyotes which are everywhere but what the wetland is doing as a wetland. He explained the hydrology of wetland A and the blocked culvert possibly contributing to wetland habitat in the area. He reviewed the volume of wetland B which cuts through the manmade ditch which has been stabilized with everything including tires tied together. He noted the hydrology of the significant channel which is now 3' deeper than it normally was.

Ms. Fanger asked what the Commission's purview was with respect to the application and Ms. Murphy indicated this was a local application. The Planning Board will address the MUND and while the Commission isn't expected to be experts, they hire out a consulting engineering firm, water quality can be part of the discussion. Ms. Murphy asked Mr. Gove about the wetland scientist who delineated the plan in April which was John Hayes and any effort to look for vernal pools because that might change the buffers considerably. Mr. Gove noted that Mr. Hayes was hired before he got involved to look at soil map and test pits for the AoT (Alteration of Terrain) application and looked at his flagging and found it to be spot on. Mr. Gove noted that his function and values assessment was done at a separate time. Mr. Gove noted he was not out there in the months that you would need to be to confirm a vernal pool is present, March, April and May. He did not see any depressional areas (18") that hold water for two months of the growing season. The blocked culvert may have situationally pooled in the past and drained.

Mr. Koff recommended reviewing the CUP criteria. Chair Short reviewed no. 1 whether permitted in the district and the response that MUND is permitted in C-2. Chair Short reviewed no. 2 alternate design that is less impactful and the response concerning the plan revision and beneficial drainage and vegetation of disturbed areas. Mr. Torrez noted the drainage rate is a huge function being lost and questioned whether it could be contributing to the flooding people experience. Mr. Mattera referenced wetland B and the significant channel. Mr. Clement felt there was an interconnection between wetland and buffers and expressed concern with eliminating the buffers and rendering the wetlands themselves useless. Chair Short reviewed no. 3 functions and values and the response that stormwater storage and flood flow were not compromised and water quality degradation mitigated. Mr. Clement noted all wetlands have value and did not feel the application met the requirements. Mr. Koff expressed concerns with the creep of development over time into the wetlands although there are ways the development can restrict that creeping and operation and maintenance plans but with zero buffer it is just too much. Chair Short questioned the ability to monitor compliance over any length of time.

Chair Short reviewed no. 4 design that minimizes impact to the wetland and buffer and the response. Ms. Fanger stated that she did not believe the design minimizes impact to the wetland and buffer.

220 Chair Short reviewed no. 5 public health safety and welfare and the response that the stormwater was 221 treated before discharge and peak flows controlled to not increase flooding to other properties.

Chair Short reviewed no. 6 buffers elsewhere on the site of equal or greater value and the response noting the vegetated area which will be undeveloped green space. Mr. Mattera asked if the eastern portion was being put into conservation and Ms. Libbey indicated no it will remain undeveloped. Mr. Mattera noted there will be no permanent protection.

Chair Short reviewed no. 7 temporary disturbance and restoration and the response including the restoration plan shown on sheet L-1.

Chair Short noted the permits under DES, RSA 485-A:17 and 483-A and US Army Corp 404 of Clean Water Act and response that they will be applying for AoT and wastewater.

MOTION: Ms. Fanger motioned that the Commission is not in support of the CUP application because of alternate designs and concerns with no. 2, 3 and 4 and water quality concerns and flow to Wheelwright Creek.

Ms. Libbey requested a continuation to revise the plan and decrease impact to wetland B.

240 Ms. Fanger withdrew her motion.

MOTION: Ms. Fanger motioned to continue the application to the Commission's next meeting when they are ready. Chair Short seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Murphy indicated she would like to have statements from John Hayes work concerning presence of vernal pools because that could change the buffers.

Daniel Frank asked about the Planning Board meeting next week and Ms. Murphy noted they could continue to meet and may want to hear their comments as well on the redesign.

2. Land Use Change Tax Research

Ms. Crepeau provided a map of other towns and cities who either had or did not have a percentage of the Land Use Change Tax coming to their Conservation Commission. She proposed 50% or \$50,000 but noted the town was always generous with funding the Commission's requests and noted they gave more than they would get with the change tax. Mr. Koff noted both mechanisms could be in place. Mr. Clement noted a bond could also be used. Mr. Clement noted 15 years ago the warrant article to give 50% of land use change tax was defeated. Chair Short noted it was too late to do it this year and Mr. Chartrand agreed this was not something they would want to put through at the last minute and recommended going before the Select Board to discuss it.

Ms. Murphy noted the Commission looked at undeveloped parcels in 2018 and 2019 and sent out a letter, and it may be worth reaching out again. She referenced the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Fund as another grant the town could apply for. Chair Short agreed the Commission needed to have funds to strike when property became available for purchase. He agreed the demographic has changed.

Mr. Koff explained the LUCT and current use with ten acres and how property taxes are reduced when a minimum of ten acres is put in current use and the penalty when it is taken out to be developed.

Mr. O'Brien opined that he wouldn't consider the past as a guarantee of the future but agreed having funds is absolute vital but to consider impact on taxes and taking money from general expenses.

3. Committee Reports

a. Property Management

Ms. Murphy indicated there had been a large brush fire off Pine Road which blew into a portion of Exeter conservation land and thanked Justin Pizon and the Fire Department for responding and the passerby who reported it. She thanked Justin for help with cleaning up. She noted that they will have access to the gate keys.

MOTION: Mr. Mattera authorized Chair Short to sign a letter expressing the Commission's gratitude to the Fire Department. Mr. Koff seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Murphy noted Dave O'Hearn had retired from mowing the property and Breen Land Works from the Tree Committee expressed an interest in doing it. The budget is \$1,825 and their estimate is \$2,200. They would need to shift funds to cover that.

Ms. Murphy noted that they could also help with the oriental bittersweet (invasive) removal at the Irvine property which would cost \$1,750. Mr. Mattera noted there were stewardship grants from Great Bay that could help with that. S. Murphy noted Fish and Game has some grants also.

b. Outreach Events

i. Winter Solstice Celebration at Raynes – Saturday 12/21

 Mr. Whitehouse reported the barn was decorated with lights and the bonfire was far from the barn. He noted the event went well and there were about 30 people. He noted the barn is ready to be used and they are waiting on L-Chip to start with the concrete work. Ms. Murphy will follow up with them tomorrow.

305	ii. Full Moon Snowshoe February Hike – February 12
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307	Mr. Koff proposed a hike at Raynes with snowshoes optional. He will coordinate if anyone is
308	interested. He noted the Recreation Department rents snowshoes.
309	
310	iii. Hike Exeter Challenge – Kyle Welch
311	
312	Mr. Welch reported that the Facebook page has 50 members and started only yesterday. He
313	noted the membership question is the name of the river that runs through Exeter which is the
314	Exeter River. The first hike released was Henderson Swasey and one will be released each week.
315	Ms. Murphy reported that Travel and Nature offered to help with discounts and hikes.
316	
317	c. Other Committee Reports (River Study, Sustainability, Energy/CPAC, Tree, CC Roundtable)
318	
319	Ms. Murphy noted that the Tree Committee would like to come into a meeting when the agenda is
320	light and give an update. They recently applied for the growth award for going over and above.
321	There were 23 trees planted with Unitil funds along Holland Way and Elm Trees (Liberty) were
322	donated by the Chair of Pairpoint Park.
323	Ms. Murphy reported on the Sustainability Committee's Styrofoam Collection event. Styrofoam was
324	collected and hauled to Guilford who has a densifier and sells it as a commodity. She noted the
325	Town of Exeter has one on its warrant this year and will be presenting at the Select Board on
326	Tuesday the 21 st and at Deliberative Session. She thanked Keith and Dan for help with transport and
327	reported 11 cubic yards of Styrofoam was transported. She thanked Wayne Allmond at Public
328	Works for his help.]
329	4. Approval of Minutes
330	December 11, 2024 Minutes
331	
332	Mr. Campbell recommended edits.
333	
334	MOTION: Chair Short motioned to approve the December 11, 2024 minutes, as amended.
335	Mr. Whitehouse seconded the motion. A vote was taken, all were in favor, the motion passed
336	unanimously.
337	
338	5. Correspondence
339	
340	Other Business
341	
342	Next Meeting: 2/11/25, Submission Deadline: 1/31/25
343	
344	

345	6. Adjournment
346	
347	Mr. Koff motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:41 PM. Chair Short seconded the motion. All were in
348	favor, so moved.
349	
350	Respectfully submitted,
351	Daniel Hoijer, Recording Secretary
352	Via Exeter TV
353	
354	Zoom Webinar ID: 813 5974 0364