

MILFORD PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING
July 14, 2016 Town Hall Auditorium, 7:30 PM

Planning Board Members:

Christopher Beer, Chairman
Paul Amato
Tim Finan
Doug Knott
Janet Langdell
Susan Robinson
Kevin Federico, BOS representative
Jacob LaFontaine, Alternate member

Conservation Commission Members:

Audrey Fraizer, Chair
Rodney Dellafelice
Andy Hughes
Kim Rimalover
Hub Seward
Janet Urquhart

Lincoln Daley, Community Development Director

Chris Costantino, Conservation Coordinator

Town of Milford, Brox Property Recreational Fields, Heron Pond Road. Joint Planning Board & Conservation Commission Public Hearing to discuss the proposed construction of multi-purpose athletic fields. (Site Plan Completed by Fieldstone Land Consultants)

Chairman Beer called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.. He introduced the Board and staff and explained the ground rules for the public hearing.

Chairman Beer recognized:

Lincoln Daley, Community Development Director
Mark Bender, Town Administrator
Arene Berry, Recreation Director
Rick Riendeau, DPW Director
Fred Elkind, Environmental Coordinator
Chad Branon, Fieldstone Land Consultants, LLC

Chairwoman Fraizer then introduced the members of the Conservation Commission.

M. Bender thanked the Planning Board and Conservation Commission for hosting this presentation for the development of the Heron Pond recreation fields. We welcome your review and recommendations. He also explained that this project is completely separate from the sand and gravel removal process and the presentation is only to discuss the temporary recreation fields, based on the 2014 updated Brox Community Lands Master Plan. He reviewed both the master plan and proposed plans dated 6/9/14. If the proposed fields were built this summer or fall, it would be at least two years before those fields would be playable. Environmental considerations have been discussed throughout the planning process inclusive of any endangered species on or near these fields. Staff and consultants have discussed best practices and have set up a meeting with NH Fish and Game to address the species during the construction process and beyond. We also feel that we can meet the needs of our children and the community at large, while still addressing concerns for the environment and concerns for the species.

C. Branon reviewed the design specifics of the project as well as the regulatory process. The Town filed a complete package for the AoT (Alteration of Terrain) Permit through NHDES (New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services) for disturbing 195,000SF or roughly 4.5 acres of land. As part of the process, the Town also submitted documentation to the NH Heritage Bureau for a database check which resulted in threatened and endangered species shown both on and in the approximate vicinity of the site. Those hits require the Town to work with NH Fish and Game on a thorough review of the project. Tonight, we are before the Planning Board and Conservation Commission to present the project and field comments. We hope that everyone will see the balance of this project between the public needs for recreational fields and an environmental design.

He continued by stating that there were general design guidelines and objectives for the project. They included the following:

- 1) The need for two recreational fields on the site.
- 2) Minimize land altering activities and environmental impacts.
- 3) Stay out of the steep slopes of the southern boundary of the property for adequate buffering for the adjacent residential properties.

C. Branon then went on to explain the engineering design and layout process and presented the Brox Property Recreation Fields Plan. He stated that Fieldstone surveyed the features and topography of the former excavation site. The proposed field area will be located in the old floor of the gravel operation and in a sparsely vegetated field that is not well stabilized. The surrounding areas consist of excavated slopes and stockpiles that are overgrown. Once the field survey and soils conditions were completed, we then proceeded to evaluate design and layout options. A conventional north/south orientation layout was initially considered, but did not fit well with the existing topography and would require significant land alterations. The proposed east-west orientation fits better within the topography and multi-purpose fields are located on the existing field area and previous gravel operation. The east-west orientation was chosen because it would result in less land alteration and environmental impact. The stormwater and drainage as designed would maintain the drainage and stormwater as it currently exists. A meeting with Fish and Game has been scheduled to discuss the project and receive input and guidance. The project design would not create impediments and result in minimal tree clearing. Further, the design will result in minimal proposed changes to the topography, environment, and drainage when compared to current conditions. Lastly, mitigation and habitat protection will be developed in coordination with the NH DES and NH Fish and Game Department to address the sensitive and endangered species located on the property. The total cost of the project is projected to be approximately \$29,250 and the engineering, design, permitting, and construction & materials were summarized.

Board of Selectmen comments:

Selectmen Federico responded that the project has been discussed for a number of years as an area identified for field space as a way to meet the public demand. The Board of Selectmen supports the project and is in favor of the project moving forward. Selectmen Federico stated that he personally supports the project as it is a good compromise for the Town to economically build needed field space in the community.

Planning Board comments:

J. Langdell inquired about the logistics of the project related to providing public facilities, parking, and access to potable water. K. Federico responded that the project does not call for an irrigation system, utilities or access to potable water. He continued by stating that there are a number of parking options for general use; the Heron Pond School lot and along the Heron Pond Road shoulder, but there isn't a need for a permanent parking area. This will be a temporary use, albeit twenty years and future uses will be addressed at that time.

Conservation Commission comments:

A. Frazier asked Mr. Bender to elaborate on the plan to protect the sensitive and endangered species in proximity to the project. M. Bender explained that some practices are already part of the plan and include such things as the installation of silt fencing. He continued by stating that the Town will meet with NH Fish and Game to incorporate best management practices into the plan and then develop a formal proposal. A. Frazier continued by stating that turtles and other animals might not use the playing fields in the same way as they use their current natural state. She recommended that a formal study of the species be conducted to understand how much and the location of the habitat that is being used. A formal study was one of the first recommendations of the Natural Resource Inventory for the Brox Community Lands. General discussion involving topography, drainage and wetlands ensued. C. Branon stated that there are no jurisdictional wetlands within the project area and the drainage/stormwater will mimic current stormwater conditions; we are not looking to change any of the drainage patterns. The calculations showed that there will actually be a decrease in stormwater generation due to a balance of more vegetation at the conclusion of this project.

A. Hughes inquired about the use of fertilizers, especially nitrogen on the site and if there would be any snow removal. C. Branon responded that the site will be self-contained and there will be no runoff. L. Daley stated there would be no snow removal. J. Langdell added that turf management practices can incorporate fertilizer accidents and run off into the management plan and maintenance of the fields. She then inquired what the proposed costs for general maintenance of the fields would be. M. Bender responded that the only costs would be mowing on an as needed basis and any general update we may have to do. The Town is not a heavy fertilizer user on any of our fields. J. Langdell referenced the Recreation Department's presentations for turf management practices on their fields said a rough estimate would be helpful. R. Riendeau stated that typical practice right now is to mulch in place.

A. Frazier asked about the amount of estimated fill material for site. C. Branon responded approximately 2,000 cubic yards of material will be brought on site, consisting of loam and a sand/loam mixture. We could shift the field over a bit, but there are certain design parameters driving this proposal. He went on to briefly discuss the proposed drainage design for the project.

Chairman Beer opened the public hearing to the general public.

Suzanne Fournier, Coordinator of the Brox Environmental Citizens, stated that she had a formal video/slide show presentation. A general discussion briefly ensued with the Planning Board Chair who determined that the Board would not accept additional presentations this evening. However, informational materials could be distributed to the Planning Board and Conservation Commission and you are welcome to speak. S. Fournier proceeded to distribute the materials to the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. She commented it is quite odd that you are holding a public hearing after the Selectmen have filed for the state permit. How do you expect the Boards to evaluate, utilize and incorporate the information? She referenced Bird Hill and stated that the project area is of high importance and contains many important threatened and endangered species like the Hog Nose snake. S. Fournier summarized the Conservation Endangered Species Act of New Hampshire, the State's bible, and its relationship to the project. She went on to discuss the validity of the wetland delineation performed by the Town's engineering consultant, Fieldstone Engineers. It is missing wetlands that have not been documented and the Natural Resources Inventory has addressed this very spot. The Brox property has been called an ecological gem. She continued by discussing the opportunities created by the purchase of the 127 Elm Street for future fields and asked that the Town maintain its current inventory of fields and/or consider evaluating existing fields for possible expansion, such as Kaley Park and the Heron Pond School field that is currently underutilized. The fields have to be built correctly, up front. She also referenced the 2013 MCAA report that stated we understand that developing the Brox Property would be a large undertaking and they only want to do that if all other alternatives have been exhausted. She cited that there has been no approval of the monies associated with this project and the costs need to be explained to the public. She also cited that Hollis and Wilton have taken measures to protect the Blandings Turtle, but our leaders are intending to destroy their habitat. Voters should have a say in this decision that would impact endangered species and cost the town a lot of money that we don't have. She held a listing of names and said many voters want this issue to be on the 2017 ballot. It would be such an anti-conservation legacy for this town to leave for the next generation if it would have harmed endangered species when it should have helped them. J. Langdell inquired about the petition; what is the timeframe, what is it asking, how many names are on it and have they been verified by the Town Clerk. S. Fournier responded that the petition is not ready. We don't have a timeframe but will be for the March 2017 ballot. The Voters' petition under RSA 39:3 for the Milford Board of Selectmen Stop the building of soccer fields along Heron Pond Rd; wrong place, wrong time, no money and no public input.

Dave McManus, Brookview Ct, stated that tonight this is being presented as temporary fields and it looks like the town is planning to put in public works and emergency facilities in about four years. It was indicated that the fields wouldn't be ready or playable until 2018, which means there would be about a four year life to these fields; is that correct? J. Langdell said, like any other master plan document, it's a slice in time, so when the Brox Community Update was done in 2014, this was the best timeframe available to the committee; these are estimates. D. McManus asked if it was reasonable to even look at these fields when there is a lot of other land being talked about for permanent fields for a more permanent solution. C. Beer spoke from memory saying that the longer term plan is to have fields deeper into the property that would be permanent and this land would then be turned over for the facilities that have been discussed. A roadway would need to be constructed to get further into the property and the cost of that roadway was prohibitive, so this is a temporary stop-gap measure for the next ten years until we come up with a design and the money for the final location. T. Finan added that was correct and said the long range community plan carves up the land to show where the facilities would go, if needed. There is no current plan to build a fire station there and no firm plans to put a DPW garage or cemetery there. So conversely, it would be irresponsible to not use this land based on someday we might use it. The area is flat and the temporary (Phase 1A) fields would be for twenty years; I can't even imagine a fire station or garage going in there during that time. D. McManus said his concern wasn't about putting a fire station in, but about endangered species being affected for temporary fields. He inquired if an industrial engineer had looked at this to optimize the other fields. The town has a lot of fields like Shepard Park and the high school fields, so why wouldn't we use these? T. Finan stated that he's been on a few committees over the years and that topic has been discussed quite a

bit. D. McManus said he'd like to revisit that instead of spending \$25,000. K. Federico stated that different fields are appropriate for different sports and the football field is owned by the school, not the Town. D. McManus said he respectfully requests that the Board look at this again and think this through.

Arene Berry, Recreation Director and resident, said that the study done in 2013 was for MCAA usage of the fields, not Town usage for the Recreation Department and not for the School usage. She then provided usage statistics from 7/1/2015 – 6/30/2016 for Adams Field, Kaley Park, Keyes Fields, the former Police Station field, and Shepard Park.

Jason Cillo, president of MCAA and resident, said our organization seeks to develop youth through sports, team building, and comradery. Participation and growth over the past few years has been exponential and the usage at Keyes, Kaley and the North River Rd fields has been stressful. Mr. Dube and myself have had to help with the maintenance multiple times a week. There is a crying need for more space. In addition, high school sports have overgrown their fields as well and those teams are using Keyes and North River Rd fields. There has been a lot of coordination between MCAA and the Recreation Department and we have been doing the best that we can; however, we are lacking in soccer, baseball and softball fields. One of our goals is expand our reach to young individuals, no matter what their financial status is, to get them out there playing and with that mandate, there will be even more need for space and fields. We also have worked out an agreement with the Recreation Department to provide repairs and maintenance on these fields through our budget and with volunteers.

Adam Grill, resident, said he handles all the scheduling for MCAA at the North River Rd fields and elaborated on the usage of the fields with times and days. If we were to build a soccer field at Shepard Park which was already determined not large enough to handle the need, we'd be eliminating the baseball and softball fields and creating a problem for that sport, as well. Sports today are no longer the seasonal sports that didn't interject with each other, they are year round and there is a constant battle between the sports to share those fields and a fine balance with scheduling. It is amazing to see the number of hours these fields are used without rest; there is absolutely a need for more fields.

Alexa Dube, resident, said there is an obvious need for more space and we should also be looking into expanding some of our current fields like Keyes and Kaley. J. Langdell said she is on the Keyes Field Expansion Committee that is looking into the integration of Keyes and 127 Elm St. Also, the Recreation Department is working on a new recreation chapter for the Master Plan pertaining to recreational facilities, so there is ongoing discussion and planning.

Heather Romeri, chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission and resident, said she wanted to speak in support of this project because it does create a balance between the needs of the community and conservation. That is important to her. There has been ongoing discussion regarding the needs for the five years she has been involved with recreation and this will help.

Audrey Fraizer, Conservation Commission chair and resident, said she has been involved with this proposal and agrees that we do need fields in Milford. She commended the Recreation Department and MCAA for what they provided to all ages including the youth in this community. She also agreed that there is a balance between the needs of the community and for preserving the environment. The recommendation of the Conservation Commission is to just understand before we move forward with the project. I feel confident that there are ways to do this together and many things are on the table. To answer Ms. Fournier's question, the Town has graciously invited me to the meeting with the State and I will be attending.

Kierstyn Henderson, a resident, said she has been working with the Recreation Commission to try to get a dog park. We are currently looking at Adams field, but this project could open up some additional space, so I am in support of this project.

Suzanne Fournier added that there are a lot of resources online pertaining to maintenance of high use fields. She then quoted from what she distributed earlier, an article from Sports Turf Management titled Budgeting Sports Field Construction by Chris Mark, Town of Oakville SPA Director dated March, 2002.

Jason Cillo added that there are big soccer and baseball tournaments that occur here and they do rent these fields. We are also in the process of planning a Columbus Day tournament, so these fields are not only for community uses but they can generate income. While the tournaments directly benefit youth sports, they also generate and funnel revenue for local businesses, especially around the Oval. The Memorial Day soccer tournament and the Rotary Swim meet bring in hundreds of participants along with their families and Milford businesses do very well on those weekends. The tournaments give Milford recognition as a small town community that cares about the quality of life.

Adam Grill added that it is also about the amount of people on the fields when being used and the amount of space available for those kids. During the fall sport season we have close to 500 kids on those fields throughout the entire weekend. It is consistently growing year after year and is very difficult to schedule the amount of teams and players that we utilize the space appropriately and safely.

Chairman Beer closed the public portion of the hearing.

A member of the Conservation Commission inquired about the wetland delineation. C. Branon stated that there are no jurisdictional areas located within the half acre area for this project. In 2013, we were hired to do a wetlands inventory for a targeted area, not the entire boundary to boundary Brox property. We utilized GIS material and there were some wetlands along the boundary of the property that we did not map or locate but we did pick them up in the 2016 inventory. There has never been a situation where we would not represent jurisdictional areas on a plan; we are bound by a code of ethics and have a great relationship with state agencies. It is very easy to make an accusation without understanding the history, project scope and what the tasks at hand were. A Hughes inquired about the wetland pointed out on the plan. C. Branon stated there was a 25ft buffer around the wetland represented on the plan.

C. Branon stated that it is common practice to file applications with the AoT Bureau and then go before the municipality. The AoT Bureau reviews applications for stormwater and those regulations oftentimes are more stringent than the local regulations. We design a project to their standards and they always have comments. That review process takes 50-60 days and during that timeframe we work with the Conservation Commissions and local regulatory boards to address their comments at the same time. It's productive, more efficient and considered standard practice. Technically there is some tree clearing proposed for this project; approximately 20,000SF in the man-made stockpile area and some in the left-hand corner of the site, but everything we're proposing is occurring within the old footprint of the gravel operations area. It has already been altered and there is nothing in its natural state. Certainly time has by since those activities have taken place but the first photo of the slideshow shows that the site is stabilized. It is a self-contained site that will not be creating any problems while finding a balance to address the community needs that we've heard tonight. This is an easy site to design and is very conducive to reasonable construction costs. To a certain extent, it is already graded and there isn't a lot of land alteration required, drainage mitigation is not needed, and sandy loam could be produced right on site. The design results of this field have not been compromised to get an end result cost.

M. Bender stated that the cost of this project does include labor, despite some of the earlier comments. This is 80% done and all costs presented tonight have line items in the budget; the engineering, the permitting, DPW labor, equipment rental and materials and supplies.

Rick Riendeau, DPW Director, clarified that he has an engineering degree from UNH with over 30 years in the civil construction field and over 30 years estimating projects. This is an easy project because everything is onsite and that is key to keeping the costs reasonable. C. Beer inquired if the cost estimates were accurate. R. Riendeau replied yes, he did them.

C. Beer thanked the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, MCAA representatives, and all those who came out for this presentation. Your comments are being heard and discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15, on a motion by T. Finan, seconded by D. Knott and all in favor.

THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 14, 2016 MEETING WERE APPROVED ON OCTOBER 25, 2016.