



Ridgefield Conservation Commission

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May 16, 2017

Ms. Rebecca Mucchetti, Chair
Planning & Zoning/TWB
Town of Ridgefield
66 Prospect Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877

RE: PROPOSED LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD Route 7 at Simpaug Turnpike

Dear Ms. Mucchetti:

The project involves the construction of a new baseball field and parking for 59 vehicles on a 2.52 acre property located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Route 7 and Simpaug Turnpike. The property consists of two parcels, a 2.14 acre parcel owned by Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and 0.38 acres owned by the Town of Ridgefield. The project sponsor is Ridgefield Little League. South of the property is a cemetery and State of Connecticut lands.

According to the project narrative report, the project site was previously disturbed for a commercial use (Walpole Fence Company) and for Sanford Station Road (an abandoned street).

A small portion of a wetland on the State of Connecticut lands extends into the southern portion of the property. Wetlands cover approximately 1,608 square feet of the subject property. The plan proposes to disturb about 225 square feet of this wetland.

Concerns About Impacts on Adjacent Wetland

Impacts of Light – **The Conservation Commission recommends that the lights be turned off within one hour following the end of a game to minimize the impact on the environment.**

Impacts of Noise – The Conservation Commission is also very concerned about the impact of noise on breeding birds, as well as wildlife that both use and breed in the adjacent wetland and woods. Noise would also potentially impact the surrounding residences across the town line in the Town of Redding. **We recommend that no loudspeakers be installed to prevent the broadcasting of the play-by-play or the playing of music over an amplification system at the ballfield.**

Impacts on Wetlands – As noted below and previously, the Conservation Commission is concerned that the ball field will have a negative impact on the large wetland to the south of the proposed facility. Runoff from the southern half of the field is proposed to be conveyed by sheet flow to the east of the field, and then in a swale to discharge to the large wetland to the south. Although the project consultant has claimed that there will be no fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides used at the ballfield, the Conservation Commission is very concerned that this statement is not consistent with the need to maintain a lush, verdant and dense green lawn. **We stand by our prior recommendation (as described below) that the plan be amended to include the planting of a wetland buffer consisting of a dense shrub mix along the entire southern property line and that a low berm be provided along the southern property line to promote infiltration of this runoff into the existing soils. In this way, some treatment of the runoff from the ballfield will be provided prior to its being conveyed into the wetland.**

On Alternatives to Impact to Wetland

1. In reviewing the three alternatives presented to the proposed impacts to wetlands, it was noted that the alternative of sliding the baseball field about 15 feet to the north to avoid the proposed direct wetland impact of 225 square feet would result in potential loss of some of the parking needed to support the activity. The Planning and Zoning Commission should review the parking requirements to determine if the amount of parking can be reduced in order to reduce the impacts to the wetlands.

Given the reported degraded condition of the on-site wetland, we concur that the site plan, which proposes a direct impact to the wetland for the construction of the baseball field is reasonable. This conclusion is based solely on the applicant's proposal to rehabilitate the existing wetland with the removal of invasive plant materials and create about 645 square feet of new wetland.

We request that as a condition of any approval, that an assessment be made by a qualified individual annually for three years following construction. The assessment shall take note of the condition of the plant materials that have been installed in the new and rehabilitated wetland and shall also take note of any invasive plant materials that have appeared.

We also recommend that a condition of any approval require 90% survival of the installed plant materials and the removal of any invasive plant materials. In addition, the removal of any invasive plant materials in the adjacent wetland on State property that are within 100 feet of the property line of the subject lot is also a reasonable and prudent precaution. A report describing these conditions shall be sent to the Town wetlands inspector within 30 days of the inspection.

Stormwater Management Plan Comments

2. In reviewing the stormwater management plan for the property, we fail to see how the proposed subsurface chambers will provide treatment of the water quality volume. First, the volume in the chambers is significantly less than the water quality volume. In the stormwater report, the available storage within the proposed chambers is calculated to be 0.055 acre feet. The available storage is therefore approximately (0.055 acre feet x 43,560 square feet/acre) 2,400 cubic feet or about 500 cubic feet *less* than the water quality volume calculated in Appendix C of the engineer's report.

Treatment of the entire water quality volume presumes that the first 1" of runoff would be contained within the subsurface chambers and infiltrates into the soils. However, we note that within the outlet control structure, the orifices to control the outflow are at the same elevation as the bottom of the chambers. It therefore appears that the entire flow entering the chambers will drain out of the chambers prior to any significant water quality treatment.

We recommend revising the stormwater management plan to provide, at a minimum, the treatment of the water quality volume, since it conveys flow into an extensive wetland area adjacent to the Norwalk River.

Other Comments:

3. The plan will create what appears to be a 1:1 slope beyond the center and right field fence. Since maintaining this slope will be very problematic due to the slope, stabilizing the slope as specified using lawn seed would not be appropriate. **The plan shall be modified to provide stabilization of this slope using a geotextile fabric and plantings that will require less maintenance.**
4. Since runoff from the southern portion of the field will be conveyed eastward then southward via a grassed swale into the adjacent wetland on the State property, some treatment of this runoff is strongly recommended to be provided since it is very likely that soil amendments to maintain the field will include fertilizers and herbicides. **We recommend that a wetland buffer consisting of a dense shrub mix extend along the southern property line to include the entire swale and that a low berm be provided along the southern property line to promote infiltration of this runoff into the existing soils.**

5. Given the degraded condition of the soils on the property, we recommend that the plans incorporate methods to restore the permeability of the disturbed soils outside of the ball field, which will have its own design protocols. Typically, this involves the application of compost, tilling the compost into the soils to a depth of about 12 inches, removal of stone, and application of at least 4" of topsoil.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Ridgefield Conservation Commission,

Alan L. Pilch, PE, RLA