

**COVENTRY INLAND WETLANDS AGENCY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 2025**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:

By: Mathieu

Time: 7:01 p.m.

Place: Town Hall Annex/Zoom

		PRESENT	ABSENT
REGULAR MEMBERS:	Lori Mathieu, Vice-Chair	X	
	William Glenney, Chairperson		X
	William Johnson		X
	Richard Pearson	X	
	Stefanie Wierszchalek	X	
ALTERNATE MEMBERS:	David Epstein (sat as a voting member)	X	
	Vacant		
STAFF:	Todd Penney, Town Engineer/Wetlands Agent	X	
STAFF:	Lindsay Beutler, Wetlands Agent	X	
STAFF:	Jana Roberson, AICP, Director of Planning & Development	X	
STAFF:	Natalia Yeschick, Recording Clerk	X	

Ken Slater, Town Attorney was also present.

2. Audience of Citizens (2-minute time limit) - None

3. Additions/ Changes to Agenda

MOTION: Motion to move enforcement, item 6A up to item 4 on the agenda.

By: Pearson

Seconded: Wierszchalek

Discussion:

Voting:

For: Epstein, Mathieu, Wierszchalek, Pearson

Against: None

Abstain: None

Motion Unanimously Approved

4. Old Business

A. #25-2 – Swamp Road and South Street – Owner: Town of Coventry; Applicant: James Drumm; Agents: Town of Coventry Engineer, Todd Penney, P.E. and Town’s Consultant Engineer of Record, VBH, Inc. – Alignment, sightline, and stormwater improvements to Swamp Road and South Street. The 65-day deadline to act on this application is 3/28/2025. 65-day extension granted. The new deadline to act on this application is 6/1/2025.

Representatives from VBH, Bill Anderson and Eric Nigosanti are in attendance.

Penney explained the Town is looking to do geometric improvements to Swamp Road and to the Swamp Road and South Street intersection as well as the S curve of South street by the heckler corn fields. There has been preliminary base mapping and engineering. There was a public involvement meeting. There is a lot of scrutiny on the S curves and increasing traffic and accidents. Those comments were taken into play. Currently on Swamp Road there is no formal drainage. There is very little formal drainage on South Street. In the process of improving the roads horizontally we want to flatten out the steep drop. The goal is to take the vertical geometry and flatten it out and in the process add some formal drainage. The South Street bridge over Hop River had catch basins put in when they redid the bridge 25-30 years ago. Penney went over a map and showed where there is existing drainage and wetlands. There will be no actual wetland disturbance but will work in the upland review area.

Penney showed the proposed plan for Swamp Road. The road varies in width, they will do a standard 26 feet wide.

Penney showed the existing versus proposed grade of Swamp Road. They will be cutting about 3.5 to 4 feet. Penney explained that when going South on Swamp Road you pass Love Lane and you are not able to see any distance. The goal is to be able to see a good distance and be able to react in time if there is anyone crossing the lane. The plan is to also add in an underdrain 30 inches deep that collects groundwater but no surface water. There will also be a structure added to effectively collect surface flow

from the road and into an outfall into a plunge pool level spreader just upgradient of the wetland line.

Penney reviewed an additional map showing improvements to Swamp going North/South and South Street going East/West. There is an existing drainage outfall we will be reutilizing and will be adding additional drainage structures to effectively collect stormwater. There will be a slight increase in flow because the road is winding and we are changing some characteristics. There are no associated wetlands within 75 feet of the outfall. Based on the North Central Conservation District we are going to be doing a deeper sump in one catch basin and add a hood that will collect the floatables prior to discharge. We will have a plunge pool level spreader that will dissipate the velocities from exiting. Going West we are improving the corridor and widening the road 26 feet. We will reutilize the existing outfall with taking the owners request into consideration. There is a catch basin, headwall, and a scour hole and a channel that runs all the way down to a wetlands complex. The owner does not like that their yard is bifurcated by the channel. Penney explained they are going to pipe the channel and it will eliminate some of the scouring. It will discharge into a plunge pool level spreader at the outfall immediately upgradient of that wetland. Adding a native planting buffer between the complex and the outfall which will be roughly ten feet from the riprap outfall and the wetland. It will help with water quality and water uptake. The amount of water that comes down South Street and into Hecklers Field is uncontrolled and it is creating scour off the road. We are trying to help that flow. It will run down into a catch basin, increase the sump, add the hood at the outlet into the new plunge pool energy dissipator into the outfall. One of the comments North Central had was to add rip rap and that has been put into the plans.

Penney explained that wetland impacts are expected to be minimal. He put together a memo based on North Central's observations and recommendations. Their first bullet is vegetation immediately downgradient the level spreaders on both South and Swamp with native plants that help retain water and filter out pollutants before it hits the wetlands. That is the ten foot wetland buffer of native plantings. There is no formal drainage on Swamp Road at all. By adding formal drainage we need to get a good level spreader plunge pool at the outfall. The next three bullets talk about the swale on South Street and planting the swale with native herbaceous vegetation other than turf grass. Penney asked if we received input for herbaceous vegetation? We want something that is somewhat maintainable and not something we are going to mow down. Incorporating that longer swale we are also incorporating the riprap check dams as was suggested in the last bullet. The second bullet talked about the existing rip rap at the Hop River channel and we are not looking to disturb that.

Penney goes on to say the following two bullets talk about deep sumps and hooded outfalls at the catch basin. We are adding four foot sumps and hoods for those outfalls going into the discharges going into the wetlands and discharges in general. The observations and recommendations talk about considering establishing reducing the salt application zone. That is a function of Public Works and their sanders are calibrated in the shop. They cannot recalibrate on the fly and it is not germane to this project. Mathieu mentioned with the elevation and the turns that reducing salt in that area is not the best practice even with all of the changes that will be made. Closer to where it flattens out it may not be a bad idea near the Hop River however there are private wells in the area and that may be an issue. Penney responded there is no known sodium or chloride contamination in these wells. Mathieu asked if near these new outlets if Penney has looked at the location? Penney responded there is only one new outlet on Swamp Road. Penney goes on to say the last bullet is on invasives. Where we are in our zone on our influence, if there is an invasive species we will clear and grub it. The district recommends managing these invasive species

to allow for native plants to flourish and prevent them from being out competed. Penney does not recall there being a lot of invasive species. We can make a comment or have a note to contractor with certain species that in the zone of influence we are clearing grubbing if we see it we will remove it. Where it is immediately adjacent to the outfall we will incorporate it.

Mathieu asked about the new outfall Penney mentioned and what the nature of the wetlands is? Is that a large wetlands complex they are leaning into? Penney responded there is a wetlands complex and showed on a map where it goes. There is no report from a wetlands scientist. It is flood storage and there is water quality benefits to it. Then it channelizes and dissipates downstream. Mathieu asked if that area is a Town ROW? Penney responded we will have an easement on it and we do not have one right now.

Beutler has no concerns.

Pearson asked if the North Central Conservation District was invited to comment as a courtesy? Penney responded that typically these size Town jobs we ask them for a peer review. Penney does not want to be the one giving the comments since he is initiating the design.

Mathieu's only concern is the piping all the way through and putting it into the wetlands; however she understands what the property owner is saying. Mathieu likes the idea from the district the vegetative outlet and maybe it is something we can deploy with other projects and asked where we are doing it on this project? Penney responded we are doing it on all of the outfalls whether there is a wetland or not because it is still good for stormwater quality. Mathieu asked if in that area what kind of vegetation we are talking about? Beutler responded we are asking for clarification.

MOTION: Move to approve 25-2 Swamp Road and South Street alignment project with standard conditions.

By: Wierszchalek

Seconded: Epstein

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Epstein, Mathieu, Wierszchalek, Pearson

Against: None

Abstain: None

Motion Unanimously Approved

5. New Business

A. WP-25-8 - Demolition of 85 Standish Road.

Beutler asked to add an item to the agenda. We had a new application come in on Monday. The applicant is here with us and he would like the opportunity to introduce us to the project. It is a demolition on 85

Standish Road. What is unique about this demolition is he has to do it by hand. The topography and not being able to get machinery down there. He will talk about the project and we will show pictures. Beutler did a site visit and took pictures and measurements.

Troy Langer Jr. is in attendance and is contracted by the homeowner. Langer explained there is no possible way to get a machine down to the house. It was decided it will be demoed by hand with sawzalls piece by piece. The home is 50 feet off the water. The plan is to put up a silt fence. There will be no machinery. Only sawzalls and manpower.

Beutler showed where the silt fence will be put up. Langer stated this is just a precaution if anything does come down but he does not expect anything to. The plan is to gut the inside and go from the top down. Beutler showed the slope and topography as well as the staging area for the dumpsters. Langer mentioned he did not measure the area for the dumpsters but he is assuming about 200 feet off of the lake. The plan is to go inside and tear everything down to the studs and work from the top down. They will cut off small sections and bring it to the dumpsters. He also stated the asbestos has been removed and the report is in the application. The electrical is already taken care of. Neighbors have been notified and are being kept in the loop during the process. Beutler mentioned that on site today they discussed ground disturbance. There is very little anticipated ground disturbance since everything is being done by hand.

Beutler also mentioned the house is on a dirt foundation so when it gets taken apart there will be exposed soil in its place. We had a discussion about what the solution will be because you will need to temporarily stabilize until the homeowner decides what the next phase is going to be. Beutler commented that Langer stated during their discussion they would get tarps and weigh them down with sandbags over the exposed soil and leave the silt fence up so a large rain does not wash the exposed soil down towards the lake.

Langer explained the homeowner will either demo and give the property to his daughter and son in law or sell the property. Langer also spoke with the sewer department about the grinder pump and what is going to keep it safe and not damaged for the next owner.

Wierszchalek does not see the tarp over the soil as a long term fix and would like to know how quickly that will be remedied permanently? Langer responded he will have to get more information for the agency on that.

Penney asked if any of the other neighbors are interested in helping get machinery onto the property for the demo? Langer explained there is no way to get machinery to the area even through the neighbors yard as it is pretty steep.

Epstein asked if the property owner is aware that once the home is demoed that he will need surveys and permits and that will take a couple of years? Penney recommends they get a survey now so they know what their lot coverage is.

Langer spoke with the homeowner in January and they were interviewing builders and he is adamant about getting the house done. Penney asked if the homeowners have had discussions with zoning? Langer does not believe so. Penney recommended telling the homeowner to have those discussions now so you know what the lot coverage is now.

Mathieu asked if we can remand this to Beutler to take care of? Penney responded there is a part of him that says there really is no disturbance. They need to have signed a letter they understand if we do not do a survey now they will start over from scratch.

Penney explained that from a disturbance standpoint there is none. Penney recommends topsoil be wheeled down and seeded until grass is grown and it can be a better temporary fix. From a land use standpoint we need to make sure the owner understands they lose everything without a survey.

Beutler and Leech need to discuss this application because it just came in. They will need to communicate with the owner. Mathieu suggests providing a memo to the property owner. Mathieu is okay with remanding this to Beutler if she is okay with once the demolition gets started she may want to be out there once a week. Mathieu asked if there is a fuel or oil tank? Langer responded there is no fuel or oil. It is only electric.

Wierszchalek asked if logistically for the permit itself Langer is currently listed as the applicant. Would it make sense to have the permit revised to the owner for the future rebuild? Beutler responded it will be related because of the address. Penney responded it will be a brand new permit and they can reference 25-8 as when they did the demo.

Mathieu confirmed the agency agrees moving forward there is minimal impact and remand this to Beutler as long as Beutler puts out a memo to the property owner noting all of the concerns noted here and also seeding that area to get grass growing. Beutler should be out there when this activity starts taking place to make sure it is done right and putting the silt fence wherever it makes the most sense.

Wierszchalek commented for Langer to consider airborne things such as insulation going into the lake and would like them to pay attention and potentially use water usage to spray it down. Mathieu asked if everything has been taken down inside? Langer stated they plan to get everything done inside first before they open up the house so the dust stays inside. Then take it apart carefully from the top down. Wierszchalek also asked to be sure the dumpster is covered in case of wind.

Beutler will be in touch with Langer.

6. Enforcement

A. 77 Tall Oak Drive – Owner: David Frechette - Material Deposition in Regulated Area. Letter requesting site visit sent 6/21/24. Site visit to be conducted 7/22/2024. Cease and Desist verbally issued by IWA 7/29/24, mailed Certified Mail 8/1/2024. (e)

Hank Gruner, Herpetologist, is in attendance. David Frechette is in attendance via Zoom. George Logan, Principal Environmental Scientist/Senior Ecologist is in attendance.

Beutler shared the violation timeline. Beutler made a series of site visits and has no issues with the erosion and sediment controls. During a more recent site visit a puddle was discovered where tadpoles were observed. Beutler contacted Logan and left a message letting him know what was found. Due to the time sensitivity Gruner was also contacted. Gruner attended a site visit the next day with approval from Frechette. Gruner offered to provide a report with recommendations which was handed out to the agency.

Beutler provided photographs taken during the site walks. She noticed she was standing in the spot the vernal pool used to be in. Beutler showed an aerial image of the property and pointed out the pickleball court that was in construction at the time of the image. Penney asked what the date of the aerial image is. The date is unknown. Beutler can find out the date of the aerial image for the record.

Gruner explained he was asked to take a look at what was considered to be a potential vernal pool that was filled on the property. Gruner approached it as if this was a brand new project and assessed it from a mapping standpoint and biological assessment. Gruner reviewed the maps and satellite imagery to get a sense of what occurred. It was clear there was a natural pool based on the imagery that was available that had been altered around 2014 or 2015 and had eventually been filled in. There is a pattern of spring filling with water but in March and April was evident on many images and you can see the drying pattern that was usually by September or October was dry. There was evidence the pool held water into August. This is important because vernal pools are variable in their hydroperiod which is the duration they hold water. This has an enormous influence on the biota and the ecological functioning nutrient cycle and so forth of that pool will depend on the hydroperiod that is there. Longer hydroperiods will support a greater number of species. That evidence is important in thinking about planning and management. The markers were there at least from satellite imagery to determine that it is a temporary wetland; it does not have fish and is likely serving as a vernal pool.

Gruner stated during the site visit with Beutler he counted 79 Wood Frog egg masses. This is an incomplete count as this is late in their breeding season so many of them are hatching. There are also several areas where the masses have degraded. Gruner would estimate 85-90 masses that were there. Gruner counted 12 spotted salamander egg masses. Both of these species are considered obligate vernal pool species which means they require vernal pools or temporary wetlands in their breeding cycle. They live most of their life in the surrounding upland forest. They reproduce in the vernal pools. It is critical to their lifecycle. The Wood Frog can tend to reproduce and survive in pools with a shorter hydroperiod and are dry by July or mid-June. Spotted Salamanders require vernal pools that generally hold water at least until mid-July and more typically into late-July or August as indicated by the presence of egg masses but also the satellite imagery that shows it held water until August. Additional evidence was found of several adult Eastern Newts. Eastern Newts require longer duration periods of water. They can hibernate in the surrounding forest and that is likely the case here with the drying. They spend part of their life cycles in the forest in the F stage before they return. The Newts returning to the pool as well is another indication of biota of a pool that held water for a period of time. That evidence as well as the clear drying cycle over a period of many years visible on the satellite images. The biological evidence of those animals

coming back they have high site fidelity for breeding which means when they breed in a site they tend to return to that site. Only a small percentage of the population will colonize new sites. It is not usually the adults that colonize it is usually a percentage of the young. On that site there is groundwater flow on top and there were ponded areas that were very shallow. A photo was brought up that shows where the vernal pool was and this specific area held roughly ten inches of water. There was a flow coming from that area where the footprint of where the pool was filled. There were shallow puddles that had formed. There were egg masses in all of those areas but the majority of the egg masses were in the deeper areas. There were tadpoles scattered throughout the shallow ponded areas. Unfortunately unless we get a lot of rain those animals will not make it out as it will dry too fast for them to develop and move out. It is a clear indication that adults came back to the site where they typically would breed and they took advantage of any water that was on that site.

Mathieu asked if all of these creatures are characteristic of a vernal pool? Gruner responded that with the exception of the Eastern Newt which is not an obligate vernal pool species. 95% of vernal pools will have Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs.

Gruner explained that based on the present conditions there will be no recruitment which can naturally occur. Vernal pools are variable - Loss of a cohort is not detrimental to a population in a given year. Spotted salamanders can live 7-9 years and wood frogs can live 3-4, so with a restoration opportunity the same animals that are attempting to breed there now will come back the next year and the year after that. As well as if they successfully restore the pool some of the young will come back. In Gruner's professional opinion restoration is preferable to creation of a new vernal pool.

Mathieu asked Gruner to confirm the location where a clear groundwater flow was observed. Gruner responded there is a clear drainage pattern and a wetland off to the left where the driveway is.

Gruner explained the research on creation versus restoration. The first effort is always trying to preserve and not impact pools and the landscape around them. The second tier of preservation is mitigation such as doing project mitigation activities like leaving 100 foot zones. The third tier is restoration. If a pool is altered then you restore. The last tier is creation because creation tends to not work. It is difficult to recreate.

Gruner explained the project not only filled the pool but trees cut around it have impacted the pool. The nutrient cycle starts with organic leaf litter that falls. Gruner was concerned that creation may be better however the animals are telling us where they want to go. You have a site that previously developed naturally as a vernal pool even though it has been altered. That provides the best shot at restoration. The groundwater may require hydrological assessments. This should be looked at as a two phase project. The first phase is to excavate and get a semblance of a pool and get the hydrology. You also want to stabilize the area around it and that can be done cost effectively with leaf litter in the surrounding forest. The second phase is looking at planting some shrubs around the pool to try and get growth there which will stabilize and in the long term have trees and shrubs that contribute to providing coverage for the animals. Gruner outlines in depth the consideration in making his opinion. One is that by restoring the pool you are not disturbing other areas. If you create a new pool you are altering the forest. There is no need to do additional disturbance. Size is a question because the project was altered previously. It looks

like the natural pool originally had a square footage of about 6,500 square feet. The existing pool has been altered. Whether you go with the 6,500 square feet or the 9,000 square feet is up for discussion. This is also the most cost effective. Gruner questions if you were to recreate what happens if it does not work? Looking at what makes the most sense from the landscape and the animals the landscape shows where the pool goes and the animals showing you where they want to go. The other good news is it is a fairly recent disturbance and there is an opportunity for a successful restoration, certainly one where the animals come back.

Mathieu asked if the animals would come back if the vernal pool was dried up? Gruner responded yes and gave some examples of other sites where the animals returned after the pools were gone.

Wierszchalek asked if any of the species are on the DEEP protected species list. Gruner responded that there is an endangered species list. There are three categories of endangered species which are endangered, threatened, and special concern. None of the species are on that list. Every ten years they also put out a comprehensive wildlife plan. In that the spotted salamander, the wood frog, and the newt are in the species of greatest conservation need. The rationale is trying to catch species before their populations decrease.

Slater added there was a case where there was a development and the obligate species were harmed. At one point the CT Supreme Court ultimately said the wetlands are what the commission jurisdiction of work not the species. The legislature changed that and ultimately said if you do physical impact to the wetlands or watercourses then the species themselves are wetlands. The species that use the disturbed area are considered wetlands and any impacts that happen to them because of the activity could be subject to enforcement because not only are you harming the wetland itself but now the species are wetlands and they are being harmed too.

Mathieu asked about the special designation and legally what is required of the wetlands commission? Slater responded that even without the special designation even if it was a mallard duck that was being affected they use a wetland or watercourse and you affect that population the wetlands act is designed to protect healthy wetlands. In this case if it is a species that uses that wetland and it is affected and there were direct impacts then it falls under the wetlands commissions jurisdiction and they are supposed to protect it. If there weren't any species and you are dealing with building something else versus this and this report is credible to you Logan may agree that restoration is the better plan. Part of what you should be considering regulating is doing as best you can to protect those species because they themselves are now considered wetlands.

Wierszchalek mentioned that even if we did a mitigation and created a wetland elsewhere the chances this area is always flooded will confuse species and that will likely be ongoing. Gruner responded that right now it is functioning as what is considered an ecological sink. One of the concerns about creating wetlands is if you do not get the hydrology right. It is attracting them with very little chance of success.

Penney stated we can now say it is a vernal pool. This was up for question up until last week. That changes the dynamic of what we have been going on now that we have proof. What is the best for mitigation?

Mathieu asked where the water is coming from to fill the vernal pool? She believes part of the answer was it is somewhat off of the owners property and somewhat off of someone else's property and what is to guarantee that water is going to stay there and be there to support? Mathieu pointed out there is a cul de sac and there is a storm drain. Penney commented there is a discharge point which feeds into that wetland that Logan located on the plan and pointed out the importance of having a plan and all of the information. It seems to Mathieu the area where the water flow is going including some of the stone and the pickleball court is what was the vernal pool and it is now disturbed.

Epstein asked if we are going to deal with the option of creating a new pool as an alternative? How are we going to process the two choices? Mathieu responded that we have not made a decision on Logan's proposal because we do not have a site plan. We denied the application last month.

Penney asked Beutler if she happened to look at whether the masses were still there and if additional tadpoles hatched? Beutler cannot say for certain if there were more tadpoles or more egg masses. There were egg masses that were still there. There was an area that was the shallowest that was dry enough where the tadpoles had died. Beutler pointed out there are ruts that were just as shallow but they did not dry out because we have groundwater coming in so those tadpoles did not die. There is another pool that looks like the area is deeper today than it was previously.

Wierszchalek confirmed that the erosion and sediment control silt fence is still up? Beutler confirmed it is and showed an area of concern because there is pressure on the silt fence. There is a series of silt fences below that are all functioning. Beutler does a site visit once a week.

Mathieu asked Frechette for an update. Frechette responded he is waiting on the surveyor and for Logan to get everything together. Mathieu asked if Frechette also needs an engineer to put together a site plan? Frechette thought Logan or the surveyor does that? Penney believes Logan's report may need to be supplemented with regards to the supporting hydrology for this area. The question becomes whether we are going to pivot to creation.

George Logan, Principal Environmental Scientist/Senior Ecologist is in attendance. Logan does not have any disagreements to what Gruner spoke on today. There may be a little nuance to what the final plan looks like. Logan would like to remind everyone where we started and where we are going. Where we started even though we did not have the information on salamanders and wood frogs there was never a doubt this was originally a vernal pool. If there was a doubt Logan would not be proposing a vernal pool. What Logan has done is he looked at the 2004 aerial photograph and it shows clearly the configuration of the original vernal pool. Mathieu asked about the evergreens in the photo. Logan responded that what you see underneath is actually the hydrology. That is the water. What you see on top of it is the maples. Mathieu asked even if there are no leaves? Logan responded yes because red maples have a peculiar graphic signature. Logan stated it is clear that it was flooded. Mathieu asked what time of year the picture was taken. Logan responded it was the spring perhaps sometime in March or early April. Logan

showed another picture from 2012 and explained the configurations are different. A third photo was shown from 2022 which shows the signature of the pond where you have the 11,000 square feet. A new photo Logan has is a 2024 March aerial photograph that shows the property boundary from the Town's GIS. It shows the limit of phase one of the pond creation. The first recommendation Logan had made was probably what we are going to end up doing which was to create a vernal pool in that location. He recalled a specific plan was never given for this. We pivoted to plan B which was to create a vernal pool in an area that had well water and surface water coming into it and that is to the side of the wetland that had delineated. Logan asked the surveyor to pick up the major trees so we can see the area that is open. Logan was not exactly sure we could create the hydrology in the vernal pool up top due to a lot of disturbance and he was not sure how much we had to dig to get to the original soils. Logan has no problem going to the original location for the vernal pool. This is a direct impact and we have evidence this was a vernal pool so we are creating the same habitat to preserve ecological services this particular wetland was giving.

Mathieu asked if the road we are looking at was given a permit? Penney responded it was back in 2009 and it was there. Frechette had done some work without a permit and Penney caught the violation. Frechette had to remove some material that went into the watercourse that daylighted from the end of the cul de sac. Penney explained Frechette remedies that by removing the material that was placed in that wetland. Mathieu confirmed with Penney Frechette did not proactively get a permit and the permit was done after the fact.

Mathieu asked Logan about the picture he handed out which says "Limit of Final Pond." Logan responded that is the original 11,000 square foot plus or minus. Mathieu stated that Logan is now mentioning he wants to do a restoration and asked if the blue outline is what he is talking about? Logan responded the blue outline is the pond that was filled which is the secondary resource. Mathieu asked what he wants to restore? Logan responded the vernal pool which is shown on the 2004 map shown previously. Mathieu asked that on the side of the pickleball court which is unpermitted the area they just saw and pointed out the area they just saw that goes up into the driveway are they looking to add that into what they are recreating? Logan responded no because that was not part of the original vernal pool. His fundamental reason for not including that area is because it was not in the location of the original vernal pool. Logan pointed out that Gruner mentioned the animals will find the area. Mathieu is trying to understand where they are going to restore the vernal pool and why they are restoring it in that place and are they trying to avoid the roadway and the pickleball court so he can have a patio next to his pickleball court and not restore the area of what should be a vernal pool. Logan responded it is obvious of Figure E he has provided that the area of the pickleball court that has the explanation is not only on the outside of the original vernal pool but is also outside of the original pond. Mathieu explained there is a reason there is a puddle, because that slope was cut into and there is a source of groundwater that is there. If you do not use that to feed your vernal pool you are restoring that could be a problem. There was a natural flow of groundwater that was significant that is feeding what was discovered. The critters would not be here if this was all filled in because the flow would have been interrupted. To Mathieu that area looks critical to make sure that flow of water is not cut off. Logan responded that is understood, however, as you can see that is created. Someone went in and dug it out and in that area the groundwater is not far. Logan pointed out that Gruner made a point in his report that the hydrology of this pool is critical. The hydrology has changed so we will have to take advantage of some of the changes. The problem is the groundwater in the fill area is probably not anywhere close to the ground. Logan mentioned there are indications of test pits and how they went. Beutler responded we do not have an actual report but it is in the minutes for how deep they excavated. Logan said that would give an indication for how far they fill. Penney responded we can get that information by getting a site plan and the existing topo and match that with the existing 2015 topo and we can get a much better definition. There needs to be action. Mathieu mentioned the water flowing from that area cannot get cut off. Someone will have to look at it

and make sure the water to sustain the restored area is restored as much as possible so you can have water in the area. That area looks critical. Penney stated there is a seasonably high water table and probably filled in what we saw on the 2004 aerials and sustained some longevity so that species survived and thrived. Penney explained there needs to be time to digest the new information and a site plan is critical. Also an understanding of the hydrology that supports the original vernal pool. Penney does not think there has been a lot of change to that area. In Penney's opinion we did not change the watershed dramatically. We did change the cover. Gruner mentioned the cover does have an impact on the hydrology. They no longer have that evapotranspiration. The big issue is the presence of some of that vegetation and once you get leaf out starts to sop up water. The lack of vegetative cover helps for the sense of restoration because you do not have immediate evapotranspiration. You do have evaporation and the balance between that from the literature is the evapotranspiration is a larger chunk of pulling out. What you want to get to minimize algae growth and to provide leaf input you want to get some cover. In an immediate restoration plan it is helpful versus creating in the woods when you have evapotranspiration. Logan commented that being a wetland scientist he knows a lot about hydrology. There are numerous vernal pools that do not have a watershed but they are deep enough and deep in the woods so you do not necessarily have to have a large watershed and a big source of water to create a proper hydroperiod. Logan stated we have to put a lot of thought into this.

Wierszchalek asked about the natural pond predevelopment and the limit of the final pond. Why would there not be a proposal to restore the final pond limits that was present for ten years or so? Logan responded the hydrology has been factored into it. The larger something is, the more evaporation happens. The hydroperiod we might have to go deeper. Logan's thought is we may have to go the original 8 or 9,000 square feet and make sure we nail the hydrology on that and do the perimeter planting.

Logan had a couple of questions for Gruner using Google Earth. The 11,000 square foot pond is probably where the traffic is? Gruner responded the opening of the canopy and the size of the permanence, yes. Logan mentioned Gruner said that there was within 742 feet another vernal pool which comes into the population dynamic and Logan asked Gruner where it is? Gruner responded it is west and pointed it out on the map. Gruner measured out where there are some vernal pools in the vicinity. Gruner also pointed out that there is a lot of forest habitat which is why the restoration has a good shot at being successful.

Mathieu asked that moving forward what do we expect to see next month? Logan responded hopefully we will see the survey plan next month and will start developing a draft restoration plan. Logan would also like to see test pits. Mathieu asked if we expect to have good progress? Logan responded yes that he is hoping the week before the next meeting they will have the information. Mathieu recapped that we will have a site plan and a start of a restoration plan. Mathieu asked to see Logan back at the next meeting so we can continue to see progress.

Penney mentioned the site plan is multiple sheets. It will be the site plan with existing conditions as it is. Then a site plan of the original and some line work of where the 2004 perimeter was. Then come back in May for three test holes so we can get a soil profile to come up with a plan that has the greatest amount of success. Penney asked a rhetorical question of what happens if this does not work? What legal remedy does the Town of Coventry have against Frechette for eliminating a vernal pool? We have one expert for the Town and one expert for the Owner that both say it is a vernal pool and it is affecting species. Mathieu mentioned this is why we want progress.

Roberson added it is prudent at this time to discuss what additional expertise the Town might need to help evaluate this plan. Roberson stated Logan had mentioned he does not want to guess and he is not a hydrogeologist. The Town has an ordinance that allows us when the need is established for professional assistance to hire those individuals at the applicant's expense. This situation leads us to the need for a professional wildlife biologist and also a hydrogeologist to examine the soil profiles and determine what the groundwater flow is. We need to restore the proper hydrological conditions to this vernal pool that has been so negatively impacted over the years. We need both a professional wildlife biologist with experience with those obligate vernal pool species and also a professional hydrogeologist who can look at the changing topography that has occurred. We know the vernal pool got filled in. What we do not know is how much or how much area around the vernal pool has been raised. Roberson strongly recommends the agency utilizes that Town ordinance that authorizes the agency to get quotes for the services and to choose those consultants and include those fees in the application fees in the wetlands permit application that will be forthcoming. Mathieu asked how we go about that? Roberson responded they should discuss that need and determine as an agency if they agree with that approach. Staff will do the work in obtaining quotes for services. Slater asked Roberson if she agrees the best time to do that is at the draft restoration plan so they have something for the commission to discuss and they will need that to get proposals from consultants that the commission might consider to engage. Roberson thinks it can wait until they have something before them but did think it was important to let the applicant and his agents know as soon as possible if that is something they are considering. Penney mentioned we need something for a professional to evaluate to be able to provide input.

Slater stated if the owner gets good information with Logan now and gets good test pits and the town decides to hire they can do less work. It might streamline what a consultant of the Town does. Mathieu asked Roberson if the ordinance allows the commission to revoke the ordinance at any time and is there a permission that needs to be granted to invoke this ordinance? Roberson responded she does not have the ordinance in front of her. She is not sure it provides much procedural detail. In Roberson's experience using the same sort of ordinance in other Towns there was some guidance. The need should be identified as soon as possible for the benefit of everyone. That is a decision the commission should make and the staff will make it happen. The staff will look at the direction of the wetlands agency if they decide that is appropriate for this application. Roberson cautions against waiting until you are too far along in the process. It is important to identify the need early on. Mathieu asked if this can be used on any application. Roberson responded yes this can be used on any application where it is needed. Roberson added that while this is paid for by the applicant they are contracted with the Town but the applicant pays for it.

Penney suggested that Gruner be present at Beutler's weekly site visits over the next month to see if the species will survive. Mathieu responded as long as the property owner is good with it.

Mathieu would like to see a timeline of what is proposed next month.

7. Adoption of Minutes

A. January 22, 2025 - Regular Meeting Minutes (e)

MOTION: Move to approve minutes as amended:

- Page 5, change the statement “That does not mean test pits did not fit the pond area” to “That does not mean test pits were advanced in the former pond area.”
- On page 2, the paragraph before the motion, change “Bill” to “Watkins”.
- On page 4, change “Charlie” to “Harakaly”.
- On page 5, specify “Frechette” is “he” in paragraph 3.
- On page 6, change “him” in paragraph 2 to “Frechette”
- On page 6, remove “Mr.” before “Markie” under section B, paragraphs 3 and 4.
- On page 6, under section B, paragraph 4, change “1 in” to “1 inch”
- On page 7, paragraph 5, add a question mark for the sentence “Why is there a sequence of permit violations and now we have to modify the original permit?”
- On pages 8 and 11, Glenney did not abstain from the motions. Add Glenney under “Voting For”.

By: Pearson

Seconded: Epstein

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Epstein, Mathieu, Wierszchalek, Pearson

Against: None

Abstain: None

Motion Unanimously Approved

D. March 26, 2025 - Regular Meeting Minutes (e)

MOTION: Move to approve minutes as amended:

- Page 4, item 5a in the first full paragraph, add that Glenney stated “it is up to the owner no matter who is speaking”.

By: Epstein

Seconded: Wierszchalek

Discussion: None

Voting:

For: Epstein, Mathieu, Wierszchalek

Against: None

Abstain: Pearson

Motion Approved

8. Correspondence

Beutler mentioned there is a new wetlands agency member who was recently appointed. Beutler will continue to try and get in touch with her and she will be on board for our next meeting. She will be filling an alternate position.

9. Discussion - Continuing A-C for next meeting.

- A. Rick Zulick's burn weeding plan for Wetlands Permit #24-32 - 375 Brewster Street (e)
- B. Policy regarding incomplete application submissions & revival of application checklist (e)
- C. Wetlands Quarterly Report Jan-Feb-March 2025 (e)
- D. IWA - Low Impact Development Working Group Update

Pearson and Mathieu generated the draft work plan and sent it out on the 14th to the agency. Mathieu is taking input on the work plan for the next couple of weeks. They welcome any and all comments. Their first meeting is next Tuesday. The agenda is set and was posted last week.

Pearson and Mathieu are going to Uconn on Monday for an impact development demonstration.

Wierszchalek had some comments and suggestions and is clarifying a few things and gave her notes on the work plan to Mathieu.

Wierszchalek asked if the meetings are public? Mathieu responded yes that this is an informal working group and they are not appointed.

Mathieu suggested Wierszchalek attend the meetings. Beutler will ask Slater if that is possible as it might be considered a meeting if three members from IWA are convening.

10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m. by Mathieu.

Respectfully Submitted,

Natalia Yeschick

Natalia Yeschick, Recording Clerk

PLEASE NOTE: These minutes are not official until approved by the Inland Wetlands Agency at the next meeting. Please see the next meeting minutes for approval or changes.