

HAMPTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION
WORK SESSION
MINUTES
February 12, 2013

PRESENT: Jay Diener, Chair
Ellen Goethel, Co-Chair
Sharon Raymond (arrived at 7:30 pm)
Barbara Renaud
Peter Tilton Jr.
Gordon Vinther
Diane Shaw, alternate
Rayann Dionne, Conservation Commission Coordinator

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Chairman, Jay Diener, at the Hampton Town Office Foyer.

Mr. Diener stated that the goal for this evening's work session is to determine the direction and rationale for drafting a sealed surface warrant article for 2014. Currently, a maximum of 85% sealed surface is allowed in those zones outside of the Aquifer Protection Zone. Hampton suffers from serious flooding and storm water management issues much of which can be attributed to large areas of sealed surface. It was proposed in the fall to reduce the sealed surface allotment to 60% which is the amount allowed in the non-residential Aquifer Protection Zone. This could be a good benchmark/goal for the rest of the Town.

Mrs. Dionne shared the results from the Assessor's database search. Since it's impossible to evaluate every lot, she focused on the five smallest lots per zone assuming that these lots would be most affected by a reduction in sealed surface. It was mentioned by Selectman Nichols (at a Planning Board meeting last year) that a propose change should not cause unnecessary hardship for any resident who wants to redevelop their property. With this in mind, Mrs. Dionne used the online GIS mapping system to calculate the percentage of sealed surface associated with the primary structure, accessories structures (decks, sheds, driveway, etc.) and the total sealed surface per lot. This provides a snap shot of some of the "worst" case scenarios. There are several zones that fall under the 60% with the exception of those more "built-up" zones like Business and Business Seasonal. Mrs. Goethel commented that those exceeding the percentage could still be redeveloped, if they obtain a variance. A reduction in the sealed surface allowance would not impact the current conditions but would protect/reduce future impact.

The Commission reviewed Section 1.2 and 1.3 in the Zoning Ordinance and a brief discussion about grandfathering and the difference between electing to rebuild and needing to rebuild do to an "Act of God" ensued.

Mr. Diener felt there were some fundamental questions that should be focused on: 1) what is an acceptable sealed surface percentage; 2) should it be the same percentage across the Town or different values per zones. Mr. Tilton commented, that even before these questions, we need to develop a purpose and understanding why a change is warranted. Several members felt the value of 10-15% sealed surface which research has found to impair water quality a compelling argument. The Rockingham Planning Commission GIS expert calculated the percentage of sealed surface for the Hampton Beach area (34%) and uptown area (22%). Comparing known sealed surface percentages against the impairment value could also be compelling.

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Several members felt that it will be important to educate residents on the benefits of permeable products that can be substitute for common impervious materials. Mrs. Goethel recommended drafting a brochure.

Ms. Raymond recommended focusing on the locations of the impaired water. Target the areas in Town that have known impairment and work within the MS4 permit requirements. Mrs. Goethel felt there were two levels of impaired waters 1) waters where the MS4 regulations will require treatment before discharge and 2) the areas in Town where drainage and flooding issues need to be fixed/addressed. Hotspots could be identified by overlaying both of these elements and the zones. Mr. Tilton added that those hotspots are where we would want make sure the sealed surface allotment is lower.

Mrs. Goethel asked whether wetlands would be used in the calculation of a lot's percentage of sealed surface. It was agreed that wetlands should not be included.

Mrs. Dionne commented that other Towns use the term "amount of open space" in their ordinances instead of "sealed surface". Changing the wording can influence the perception and make it sound less restrictive. Several members thought this was worth considering, however the term would needed to be specifically defined.

The availability of GIS resources was discussed. It was recommended to contact DPW and see their interest and availability in providing GIS support. It could be a good partnership and this effort could help them meet MS4 requirements

The Commission tasked Mrs. Dionne with collecting maps and information on impaired waters, drainage systems, watershed boundaries, land use/sealed surfaces, flood zones, flood areas, Town Zones, drainage analyses, etc. The Commission would determine which maps to overlay to identify areas of greatest concern. It was also recommended to have a representative from DPW at upcoming work sessions or meet with them separately.

Mr. Diener commented that this effort could benefit from grant funding. Mr. Tilton recommended checking with PREP.

Mr. Tilton asked to summarize the goal in one or two sentences. It was agreed that the objective is to increase the amount of open space and to slow the damage from flooding and water impairment.

It was decided that the next work session would occur once this information has been gathered. Mrs. Dionne would give an update at the February meeting.

MOTION by Mrs. Goethel to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.

SECONDED by Mr. Tilton

VOTE: All in favor

Respectfully submitted,
Rayann Dionne
Conservation Coordinator