

**Town of Auburn
Conservation Commission
January 9, 2018**

Members present: Jeff Porter-Chairman, Peg Donovan, Vice Chair, Diana Heaton, Member, Richard Burnham, Alternate.

Absent: Alan Villeneuve & Ed Fehrenbach, Members. Stephanie Hanson, Alternate.

Others present: Kristin & Mark Travassos

Mr. Porter called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. and moved on to the first discussion.

MINUTES

Mrs. Heaton moved to accept the minutes of December 5, 2017, as written, Mrs. Donovan seconded the motion. A vote was taken; all were in favor with Mr. Burnham abstaining, and the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

**Kristin & Mark Travassos
405 Wilson Crossing Road, Tax Map 2, Lot 4
Discuss Reduction in Wetland Buffer**

Mrs. Travassos informed the Commission that she and her husband purchased this property with the idea to buy as much land as they could so they could live a self-sustaining lifestyle. They would like to clear one acre of land to build a home, plant fruit and nut trees, have a large garden and install solar. They would like to put the remaining 10 acres in current use. Mrs. Travassos continued that there are wetlands on the property which are classified as Level One. The wetland buffer leaves approximately 1/3 of an acre of clearable land. Mrs. Travassos stated that they are asking for a variance from the Zoning Board to reduce the wetland buffer. The Travassos' reviewed the proposed plot plan with the Commission which depicted the proposed house. Mrs. Travassos pointed out where she was thinking would be a good place for the garden and indicated that they would like to install solar roof panels but may have to have a standalone unit installed instead.

Mr. Porter commented that with Level One wetlands they really try to maintain the 125-foot buffer and asked about perhaps tweaking the layout of the proposed house. Mrs. Travassos believed that due to the septic and side setbacks this was the only option for the placement of the house. The Travassos' explained to the commission the approximate timeline for applying for permits, the construction loan, and tree clearing. They are currently staying with relatives as they sold their previous home so from their standpoint they don't want to delay the timeline.

Mrs. Donovan stated that she was not so much concerned with the Travassos' proposed use of the property but the Commission needs to be forward thinking and concern themselves with the potential future uses of the land. Mrs. Donovan added that she would like to work with the Travassos' in a more conservative way. Mrs. Travassos commented that she appreciated the Commission's function, adding that they are trying to be conservative themselves. To be self-sustaining and feed a family of 4 a half acre per person is necessary. Mrs. Travassos noted that they realize that would not be possible with this property. Discussion ensued regarding possibly placing the orchard and garden off Nutt Road trail and using a rain barrel for watering purposes. Mr. Porter suggested that the Commission may support a slight reduction of the wetland buffer but likely not a 75-foot reduction. Mrs. Heaton agreed with Mr. Porter and echoed Mrs. Donovan's concern of the property in perpetuity. Mrs. Heaton stated that she fully supports the lifestyle that the Travassos are striving for but noted that any change to the land will alter the water flow and impact the wetland. Mr. Burnham indicated that the Commission has seen scenarios where one person's garden has become the next homeowner's lawn which becomes the next one's swimming pool. Discussion ensued regarding the solar panels. Mr. Porter stated that standalone units have a temporary impact and the Conservation Commission have supported them with conditions such as tree stumps remain and the area be left to return to its natural state. Mr. Porter suggested that the applicant could grow wildflowers in the area to support bees. The Travassos' noted that they are trying to reduce their carbon footprint through their home design. Mrs. Donovan indicated that she would like to conduct a site walk. The other Commission members agreed they would as well. Mr. Porter suggested the applicant may want to table their meeting with the Zoning Board or perhaps talk to the Board about the possibility of reducing a side or front setback to limit the impact to the wetland buffer. The Travassos' timeline was discussed again. Mr. Porter believed that even with tabling the Zoning Board hearing and conducting a site walk the Travassos could still clear some of the land to accommodate the house. Mr. Porter also suggested that the Travassos talk to the Auburn Building Inspector about the proposed home and the side and front backs.

ADJOURN

Mrs. Donovan moved to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Heaton seconded the motion. All were in favor, the motion passed unanimously and the meeting stood adjourned at 8.00 p.m.