

[D R A F T]

**DURHAM CONSERVATION COMMISSION SITE WALK**  
**Mill Plaza – November 20, 2020 – 9:00 a.m.**

Members Present: Chair Sally Needell; Vice-Chair Mary Ann Krebs; James Bubar, Coleen Fuerst, Jake Kritzer, John Nachilly and Walter Rous. Alternates Liz Durfee and Roanne Robbins.

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2 Also Present: Rick Taintor (Contract Town Planner for the project); Heather Grant and Paul  
3 Rasmussen (Planning Board); Engineer Joe Persechino and Sean McCauley from Tighe & Bond;  
4 Dr. Wil Wollheim (UNH Department of Natural Resources and Environment; Co-Director of  
5 Water Systems Analysis Group); Dr. John Hart (UNH Professor Emeritus of Life Sciences and  
6 Agriculture) and Lucie Bryar (Minute Taker).

7 Durham residents in attendance included:

8 Allen Bennett

9 Adrienne Burkey

10 John Hart

11 Holly Zirkle

12 Marshall Banks

13 David McCormick

14 Sandra Hebert

15 Bob Russell

16 Megan & Guy Johnson

17 John & Diane Carroll

18 Diane Chen

19 Mark McPeak

20 Joshua Meyrowitz

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22 Chair Needell introduced individuals present who would be leading or contributing insights  
23 during the walk, including Joe Persechino and Sean McCauley of Tighe Bond Engineering; Wil  
24 Willheim (UNH) and John Hart (UNH).

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26 The group started at the upland wetlands buffer line (marked with chalk) in the parking lot of  
27 the plaza. Mr. Persechino had copies of site maps available for those interested. Chair Needell  
28 added the maps do not show the proposed stormwater retention basin, which would be on the  
29 wetland buffer.

30 An orange cone showed the corner location of the proposed Building C. Colonial Durham  
31 Associates proposes a parking lot and a walkway between the building and the wetlands. This  
32 area is currently paved. According to Mr. Persechino, the site plan calls for an overall slight  
33 reduction in pavement and an increase in green space. There will be a retaining wall in this area  
34 as well.

35 The current parking lot was built directly in the buffer – ostensibly before 75-foot buffers were  
36 established.

37 Chair Needell said any changes to the site would fall under current ordinances and criteria for  
38 wetlands. All proposed new parking spaces and buildings are subject to current regulations and  
39 only anything left untouched on the site would be “grandfathered” in.

40 A resident asked about the plan for snow removal. Mr. Persechino said snow would be plowed  
41 to designated spots in the back and front of the property and if too much, would be trucked  
42 away from the site. No snow would be pushed toward College Brook.

43 Mr. Persechino briefly recapped the proposed stormwater treatment system and said it would  
44 help to reduce peak water runoff. The plans have been reviewed by a third party hired by the  
45 Town of Durham. Any final plans will be subject to approval by the NH Department of  
46 Environmental Services.

47 The group continued on the walk to another orange cone (in the parking lot) showing the  
48 corner for proposed Building B. None of this building would be in the wetlands buffer.

49 The next stop was the Plaza entrance, which is within the buffer. Mr. Persechino said the  
50 entrance would have only minor alterations as would a nearby culvert. This is also the location  
51 for a proposed rain garden treatment area.

#### 52 **Walk to Adjacent Properties on College Brook**

53 The group proceeded to Brookside Commons, an adjacent private condominium property on  
54 the other side of College Brook. Here, Condo Association President John Hart (and UNH  
55 Professor Emeritus – Life Sciences & Agriculture) shared landscaping concerns. He pointed out a  
56 number of trees marked for removal because they are dead or dying. He said there are plans to  
57 remove about 80% of the invasive understory along the bank and replace it with large native  
58 shrubs. The soil here is poor and is being managed to build organic matter.

59 Continuing on the walk, Dr. Hart pointed out an area that was once a pond, now silted over. He  
60 said snow had been plowed over the banks. A number of residents in attendance said they  
61 remove trash from the Brook daily.

62 Further down the brook, Wil Wollheim from the UNH Department of Natural Resources, was  
63 invited to give an update of his work. He and a group of students have been studying College  
64 Brook since 2013. Among other things, they are monitoring how much nitrogen it contributes  
65 to Great Bay. He noted the brook goes underground in three places. They have studied  
66 discharge rates at various height stages.

67 His research group also measures chloride in College Brook from road salts, using water quality  
68 sensors. Wil Wollheim said College Brook has a lot of salt and a “high metabolism,” due to the  
69 fact it’s an urban brook.

## DCC SITE WALK MINUTES – NOVEMBER 20, 2020

70 Resident Joshua Meyrowitz (whose property abuts the brook) said in 2002, Colonial Durham  
71 bulldozed an adjacent hillside, which has contributed to flooding in the neighborhood ever  
72 since. He takes exception with the current development plan because it does not address the  
73 flooding issue.

74 In answer to some charges from Mr. Meyrowitz that engineers and developers have  
75 deliberately hidden or distorted information, Mr. Persechino said some statements have been  
76 taken out of context. He adheres to a strict code of ethics and deals in science and facts. He will  
77 address more specific points of information at the Conservation Commission meeting on  
78 November 23, 2020.

79 At this point in the walk, an adjacent hillside property currently proposed for a parking lot was  
80 discussed. Chair Needell said the two applications are separate and need to be treated  
81 separately – even though the properties are part of the same eco-system.

82 The group then proceeded with permission to a number of homeowner properties on Chesley  
83 Drive to look at problem areas due to flooding from the brook; Mr. Persechino said none of the  
84 properties are part of the Mill Plaza site – but he indicated the developer may be willing to  
85 work in collaboration with others to try to mitigate some of the issues.

86 Mr. Meyrowitz showed flood points and negative changes to the Brook from his property.

87 A number of homeowners reiterated they've been promised by town representatives for many  
88 years that any Mill Plaza re-development would address the issues with the deterioration of  
89 College Brook and flooding of their properties. They are not convinced this project will address  
90 it.

91 The site walk continued south over the footbridge to Nancy Lambert's property along the brook  
92 and up into her backyard. It was recommended that homeowners with properties facing the  
93 plaza ask the Planning Board to include their yards in a site walk.

94 The site walk concluded around 11:00 a.m.

95 Respectfully submitted,

96 Lucie Bryar, Minute Taker  
97 Durham Conservation Commission

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