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DAILY HAMPSHIRE
GAZETTE

Lowe's will ID wetlands around proposed site

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HADLEY - Local officials will soon examine the impact the construction of a Lowe's home improvement store would have on nearby wetlands and the amount of displaced water that enters the Fort River.

The Conservation Commission recently received a notice of intent from the developers of the Lowe's project, which is expected to be built on a parcel just east of the Long Hollow Bison Farm.

"This means Lowe's is going to delineate, to flag, a lot of wetlands that haven't previously been flagged," said Conservation Chairwoman Alexandra Dawson.

The hearing is tentatively scheduled for March 13 at the Senior Community center.

The aim of the commission, Dawson said, is to have Lowe's representatives, along with commission consultant Comprehensive Environmental Inc. of Milford, flag wetlands on the Lowe's property, the neighboring farm parcel and additional property on both sides of Route 9, where the state road may be widened to accommodate additional traffic brought by the store.

Dawson said she doesn't expect this delineation process to change the amount of wetlands that Lowe's will need to alter to construct its building and parking lot, which is expected to be below the 5,000-square-foot threshold that would trigger a variance request. But it will tell the commission about future build-out potential.

"We'll have a sense of what's left over for future development," Dawson said.

The commission is inclined, she said, to count all projects as one, including any additional structures on the Lowe's property.

The notice of intent also allows the commission to examine how much the flow from the property will increase into a culvert that crosses Route 9 from the site and how the store should minimize the peak flow so that it won't affect land downstream.

Dawson said she doesn't expect the commission to ask Lowe's to substantially alter its site plans, which were approved last June by the Planning Board. Planning Board Clerk Bill Dwyer said if major changes are made, Lowe's developers would have to reopen these plans.

Meanwhile, Pyramid Corp., which is planning to add the Wal-Mart Supercenter as part of an expansion of the Hampshire Mall, has not yet filed its new notice of intent, but is expected to do so by late February, Dawson said.

The project has been delayed for more than a year after the Conservation Commission ruled that a detention pond for the mall's parking lots should count as a wetland, meaning that there were in excess of 5,000 square feet of wetlands that would need to be altered.

Wal-Mart should return with revised plans and also be on the March 13 agenda.

"We're looking for a kinder design," Dawson said.

Dawson added that she has never thought a Wal-Mart Supercenter could be stopped at the site, but that it could be moved from being so close to the Norwottuck Rail Trail.

"I have always felt that what we had was the possibility of having a nicer plan," Dawson said.

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