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Planning Board Members
City of Newburyport MA
City Hall
60 Pleasant Street
Newburyport MA 01950

Re: 5 Parker Street-Shepards Automotive-Site Plan Review-October 29, 2019

Dear Board Members:

The applicant has asked for a waiver for submission requirements for this project and has submitted only an Existing Conditions Plan of the area. As stated in the application a retail project was approved on this site in 2007 but the only work done for the project was to fill and grade the site and install stormwater management facilities.

The Existing Conditions Plan submitted with the application shows a “Gravel Parking Area” with two catch basins, drain piping and a stormwater treatment area installed. The Stormwater treatment area consists of a Forebay and a constructed Pocket Wetlands. The plan also shows an existing fence to be removed. There are wetlands to the south and west of the Gravel Parking Area.

I have not provided the Board with the usual checklist for compliance with plan submittal requirements since nothing is proposed for the property other than a different use than that for which it was originally approved.

I inspected the site on November 30, 2019 and found the following

- The catch basin top on the easterly most catch basin is not mortared to the basin and is higher than the surrounding grade
- The basin in the westerly side of the site is at grade and is free of sediment
- The Stormwater Management Area that was constructed is overgrown but the riprap overflow from the forebay and the forebay can be seen. The vegetation in the pocket wetland is too thick to see it from the parking area. The Google Earth aerial photo of the site of April 2013 clearly shows the Forebay and the Pocket Wetlands.
- There were four cars parked in the lot
- Three boats are on the property
- There are four storage containers on the lot
- Seven recreation trailers and motor homes are on the property.
- A review of Google aerial photos from 12/10,4/13,10/14,5/15,4/16,10/16, and 5/18 show a similar mix and a varying number of boats, cars, RVs and storage containers on site
- A Trex Seclusion fence is proposed to be installed on the lot to limit the visibility into the lot.

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- The surface of the lot appears to be reprocessed asphalt which is relatively impervious with a runoff coefficient approaching that of asphalt.

The catch basin in the easterly end of the lot does not collect any water because it is above grade and drainage from the lot, in part, also flows directly overland down the slope and into the surrounding wetlands and not through the stormwater management system. For ten years the lot has been used for container storage, boat storage and RV and car parking. The proposed fence will improve the aesthetics of the area by providing a visual barrier into the lot.

The following is stated in the project narrative submitted by the applicant.

Existing Stormwater measures include a sediment forebay with a rip-rap overflow weir, pocket wetlands with a rip-rap outfall to the existing wetland habitat. A Stormwater Management Report had been previously accepted for the installation of these measures and no new changes are proposed for the site that would warrant additional remediation

The statement would be true if the site grading had been completed to direct all stormwater to the catch basins and from there flow to the stormwater treatment systems but the plan clearly shows that not all areas of the site drain towards the catch basins and from a site inspection, the easterly catch basin is unable to collect any water because it is above grade. So, if “additional remediation” is not proposed to correct these deficiencies the applicant has not complied with the previously approved Stormwater Management Report.

In summary the Board is being asked to approve the use of the site as a Parking Lot for cars and RVs, container storage and boat storage and allow the continued use of a site that is not in compliance with the approved Stormwater Management Report.

Very truly yours

Philip G. Christiansen P.E.