

**AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION BOARD**

Date: November 13, 2024

Application #2024-20

Location: 777 Long Ridge Road

Applicant: Wesley Stout Associates for Long Ridge Stamford Associates, LP

Watershed: Rippowam River (Non-DWS)

FEMA FIRM: 09001C0502F & 506F (6/18/2010)

Flood Zones: Zone AE ~74.7 – 78.8 with Floodway, Zone X

Area: 16.99 acres

Account: 001-5008

Map: 82

Block: 359

Lot: 13

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References

- Five sheet set of plans entitled “Synchrony Walking Trail – 777 Long Ridge Road, Stamford, CT” prepared by Wesley Stout Associates – dated October 1, 2024.
- Romex Profi-Deko technical data sheets.
- Flood compliance letter certified by Andy Soumelidis, CT PE #27803 of Landtech Consulting, dated November 8, 2024.
- Letter describing the walking trail “Construction and Implementation Approach” prepared by Thomas J. Cross, CT PLA #1525, of Wesley Stout Associates Landscape Architecture, dated November 13, 2024.

Proposal

The applicant seeks inland wetland/watercourse and flood prone area permits to replace the woodchip surface of an existing ~1,750 foot long footpath around the perimeter of the buildings and associated parking areas of the Synchrony office complex at 777 Long Ridge Road with a porous, bonded gravel material.

This application was filed on October 4, 2024, and was accepted by the Board at its meeting held on October 17, 2024.

Description of Project Area

777 Long Ridge Road is a commercial office complex consisting of three buildings, parking garages, and surface lots. The Rippowam River flows to the south along the northern and western edges of the property. The FEMA-designated regulatory floodplain with floodway that is associated with the on-site portion of the river has a base flood elevation ranging from approximately 74.7 – 78.8 feet. As shown on the property survey, there are variable width wooded riparian wetlands along both sides of the river and an approximately 1.4-acre swamp wetland in the eastern portion of the site.

This property is not located in a drinking water supply watershed or within a Connecticut Natural Diversity Data Base area of concern.

Prior EPB Actions

EPB Permit #1308 Install emergency generator

Issues/Discussion

The existing footpath crosses wetland areas to the east, north, and west of the development envelope. The northern and western sides of the footpath are also located within the 100-year floodplain, with portions in the floodway. The proposed improvement to the footpath consists of replacing the existing woodchip surface with gravel that is resin-bonded with a material called Rompox-Profi Deko. According to the descriptions in the technical data sheets provided by the applicant, this product creates a stable, porous surface.

The application plans specify the surface of the improved path will match the existing elevations (i.e., no net fill), and the flood compliance letter prepared by Andy Soumelidis, P.E., certifies the walkway will be capable of withstanding the flood depths, pressures, velocities, impact and uplift forces, and other factors associated with the base flood per section 9.B.4.a.(6)(g) of the Zoning Regulations (i.e., the Flood Prone Area Regulations). The supervising landscape architect should verify that the contractor sets the surface of the improved path at the same elevation as the existing wood chips and the Board should require post construction certification of same by a professional engineer.

In response to questions raised by staff about the construction methodology and site controls that will be used during this project, the project landscape architect, Thomas Cross, has submitted a letter describing the project sequencing, equipment that will be used, and the erosion controls and site stabilization measures that will be employed. This outline provides a reasonable approach for implementing the project while protecting the wetland and river. Based on this information and observations made on site, staff also believes there is enough space between the trees that stand along the existing 3 – 5 foot wide path for the mini excavators and other small equipment called out in Mr. Cross's letter to install the five foot wide path without the need to remove any of the nearby trees. However, the Board may wish to include a condition of approval to require replacement of any tree that may be damaged or that turns out does need to be removed. The "Permeable Pavement" cross section on sheet SP-1.1 indicates there will be at least a six inch deep trench dug along the path for the stone base and Rompox surface. Any tree roots encountered during excavation should be cut rather than ripped in order to protect the health of the trees.

The revised set of drawing that Mr. Cross mentions in his letter will include site specific details to guide project implementation and can be reviewed by EPB staff as final construction plans. In addition to the measures outlined in the letter, the final plans should specify that any stockpiling in the floodplain should only be for a very limited duration and that all stockpiles and equipment must be moved from the floodplain prior to anticipated high water events.

The application plans include a note that existing invasive plants are to be removed from the vicinity of the trail. The supervising landscape architect should monitor the plant removal is limited to non-native invasives and is done in the least impactful way to wetland and watercourse resources.

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board issue an inland wetland/watercourse and flood prone area permit for this project with the following conditions:

1. Work shall conform to the plans entitled:
 - Five sheet set of plans entitled “Synchrony Walking Trail – 777 Long Ridge Road, Stamford, CT” prepared by Wesley Stout Associates – dated October 1, 2024.
 - Letter describing the walking trail “Construction and Implementation Approach” prepared by Thomas Cross, CT PLA #1525, of Wesley Stout Associates, dated November 13, 2024.
2. The permittee shall submit a permit filing fee of \$65.00 within fifteen days of the decision’s publication (on or about November 30, 2024).
3. The permittee shall submit a “Permit Compliance Fee” in the amount of \$200.00 to the EPB prior to the start of any site activity and issuance of building permit. Subsequent fees shall be submitted on an annual basis on or before the anniversary of the permit's effective date until the project is satisfactorily completed. Said fee is required pursuant to the EPB Fee Schedule.
4. The permittee shall submit final construction plans to EPB for staff review and approval prior to the start of site activities. These plans shall depict the site-specific details of the construction and implementation approach outlined in the November 13, 2024 letter prepared by Thomas J. Cross, PLA, of Wesley Stout Associates. In addition to the measures outlined in the letter, the final plans shall specify that stockpiling in the floodplain shall only be for a very limited duration and that all stockpiles and equipment must be moved from the floodplain prior to anticipated high water events.
5. The permittee shall submit a performance bond, certified check, or other acceptable form of surety to secure the timely and proper performance of erosion and sedimentation controls, and professional supervision and certifications, plus a 15% contingency. A detailed estimate of these costs must be supplied to EPB staff for approval prior to the submission of the performance surety. The performance surety shall be submitted to EPB staff prior to the start of any site activity.
6. A Contractor's Compliance Statement completed by the contractor engaged to perform the regulated activities shall be submitted to EPB staff no less than 48 hours prior to the start of work. (https://stamfordct.seamlessdocs.com/f/contractors_compliance_statement).
7. This project shall be implemented under the supervision of a professional landscape architect to ensure the surface of the improved path is set at the same elevation as the surface of the existing woodchip path, any tree roots encountered during excavation for the improved path are cut rather than ripped, any trees that are damaged or removed during the project are tallied and reported to EPB staff, and non-native invasive plants are removed in the way that is least impactful to wetlands and watercourses.

8. The permittee shall replace any trees that are damaged or removed during the project, based on a plan submitted for review and approval by EPB staff.
9. Upon the completion of construction and prior to release of surety, a professional engineer shall certify by way of signed and sealed correspondence that the improved path has been constructed in accordance with the provisions of Section 9.B of the Zoning Regulations (“Flood Prone Area Regulations”), has not created a net fill within the FEMA-designated regulatory floodplain, and is capable of withstanding the flood depths, pressures, velocities, impact and uplift forces, and other factors associated with the base flood.

Robert E. Clausi