

**St. George Planning Board
On-site Inspection
St. George Sea Farms, LLC
127 River Road
January 9, 2021**

The on-site visitation inspection began at 9 a.m. Planning Board members present were: Anne Cox, Chair; Jane Brown, Anne Cogger, Ray Emerson, Michael Jordan, Mary K. Hewlett, and Alan Letourneau. Others present were: CEO Brackett, Richard Bates, Carolyn Connors, Paul and Billie Gaudette, Russ Wolfertz, Irene Rizkalla, Bill Hickey, Albert and Gail Moncovich, Steve Taylor, Jon Lewis, Ryan Cline, Joseph R. LaBranche, Nadina Kinisch, Debra Frieder, Chris Caffrey, David Noonan, Mark Bartholomew, David Emery, Judy and Robert Norton, Michael Myers.

Russell Wolfertz, Joseph R. LaBranche, and Jon Lewis represented the developer, John Wagner. The application is to reconstruct the lobster pound containment for Marine Aquaculture.

Chair Cox explained the purpose of the onsite inspection: To look at the layout of the physical site and what is on the grounds. She stated that a public hearing will be held on Tuesday, January 12, 2021, at 7 p.m. via Zoom, and at that time, people can raise concerns and ask questions.

Wolfertz introduced himself and stated he represented Jon Wagner. Lewis stated he worked 23 years for the Maine Department of Marine Resources as an aquaculture biologist diver and then as Director of the Aquaculture Program. Wolfertz noted that Lewis is in charge of the St. George Sea Farms aquaculture project, some of the rebuilding of the pier, and dealing with the overboard discharge issues. LaBranche is with LaBranche Land Surveys and is the engineer working with the team to survey the property, and deal with aspects of the structure.

Wolfertz explained the plan. It is to remove all the existing buildings as they have no economic value. The original caretaker's house will be removed because of interior mold and water leakage. Two sheds will also be removed. The former processing building will be removed and will be replaced with one building with a sweeping roofline. The new roofline will be no higher than the existing building, but the roof will slope down. The proposed building will be cantilevered out over the water and the intent is to have a large trap door that will allow the oysters to be moved between the pound area and the building. The plan is to keep and reuse the existing tanks that are in the building so they can get a double season out of the oysters. By maintaining the tanks, they can move the oysters, continue to grow and nurture them in their seed state through the winter months, put them back into the pound, and then float them out on ropes and cages.

Wolfertz explained the overboard discharge system will be removed and replaced with a state-of-the-art Fuji subsurface pre-treatment system and Joseph LaBranche, Sr. has been working on getting the permits for that. Lewis stated he is working with the Maine Department of Marine Resources to clean up the cove and eventually get the cove open. Wolfertz noted that removing the overboard discharge and getting it cleaned up, may open the cove back up to commercial

fisheries that are currently closed. He stated with the oysters and the possibility of bringing in mussels at some point, will create a two-tier project, and the mollusks will help clean the water in the cove.

Wolfertz stated that as far as buildings, the plan is to contain the same square footage as now. There are three bedrooms in the existing building that was for employees and caretakers and there are two bedrooms in the proposed setup with a central area for the employees. The intent is to find a couple of volunteers or a couple to live there and watch over the property. There is no rental involved. It is intended for the employees.

A small parking area will be used by half-ton and three-quarter-ton trucks to transport the product to Bristol. Mr. Wagner bought a building there about a month ago to do the processing, culling, and shipping out of the product. No nighttime traffic is anticipated at Sea Farms. The only lighting will be down shielded and located off the eaves of the new building to keep the perimeter of the building and parking lot lit and secure.

Chair Cox asked about the plan for the containment and dam.

Wolfertz stated it leaks there now, and it is not particularly pretty. Mr. Wagner plans to resurface that area. Lewis stated that Wagner is talking about taking out the existing catwalk and pilings and using the existing crib works. There is a bit of depression in between the cribwork and he will fill that in with concrete and then face it with granite. The height of the dam will increase by about 3 feet so there will always be approximately 7 feet of water in the pound. Wagner plans to construct two to three vents in the bottom of that so the pound can be drained, if necessary.

Lewis stated that one of the unique traits about this site in terms of aquaculture is the ability to control water flow. "If you are bringing in open ocean water into the pound, you will get additional salinity and get increased dissolved oxygen. But we hope to have some controls over water flow, temperature, and phytoplankton for the oysters to feed on. The dam will be concrete in the middle with granite faces. Then a new catwalk to be constructed over that, probably with out-pilings just surfaced on top with granite."

Wolfertz stated the vision for this project after its completion, is to look down Rt. 131 and see a nice building, the catwalk and the whole compound will look like an infinity edge.

Cogger asked if there will be a cooling system at the site.

Lewis stated there has been no discussion of having any kind of refrigerator trucks. If refrigeration becomes necessary, it will be inside the plant, not outside with running trucks and generators. He stated that refrigeration should not be necessary for the process of harvesting the oysters, and in terms of refrigerator trucks running outside, if any refrigeration is needed, there would probably be a walk-in cooler inside the plant.

A question was asked about 3 a.m. or 4 a.m. traffic at the pound.

Wolfertz stated said the intended traffic coming in and out of the pound will occur during normal business hours. No retail is anticipated. It is purely a wholesale operation to move the product off-site.

Bill Hickey asked how the total square footage was determined.

Wolfertz stated the total square footage of the building design is the cumulation of all the buildings that currently exist.

LaBranche stated the buildings have been measured directly and the square footage of the proposed building is slightly less than 30% expansion of the square footage that exists. He stated that was compared to the survey done in 1973 as recorded in the Registry of Deeds. The acreage listed on that is more or less compared to the existing ground with the liDAR surface giving us the height of the highwater mark, and the lot lines just described on that survey, being compared to that. The ratio is calculated from there.

Hewlett asked if the barbed wire is going to be removed.

Wolfertz explained the proposed landscaping plan. The barbed wire will be removed, and they will clean up the edges. A decision has not been made whether they will install a granite wall or whether they will install a New England style split rail. On the other side, some of the granite that is there will be lined up around that area, which should stabilize the road to Haskell Point and provide more warmth to the water to help the oysters grow.

Lewis, "The plan was originally to take some of that granite pile whether he works from the back end or not, I can't say at this point but if you create some additional rock surface and granite surface just below the high tide line in the pound, you will get the solar gain during the day and then it will release the heat."

Chair Cox asked if the plan is to take the granite from that grout pile that is already there.

Lewis stated that the only granite that would be taken from that pile would be used to line that north end of the pound for solar gain. The granite is going to be cut and transported from Georgia. Wolfertz stated the granite had already been ordered for the facing of the wall and 30-foot sheets of granite will line it. Then on the inside, some of that (off the rock pile) might be used to stabilize the inside of the wall that will not be seen.

Chair Cox stated the Haskell Point neighbors will be worried about the stability and condition of the road with taking any rock from the pile.

Lewis stated Wagner is well aware of taking rock from this surface. Wagner has talked about the ability to go over to Atwood's and take it from the backside and then move it in and then leave this front face as it is. Noonan asked if he had talked with Atwood? Lewis stated that he did not know. Noonan stated he has not.

Wolfertz stated Wagner has not spoken to Atwood. They have talked with many of the neighbors on Haskell Point and have shared all the information about what is going on with them. Wolfertz stated they recognize there are concerns about the road, but Wagner has made assurances that the road will be in better condition than it is now.

Eliza Bailey, a resident of Haskell Point Road, stated the concern is taking from the front side of the granite pile. "I cannot imagine because of the size of those pieces that taking from the front would be practical, but I think that is the concern because the pile is so close to the road. If the granite were taken from the backside of the pile, I think there would be no concerns whatsoever."

Wolfertz said they have been working with George Hall and Bill Reinhardt as to the mechanics of that and it is Reinhardt's intent to start from the back. He said Bill had no concerns whatsoever about a few of the larger rocks. Reinhardt said he could pick those off. Wolfertz, "It is not a question to destroy the pile or remove it, it is to try to get what granite they can out of there safely, maintain the pile, and make it look and feel better for Haskell Point residents."

Emery, "Mr. Wagner and Russ Wolfertz have spent a lot of time talking with us discussing the road, and he committed to us that if there was any damage done to the road, he would be financially responsible for repairs. That is very important to us. Second, for clarification, I believe when Russ talks about taking rocks from the back, he is not talking about the Atwood back. What he is talking about is the side."

Wolfertz, "Correct, and the removal would occur on the land Mr. Wagner would acquire with this. We have about one-quarter to one-half acre and we would come in on the side and can pull off without going into Atwood's and without destroying the front."

Myers, "I see you are going to do oysters and mussels. I have taken agriculture classes myself and I know mussels are a big footprint. So where do you plan on growing your mussels?"

Lewis stated mussels were kind of a long term plan that Wagner has expressed an interest in.

Myers, "I know space. I know the government leases space on the water for people to grow stuff, but this is a fishing bay. I am a fisherman. (Hickey noted he also was a fisherman). This is our livelihood. This is a concern. A lot of people use this bay and the water that comes out of here. This has all contributed to our harbors and our fisheries. I am not so concerned about the oysters because they are filter feeders, the mussels are, too, but they are a much bigger footprint. I am concerned about the maintenance of the sites and the mussel footprint has really got me concerned because I have fished these waters and I do not want to lose ground because someone else wants to come in and make money. I have been doing it since I was a kid. I grew up here."

Lewis, "At this point, any aquaculture activity would be in the pound. Everything would be contained there. I think oysters are going to take up most of the feed so the idea of getting a mussel farm and oyster farm and potentially a clam farm in there, is probably not realistic unless you really reduce the number of oysters. Full disclosure, he has talked about down the road potentially finding a site out here but that would be something we would definitely want to work with the fishing community. The guy is totally focused on not creating conflict or problems for

other people. If there is a spot in Long Cove that might work, but I don't see that being a big mussel footprint. Right now, what I would say is for the foreseeable future, everything is going to be just within the pound."

The group then viewed the shed, dock, pound, and bay area at the site. Chair Cox stated there were questions about the proposed cantilevering. Wolfertz explained that the proposed cantilevering will be approximately where the existing chimney sticks up and is about where the trap door will be. Lewis stated the idea is to float the bags, pick them up, and take them into the plant so there is no activity outside.

Wolfertz discussed the noise issue. He stated that Lewis has been working with Mr. Wagner about developing a system that will allow the oysters to come in without having to send boats out to drag the oysters up, and the system should be quieter than a normal pound operation. Lewis added they may use a small powerboat with a small four-stroke outboard or the boat may be hand-powered.

Lewis said the St. George Sea Farms' design is similar to Pinkham's Seafood in Boothbay Harbor which Mr. Wagner built.

Question: Will it always be high tide in the pound?

Lewis, "There will be a spillway. There will be about three feet of spillage. The infinity pool on an incoming tide will start to spill over, raise about three feet and on the outgoing tide, it will fall about three feet. There will be about seven and one-half feet of water in the pound. Wagner does want to put openings in the bottom so he could exchange all the water or potentially drain the pound if he needed to for some reason."

Question: Will there be an overboard discharge component?

Wolfertz stated the overboard discharge is being removed.

LaBranche, "The state absolutely does not want overboard discharges. They are very excited to see another overboard discharge gone. The common practice is to try to accommodate their removal, so there will be no overboard discharge type component to the proposed septic system."

Question: Will the waste treatment system handle the amount of waste for the residents and employees?

LaBranche, "Yes. The system is being designed to accommodate what would be the equivalent of a three-bedroom system."

Question: The system won't be used to support this manufacturing process? It will be just used for the employees' and residents' waste?

LaBranche stated that is correct.

Question: Does your project plan to keep brush and (vegetation) from growing up along the edges?

Wolfertz stated in every plan that has been drawn, the view will be improved tremendously. He said, "You will have an open expanse coming down through. Some of the trees will be removed. All of this ugliness will be gone and the reason for the cantilevered building is so that it looks low, so you can look down through it. If you look at the design of the building, it sweeps down. The chimney that is shown on the design is another piece of Georgia granite, so Wagner is trying to stay with the earth tone all the way through."

Chair Cox asked for other comments or questions. There being no other comments, the onsite visitation ended at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marguerite R. Wilson
Planning Board Recording Secretary