

From: [Carroll, John](#)
To: [Karen Edwards](#)
Cc: [Michael Behrendt](#)
Subject: Statement to Planning Board and Conservation Commission
Date: Tuesday, January 12, 2021 1:41:23 PM

Karen,

Please send this to both the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission. Thank you.

Statement to the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission:

I am John Carroll, Professor Emeritus of Environmental Conservation at UNH.

With the best of knowledge and the best of intention, we humans will never be able to replicate the complexity of nature by our own hand. Regardless of how much of an effort by Mr. Sievert or any other engineer, nature and natural process, as complex as it is, remains beyond our ken, beyond our capability to even fully understand. The realization that the Upper Gerrish Watershed extends all the way to Canney Road on the Ambler side is further evidence of this complexity, with the likelihood of numerous small springs, streams and rivulets all flowing toward the point at the Ambler-Gerrish intersection where they converge and flow into the town-owned containment known as the Gerrish Wetland. This flow is composed of a mixture of road run-off from Ambler, Gerrish and even Canney Road, and likely a web of numerous small springs coming in from multiple directions, not only from the Lewis and Merton/Kelley lands and those property owners along Gerrish upland of their home sites; not only from the Sproule property at the intersection itself; not only from the Sweetman property, but, we now know, from a host of properties farther upstream on both sides of Ambler and beyond to Canney Road.

I am not a wetland scientist but I have been close to this subject since my own doctoral dissertation research in the early 1970s which focused on federal and state wetlands policy and law and the science upon which it is based. That was followed by 43 years of teaching and research in Environmental Conservation at UNH. I know enough to know that, if we are to further consider the town-owned "Gerrish Access", we need an independent wetland ecologist working jointly with an independent hydrologist to study the character and dynamic of this watershed over the four seasons before we could ever consider destroying the wetlands containment, the trees, the wetland plants, the soils, the geology of that town-owned property. And, even with that knowledge, it appears that we cannot legally destroy those wetlands, given both town ordinances and state statutes.

In his recent letter of January 8 to Town Planner Behrendt, Project Engineer Sievert understandably places clear limits to the breadth and width of required studies by independent evaluators, both ecological and hydrological. The wide scope necessary for such studies by independent evaluators, both ecological and hydrological, can be both expensive and time-consuming. Were I in Engineer Sievert's shoes, I would likely write the same letter placing the same limits, and for the same reasons: to save money and time. But nature does not allow for such constrained limits. Nature simply does not work that way. All things being connected, what affects one part of the watershed system affects all others.. We deceive ourselves if we believe otherwise. The comprehensiveness and the time-frame are necessary if we want to know and understand the truth, for we cannot replicate nature's complexity with engineered mechanical measures.

That being said, another option is at hand, an option which is both physically doable and legal, and that is the Bagdad Access, the Bagdad Entrance. Much less study is needed, far less wetland acreage is impacted, and the Planning Board as well as the Conservation Commission can act in good conscience to consider that alternative for access. I walked Bagdad Entrance again a few days ago, following the route of the photos we have been provided, following the right-of-way created by Engineer Sievert himself into the circle of houses proposed. That right-of-way is easy to use, clear to navigate, is fairly level in grade, crosses only one very small and rather inconsequential wetland, and efficiently serves the entire planned development of fifteen houses of the proposed "pocket neighborhood".

It is time, therefore, for Planning Board and Conservation Commission site walks starting from Bagdad and following the road bed so clearly photographed by Ms. Kelley on December 28th. That would be far wiser than wasting any more time, including the applicant's time and money, on the town-owned Gerrish Wetlands, wetlands which need to be left alone and unimpaired, so that they can continue to do the containment and purification work they do. And, given the necessary time and expense needed for proper independent studies of Gerrish, the Gerrish Access should be avoided by using the obvious and simple Bagdad Entrance. It is time for both the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission to conduct site walks starting at the Bagdad Entrance.

Thank you.

John E. Carroll

cc.: Durham Conservation Commission