

**Conservation Commission**  
**Gentle Giant Rowing Club, Public Hearing NOI DEP File #287-0021**  
**Minutes for July 24 & July 31, 2002**

**Gentle Giant Rowing Club Hearing Opened July 24, 2002**  
**Open meeting/introduction**

The meeting was opened at 7:10 pm. Attendees were Conservation Commission chair, Cassandra Koutalidis, and members, Elisabeth Miley, Michael Fager, and Lisa Brukilacchio, Associate Member, Rachel Evans and Agent, Anne Phelps.

Present for Gentle Giant Rowing Club (GGRC) were Gracio Garcia and Allan Gehant.

**Presentation of NOI**

Gentle Giant Rowing Club, represented by Gracio Garcia, presented the NOI. Gracio said his group works with the boys and Girls Club and is sponsored by the Gentle Giant Moving Company. He described the history of the Rowing Club and its aims. He said they are operating at Blessing of the Bay Boathouse (owned by MDC), and have added a number of rowing shells to increase the number of people they can accommodate.

The NOI is submitted to add a 30 x 80 ft. temporary, free-standing fence to an existing one attached to the boathouse, and to add two 8 x 64 ft. floating docks to extend the existing dock. The dock is anchored with cement blocks, galvanized chain, and two galvanized pipes hammered into place. Potentially affected areas include land under water, and bank (the fence is within 25 ft. of the Mystic River bank).

The present dock is too high above the water to easily place the boats (weighing several hundred pounds) directly into the water, so they wanted to add a floating dock as an extension to the existing one that would make it easier to launch boats from the dock. Also, they want to add a fence extension to the present chain-link fence attached to the boathouse, to enable them to store the additional rowing shells more securely. The fence is on footings, and no excavation of the riverbank has occurred from installation of the fence. Gracio said the fence will be removed when not in use (during the winter months) and stored inside the boathouse or inside the perimeter of the permanent fence adjacent to the boathouse.

Gracio said the Rowing Club is trying to expand its program to get surrounding High Schools to participate.

MF said he inspected the structures and the fence is on the riverbank. He said he is concerned about foot traffic around the fence wearing the grass and causing erosion. Gracio said he is willing to do what is needed to mitigate. Alan said the grass there is very heavy, not the usual lawn grass, and he thinks it will stand up better than suburban lawns to foot traffic.

CK said the CC might require mitigation, such as an alteration to the path or the location of boat storage.

Gracio said it is not easy to move the fence and still have it be useful. And, he said the fence is in use from April to October, which, as CK commented, is a bad time frame for re-planting.

CK asked Gracio to elaborate on the information provided about the anchors for the docks. Gracio said they are 2 X 2 ft. concrete blocks anchoring the front of the docks. Rachel asked if the Corps of Engineers needed to grant a permit for the work. Michael asked about whether Ch 91 is applicable. CK said they also are working in an area of a fish run, and the CC may restrict the permit during the time period from April to mid-June.

Rachel asked Gracio about the temporary nature of the fence. Gracio said he meant a period no longer than 5 years. Michael suggested Gracio replace the term with the word "seasonal." Gracio added that rowing is an expensive activity and the club needs to build a constituency before they can think about a permanent structure.

Discussion of possible alternative fence placement followed. Michael commented that if the CC does not permit the work, it will have to put in a stop work order. Rachel said she does not know how the CC can condition it. More discussion of the potential for erosion followed. CK said they could put down a geotextile (rubberized netting) mat and it may need to be anchored. It would keep the vegetation from being eroded where people are frequently walking. Pavers might also be considered. Rachel said both the riverfront area and the bank are being affected. CK agreed. Discussion of calculation of filing fees for the project followed.

Gracio asked to continue the hearing, and said he needed help to amend his NOI. CK offered to be available to help. The amended NOI will be attached to the old NOI.

Gracio said all the work has been completed, except installation of the second dock extension. That installation is scheduled for August 21 or 22, the day that Belmont High School is donating the dock. The CC discussed times for a site visit. Allan said the hours of operation are M-Th 6:00-7:30am and 6:00-7:30pm, but most activity occurs between 5:30-8am and 5:30-8pm.

The CC agreed to Continue the Hearing on Wed. July 31, at City Hall Annex, after 7:30 pm. This is to occur during a special procedural meeting of the CC.

**Hearing Adjourned.**

**Hearing continued, Mon. July 31, at City Hall Annex, at 8:01 pm  
Introductions**

Attendees were Conservation Commission members Elisabeth Krautscheid, Delia Kaye, Leslie Brayton, John Reinhardt, Michael Fager, and Lisa Brukilacchio, Associate Member, Janet McGowan and Agent, Anne Phelps.

Also present were Gracio Garcia, Gentle Giant Rowing Club (GGRC), and Allan Gehant, GGRC, Sondra Madison, Boys & Girls Club, and Jennifer Hill, GroundworkSomerville.

**Discussion and Questions from the Conservation Commission**

The DEP file number was submitted, and there are no abutters.

Gracio was asked about how many people would use the boats. Gracio said the largest class is 24 people. He would like to see 32-48 people/class, which is about 300 total rowers per season.

Members of the public can sign up to row, too, although there is a limited amount of equipment and storage. Right now GGRC owns 1 boat and leases 3. They would like to have 6 eight-person boats and 48 rowers.

Discussion of the potential for erosion followed.

**Leslie moved to grant the Rowing Club an OOC. Lisa B. seconded.**

Discussion: It was suggested the OOC contain wording to the effect that if erosion along the path to the boat storage area occurs, the CC shall be consulted regarding mitigation.

Delia volunteered to do a site visit and take pictures.

**VOTE: All in favor.**

Hearing closed 9:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anne Phelps, Agent