

PLANNING BOARD

Town of Waterboro

PUBLIC HEARING

MAY 23, 1996

Maine Cranberry Company Map 1 Lot 25 AR Zone 8:00 P.M.

Bob Cleaves of the Maine Cranberry Company explained that the company was founded in 1989 to find an appropriate site for the growing of cranberries. After three years of searching they found an old bog that had been harvested by Albion Gile in 1945 and was 10 to 20 acres in size. Research found that this was the first water harvested bog in the United States. The Roberts and Giles families operated this cranberry operation. They also found a letter from Ocean Spray Company that this operation had the honor of having the third largest berry in a contest. They had to see if a commercial cranberry operation could be successful in Maine.

In 1992 they began the process with the state, federal and local agencies. The current configuration of the lots is the effort of the past four years. They originally proposed 65 acres of bed. As a result of the Federal process which they were humbled by they have redesigned the beds away from Shaker brook and abutters to protect natural area. They now propose 20 acres of beds in Alfred and 10 acres in Waterboro with support buildings in Waterboro for chemical storage, office and sand extraction and storage. The contour of the site works well for cranberries. They need a lot of water to protect the berries from frost, bugs etc. This site yields an excellent source of water supply for the site and appear to have all the elements for successful harvesting. Water source, history and the soils on site.

The first step would be the excavation of vegetation and topsoil. The bog is laser leveled because they don't want a ponding effect, this would cause root rot. After the site is leveled you undertake the dikes and ditches for the complex irrigation system and construct the beds. They have found that cranberries grow better with the application of sand it helps promote growth. Every three to four years they lay down additional sand on the beds.

The yield per acre is expected to be ½ ton. Once the vines are planted they will not be ready to harvest for three seasons. There are two ways to harvest, one is by water the other is to dry pick them. Mr. Cleaves indicated that they are discussing the possibility of working with Hannaford Brothers on selling some of the dry picked berries. There are between 15 and 20 varieties of cranberries. Stephens is the most popular. September and October the berries are harvested. Once harvested the bog lays dormant, the beds are then flooded to form a layer of ice over the vines for protection. In the spring of the year you take the ice off and another season starts.

Regulatory Summary:

In 1993 the Maine Cranberry Company presented an application to Clean Water Act, Federal, State and Local agencies. The project was reviewed by FEMA, Fish and Wildlife, S.C.S and the Army Corp. In 1995 they received their Federal and State permit.

Compensation for the wetland required preservation of land mass preserved in a deed to the State of Maine. The green area indicated on the site plan is the restoration area to help with the impact to the area. What you take from the environment you need to find an area to replace. They are now before both towns for local review. Town of Alfred is focused on a few issues. Dan Garson of Woodward & Curran has been hired by both towns for review.

Sand Crossing Road is a discontinued road. They have provided proof of sand supply being in existence for a number of years and is ongoing. An inventory of those chemical to be utilized has been provided. The land is under option.

A person in attendance noted he was not familiar with this area but asked would the water taken from the brook cause the brook to dry up. A fixed water intake structure will be placed to keep that from happening. Once below aquatic growth they would not be able to draw from the brook. The process used to protect the berries is similar to that used by the orange orchards in Florida. They create a layer of ice to protect the fruit. Once the beds are flooded and frozen you could skate on the beds.

Larry Jacobsen asked the audience how many had come for the Cranberry Bog hearing. None noted they were there for the review. Approximately 10 people from the general public were present. Monitoring for a number of conditions in Dan Garsons report. A background study of water quality before and after the development. Mr. Cleaves indicated he was not aware that any other cranberry operation that has to provide this information. It will be a closed loop system. During the spring of the year there are no chemicals being spread and this would be the only time that any over flow might occur.

Who monitors the brook? The fixed intake structure physically fixes the level.

Dan Garson indicated the level is set at 6.8 cubic feet per second. Weir structure permanently calculated into the elevation as the water goes below the fixture cannot be physically moved.

No further questions the hearing was closed by Cindy Allen at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dwayne Woodsome
Secretary/Treasurer