

## GROTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

### Minutes

October 22, 2011

Chairman Nadia Madden called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room in Town Hall. Members Craig Auman, Bruce Easom, Marshall Giguere, and David Pitkin were present. Members Peter Morrison and Bill Neacy were absent. Selectman Peter Cunningham and Conservation Administrator Barbara Ganem were also present.

Members noted the Town Meeting has been continued from October 17<sup>th</sup> to October 24<sup>th</sup>, and one of the concerns is the siting of a new fire station at the Groton Electric Light property on Station Avenue. P. Cunningham commented the siting of both the new GELD building and a fire station is a very complicated and potentially expensive project. He said his comment was based on preliminary plans prepared by the engineer working with GELD which outlines issues that must be overcome.

N. Madden asked whether alternative site plans were also located near wetlands. Option 3F meets the needs of the Fire Department and parking. Selectman Cunningham said the Department has indicated they need a building 8,064 SF in size with four double bays allowing them to come and go from the direction of the Rail Trail as well as Station Avenue. Either configuration will have wetland issues. C. Auman underscored the need to respond to concerns raised by residents about the wetland resources on the site. D. Pitkin outlined three reasons why this could be problematic: 1) our Bylaw, 2) environmental impacts, and 3) financial impacts. The fire station would be a two-story building. GELD also has to determine whether their project is financially doable and whether it would involve rate payer increases.

It is estimated that 3 – 3.5 ft. of fill will be necessary to raise the site to the appropriate grade. There is also concern about taking ambulances and rescue trucks over the floating road – Broadmeadow Rd. – which floods every year. P. Cunningham said the site must meet the needs of both fire equipment and ambulances going forward if Main St. is blocked. B. Easom thought the placement of emergency response facilities near a floodplain was irresponsible and certainly flies in the face of global warming. He said the same problem was created at the Public Safety Building on Pleasant St. where they have no room to expand due to surrounding wetlands. The building was constructed on an island.

B. Easom pointed out the difficulty of saying anything definitively without a plan before us. The complications and costs associated with Station Avenue seem to suggest it would be difficult to develop. M. Giguere mentioned the Commission has previously been down this road where seemingly the Commission has pre-approved a project without an actual filing and real plan. Months later members deny the project. The Commission had requested information on the current impervious surface boundary within the 100 ft. buffer zone at the Station Avenue site. Without an engineered plan and the filing of a Notice of Intent, the Commission could make a general statement about grades. C. Auman stated we can't really say it is a no-go without seeing the Notice of Intent filing.

P. Cunningham noted Town Meeting may not be familiar with the Commission's process for wetland hearings, and Chairman Madden pointed out this is an opportunity to educate the Town about what the Commission does. C. Auman suggested summarizing the importance of the buffer zone and its functionality. He stressed that it is important to show the wetland delineation prepared for Station Avenue as that 'picture' can help explain some of the difficulties with the Station Avenue site. B. Easom noted that what used to be considered a 100-year flood is now happening every 10 years, and is predicted to become more and more problematic.

Reviewing the draft overview prepared by B. Ganem, members agreed to add in the previous comments, including a slide showing the Station Avenue wetland delineation, unavailability of a definitive plan, and lessons learned from the siting of the Public Safety Building. According to P. Cunningham, the .92 acre Sacred Heart site would allow the Town's needs to be met for at least 50 years. B. Ganem reminded those present there is a small wetland offsite of the Sacred Heart parcel. It is connected with a culvert under Rt. 119 to a culverted stream that runs under the parking lot that serves the Credit Union and Dr. Breen's office. Member Giguere pointed out GELD had indicated the fire station would remain within the original footprint of the GELD barn. The new plan shows far more parking and an enlarged building footprint. B. Easom added that the costs of preparing an engineered plan and doing a Notice of Intent that requires public hearings, lawyers, and engineers were not incorporated into the estimate.

Mr. Easom asked what is driving the process and Mr. Cunningham explained a study was prepared on the Town's public safety facilities. Right now ambulance and fire equipment and crews come out of two separate structures. There are four full-time day people, and call firefighters respond during the night. The Town's ladder truck was custom built to fit into the bay at the existing fire station on Station Avenue. To exit in the winter, firefighters must first remove snow from the Station Avenue fire station entrance. P. Cunningham stressed that the Town has to take the leap to meet the needs of our safety response people. In 2009 the Master Plan for Station Avenue started looking at potential Main St. sites. The GELD decision to remain on the Station Avenue site may crimp final plans for the development of Station Avenue. The consultants who prepared the plans for the Town's Public Works grant application had a good concept plan. The nexus formed with the Rail Trail has great potential.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara V. Ganem  
Conservation Administrator

**Approved as drafted 10/25/11.**

#### EXHIBITS

Document	Source	Date
Conceptual Site Plan Option 3-F	Maguire Group	9/9/11