Town of Groton

**173 Main Street**

**Groton, MA 01450**

**Historic Districts Commission**

**June 20th, 2023**

**7:30 pm**

**First Floor Meeting Room**

**Members Present:** Peter Benedict, Maureen Giattino, Brian Cartier, Lisa Hicks, Jennifer Rand

**Others Present**: Attorney Bob Collins

**Administrative Assistant**: Amanda Urmann

**Meeting Called to Order at 7:30 pm by Chair Peter Benedict.**

**357 Farmers Row Public Hearing-**

**Member Giattino read aloud the public hearing notice:**

*Chairman Benedict recused himself from this public hearing.*

**357 Farmers Row**

**ASSESSORS MAP 219-2**

In accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40C, the Groton Historic Districts Commission (GHDC) will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, June 20th, 2023, at 7:30 pm at The Groton Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450. This meeting will be held** to consider the application submitted by the owner, Groton School, seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for **357 Farmers Row, Assessors Map 219-****2** to add solar components in the field next to 357 Farmers Row**.** Copies of the application and supporting materials are available for review by contacting the GHDC via the Land Use Dept, 2nd floor of the Town Hall.

**Attorney Bob Collins was the presenter for this public hearing.**

Mr. Collins explained that this application was for modestly sized solar panels. These are proposed to be situated in the field between Sturgis House and Nash House on the easterly side of Farmers Row. When the field ceased to be utilized as a golf course, resource areas developed that coupled with the trees stipulated once the sole engineers got involved, there was little “wiggle room” as far of the locations of the panels could be located. It is on the very edge of the historic district, but if they were to be moved slightly, they would then be in conservation land. In sum, they need to be where they are proposed, which is about 320’ from the edge of Farmers Row to where the four panels will be situated. Mr. Collins also noted that they will be perpendicular to the south. They are not very wide, longer than wide, however they are not entirely long/large in general. Mr. Collins proceeded to say that when driving by, they are difficult to notice unless you are really seeking them out as they are out in the distance. Mr. Collins also said that these four panels will completely eliminate Sturgis House’s carbon footprint, plus all of the electricity in Nash House. Eventually when Nash is renovated and heat pumps are installed, it will also eliminate this carbon footprint. Mr. Collins considered plantings nearby this area to cover them more than they already are and also mentioned that they are not necessarily “structures” either.

Member Hicks made a comment that if Groton School is going to be aggressive with adding solar panels, they should think about that when making this decision to set precedence. She proceeded to then ask about the hedgerow that is covering this and asked where it was located. Mr. Collins said that when you come down Farmers Row, there is shrubbery located there and showed on a map where it was.

Member Cartier asked how tall these solar panels were and Mr. Collins said that they are about 4 feet tall.

Member Rand said that she has looked at this several times and mentioned that the shrubbery was low typically but when she drove by recently, it was much taller and thinks that it would be covered by this shrubbery. She wasn’t sure if Groton School would think about putting something more permanent than what is there now, since it is mostly just overgrowth. She was curious if something more landscaped would be more appropriate for this area to cover. Mr. Collins was not confident that the Conservation Commission would like this because this would involve changing the resource area a bit, however he was more than willing and able to come back with a planting plan. This topic continued briefly, with the conversation going back and forth on whether it was best to do a more landscaped/planted area or to keep it the same as it is now to screen this area. It was determined and agreed upon that it would be best to keep it as is so to not draw more attention to it because if it was “cleaned up”, it would draw more attention and the panels would then be more noticeable. Mr. Collins also noted that solar panels won’t necessarily become a major thing for Groton School and that if any more were to be installed, they wouldn’t be visible from the Historic District like these will be. Mr. Collins said the poles for these solar panels would be all underground as well. Member Giattino asked for a cut sheet for these and Mr. Collins said he would get these.

A resident asked if there were any plans to add solar panels across from his residence and Mr. Collins said that there was not, once this resident explained where they lived.

Mr. Benedict commented, as a resident, that these solar panels were far back and doesn’t think they will be noticeable.

Member Cartier made a motion that the HDC approve the application for the certificate of appropriateness for 357 Farmers Row, Assessors Map 219-2, to add solar components in the field next to 357 Farmers Row from the plans dated 4/9/2023. Member Rand seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**123 Farmers Row Public Hearing-**

**Chairman Benedict read aloud the public hearing notice:**

**123 Farmers Row**

**ASSESSORS MAP 107-2**

In accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40C, the Groton Historic Districts Commission (GHDC) will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, June 20th, 2023, at 7:30 pm at The Groton Town Hall, First Floor Meeting Room, 173 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450. This meeting will be held** to consider the application submitted by the owner, Akash Vallecha, seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness **for 123 Farmers Row, Assessors Map 107-2** to remove the chimney (above roof) and bricks (interior) and replace most of the windows**.** Copies of the application and supporting materials are available for review by contacting the GHDC via the Land Use Dept, 2nd floor of the Town Hall.

The applicant was not able to make this public hearing but Chairman Benedict had previously spoken to Mr. Vallecha and explained the concept that he was proposing. Mr. Vallecha proposed the removal of one, or both, chimneys, and as the applicant submitted pictures of both chimneys and a picture of the house appearing like it had no chimney at all, it was determined that more information was needed on this to establish if the HDC would approve the removal of one or both. There was also discussion on the type of windows that were going to be used, but it was determined that it was unclear which ones he was proposing to install.

The applicant needs to install the SDLS windows and also needs to inform the Board on which chimney they intend to remove, if it is one or both, before the HDC possibly issues the approval of this certificate of appropriateness.

Member Cartier made a motion that the HDC continue the hearing for the property at 123 Farmers Row, pending more information from the owner. Member Giattino seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Groton School, Sturgis House – Discussion**

Attorney Collins was present to discuss this topic. Mr. Collins explained the intentions with Sturgis House and the coloring of it, which was previously brought to the board before. He said that the porch was intended to be painted brick red, which was how it had been previously. Mr. Collins is proposing for this woodwork to be painted white to blend in with the trim and have the doors be painted a dark green color that Groton School uses elsewhere.

Member Giattino motioned that the HDC approve the color changes to Sturgis House at 295 Farmers Row at Groton School per the attached white siding, trim and decks and the green doors. Member Hicks seconded the motion and the vote was carried unanimously.

**Re-Organization of Board:**

Member Giattino will be leaving the Board once her term ends. Due to this, if anyone knows someone who is looking to join, there will be openings. Chairman Benedict is also considering leaving once his term ends. Re-organization to be continued to future meetings.

**Commissioner Updates:**

Member Giattino has been combining documents that explain the Historic District and some of the rules and regulations in simpler terms. Being a relatively new member, Member Rand thought that these documents would be beneficial to send out to Historic residents and handed out to members of the Board to guide them. There was discussion if this should also be sent out directly to the Historic residents, but there would potentially be the concern of mailing costs. It was then recommended that perhaps this should be sent out when there was an application that was submitted when the abutters need to be notified for public hearings. This topic to be continued once these documents are combined into one and a final document is established.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Member Rand made a motion to approve the May 23rd, 2023 meeting minutes as submitted. Member Giattino seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Next meeting to be held on July 18th, 2023.

Chairman Benedict made a motion to adjourn. Member Cartier seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

**Meeting Adjourned: 8:40 PM**

Respectfully Submitted By: Amanda Urmann