



TOWN OF GROTON

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HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Cunningham, Chair
Anna Eliot
Richard Perini
Carolyn Perkins

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Wednesday, July 19, 2022
Time: 7 pm
Location: Virtual Meeting held via Zoom
Members in attendance: Anna Eliot, Rick Perini, Carolyn Perkins
Others in attendance: John Sopka

Carolyn Perkins called the meeting to order shortly after 7 pm. She is leading the meeting as chair Peter Cunningham will be absent this evening. Carolyn Perkins stated that the meeting is being recorded. Cameras were turned on and the Housing Partnership members each identified themselves.

Minutes

Anna Eliot moved to approve the March 29, 2022 draft minutes as presented. Rick Perini seconded and the motion carried 3:0 by roll call vote of Perini – aye, Eliot – aye and Perkins – aye (Cunningham absent).

Anna Eliot moved to approve the June 22, 2022 draft minutes as corrected. Rick Perini seconded and the motion carried 3:0 by roll call vote of Perini – aye, Eliot – aye and Perkins – aye (Cunningham absent).

Groton Farms Comment Letter

Partnership members discussed which organizations should receive its comment letter. Letter will be address to MassHousing with a copy sent to the Select Board. Anna Eliot asked about the scope of MassHousing's review and what input might be helpful for that agency to receive. The group agreed that the comment letter is an opportunity to comment directly on the proposed project but also to highlight other matters of interest to the Town such as transportation. In turn, each member provided comments that could be incorporated in this Committee's letter.

Anna Eliot commented:

1. It is noteworthy that the Town has not built an affordable rental project since 2006 and there have not been any new construction market rate rentals for decades. The pandemic has demonstrated that young adults who moved home during the pandemic need more entry level housing stock to move out and establish their own households.
2. This project provides housing that will provide an opportunity for potential employees at Devens.
3. Tenant employment was discussed. Cannot require employment but affordable rentals are geared toward working households since there are both a minimum as well as a maximum income limits.
4. Local preference wanted for the 50 affordable units.
5. The duration of the affordable restriction should be perpetuity.
6. Future upkeep of the development is important. Rental projects with multi-million dollar financing often have 40-year business plans because lenders demand such long-term planning.
7. Is the project compatible with using the same land as part of Groton's designated MBTA communities zoning?
8. The project is sited at a good location. On a major roadway, town water and town sewer available. Note that we do not want any sewer upgrades needed for this project to negatively impact current sewer customers.

Rick Perini commented:

1. Based on his experience the project will supply housing needed by current employees at both Lawrence Academy and the Groton School.
2. State that the proposed project will be beneficial for the Town.
3. The housing that will be created is needed.
4. Ask the Commonwealth to provide public transportation because the Town needs, not just the future Groton Farms residents but seniors and veterans need help with public transportation too.
5. As a matter of public safety, encourage the developer to put in the second means of egress reserved for public safety use only via Taylor Road.

Carolyn Perkins commented:

1. Start the letter with the statement that the Housing Partnership is very supportive and the project will meet a lot of needs.
2. The enumerated supports and services planned by the developer in the complex will be a great benefit to those in the complex, particularly for future tenants with limited resources.
3. Appreciative of the fact that 5% of the units will be handicapped accessible.
4. The adequacy of parking is there.
5. The site offers a great location for the project. The parcel is large enough to set back larger building and maintain the rural viewshed that Groton residents are interested in maintaining.

John Sopka added suggested phrasing vis a vis the MBTA communities that notes that the Town is in the midst of a process of complying with MBTA zoning. Given the proximity to infrastructure and utilities (roads, sewer, water, natural gas), this site is among those locations most likely to be included in the Town's multi-family zoning overlay. Anna Eliot is satisfied with that comment. Rick Perini is okay with the tenor of these comments so long as we do not interfere with a private owner's property rights. Carolyn Perkins added that we need to mention that this is one of the few properties that can accommodate a project of this size due to the large number of wetlands and endangered species in the area.

The group agreed that as the Planning Board begins to explore MBTA communities zoning that the Partnership will want to support the Planning Board in making these designations.

The group discussed ways to finalize the letter without violating the Open Meeting Law.

Rick Perini moved to direct Fran Stanley to prepare a comment letter, circulate the draft, receive comments back from individual members and then have Carolyn Perkins sign the final letter to be submitted to Mass Housing. Anna Eliot seconded and the motion carried 3:0 by roll call vote of Perini – aye, Eliot – aye and Perkins – aye (Cunningham absent).

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 pm.

Important date: Tuesday, August 2, 2022 (comments due in to MassHousing for Groton Farms 40B)

Notes by Fran Stanley