



TOWN OF GROTON

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HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Cunningham, Chair
Anna Eliot
Richard Perini
Carolyn Perkins

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2023
Time: 5 pm
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall, 173 Main Street
Members in attendance: Anna Eliot, Rick Perini, Carolyn Perkins, Peter Cunningham
Referenced documents: [Community Preservation Coalition sample grant agreement](#) and
March 21, 2023 Fran Stanley email regarding Heritage Landing 40B

Peter Cunningham called the meeting to order shortly after 5 pm.

Discussion of Housing Trust CPC Application for \$200,000

The Community Preservation Committee voted on the Affordable Housing Trust's application. The vote was 4 in favor, none against and 3 abstentions. Bruce Easom and Carolyn Perkins both abstained as they have each recused due to a potential conflict of interest. Anna Eliot explained that she abstained because she wanted to wait to vote on the application. Anna Eliot also has concerns about the proposed grant agreement associated with the Trust's application.

Peter Cunningham said that the Housing Partnership is not a party to the grant agreement and asked should the Housing Partnership take a position on the Trust's application at Town Meeting. Town Counsel has reviewed the proposed grant agreement. Anna Eliot said that the grant agreement has no provision for transparency and noted that she is uncomfortable with site assessments done in executive session. She gave the site assessment work on the Hoyts Wharf parcel as an example. Anna Eliot commented that she wants to see a collaboration between the Trust, the housing authority, etc.

CPC member Richard Hewitt's concern about the grant agreement – as in how can the Trust accrue money to buy land – was referenced.

Peter Cunningham reiterated that he did not see that it would be appropriate for the Housing Partnership to weigh in on this matter. Richard Perini and Carolyn Perkins, who also serve on the Affordable Housing Trust, expressed that they wanted the Partnership to support the Trust's application.

Richard Perini moved to have the Housing Partnership recommend the Community Preservation Committee application by the Affordable Housing Trust to Town Meeting. Carolyn Perkins seconded and the motion carried 3:1 (Anna Eliot against).

Heritage Landing Update

The group discussed the developer request for a permanent restriction on Town owned land in order to facilitate the development of a 40-unit homeownership project on Cow Pond Brook Road. If approved, Heritage Landing would provide 10 affordable homeownership units. Richard Perini was familiar with the balancing act whereby a permanent restriction on some acreage would allow the state to overlook the nitrogen buildup proposed for the site.

Anna Eliot noted that the Heritage Landing site is 20 feet lower than Cow Pond Brook Road. She described the hill across the road that might be removed for 40B fill with the useful byproduct of increasing parking safety for the Park Commission's Cow Pond Brook fields.

If the developer cannot persuade the Town to place a permanent restriction, then the proposed project may need to be scaled back in order to be built. It is unclear how much room the developer has financially to reduce the scope and still turn a profit.

Minutes

Carolyn Perkins moved to approve the July 19, 2022 draft minutes as presented. Rick Perini seconded and the motion carried 4:0.

63 Gratuity Road Update

Fran Stanley described the flexible development to contain 6 affordable and a total of 34 units at 63 Gratuity Road. These condominiums will all be 2-bedroom duplex units with first floor bedrooms and 2 car garages. There will be one private road/driveway connected to Jenkins Road and a second one connected to Gratuity Road. This large 53-acre parcel is bisected by a stream. Developer hopes to file with the Planning Board in the next 2 weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 5:50 pm.

Notes by Fran Stanley

copy of March 21, 2023 email from Fran Stanley to Housing Partnership members

Dear Housing Partnership members:

Today, developer representatives met with Town Hall staff about assistance they need in order to proceed with their development plans. As you will recall, MassHousing issued a Project Eligibility Letter to these developer on July 5, 2022 and they have two years to sort out their plans and apply for a comprehensive permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Heritage Landing is expected to be a 40-unit homeownership development where 10 of the units are affordable.

Background

In order to build the planned development, Natural Heritage insists on a one for one nitrogen loading offset for the septic. This means that in order for the 40B to proceed the developers need to find a way to place 15 acres under permanent restriction. That restriction bars development as well as any future impervious surface. The developers do not have land to devote to this purpose. The developers have asked other abutters with sizeable acreage including MIT Haystack to the East and the solar company leasing Town owned land to the North and received negative responses.

Present Request

The developers would like to place a restriction on 15 acres of Town owned land on the other side of Cow Pond Brook Road, probably on parcels 249-51 and 57. The developers have been informed that the Affordable Housing Trust has a potential single house lot identified for the Hoyts Wharf Parcel. They also know that the Park Commission would like to use portions of both parcels to re-route driveway access from the Cow Pond Brook fields through to Hoyts Wharf Road and to add parking and multi-use fields on the Hoyts Wharf Parcel.

The land restricted does not need to be contiguous and wetlands are acceptable. Therefore, the developers were advised to find 15 acres, probably wetlands, for their nitrogen offset that would not impinge on uplands and other areas of present and/or intended town use. There is a separate Natural Heritage requirement to set aside approximately 10 acres in order to build their desired plan and the developers hope that restricting the 15 acres will also satisfy this other 10-acre requirement.

Expected Process

The developers will prepare a plan and request meetings with the Affordable Housing Trust and the Park Commission. Those two committees will make recommendations to the Select Board. The Affordable Housing Trust may choose to preference the creation of 10 affordable units by the 40B over developing a single house lot on the Hoyts Wharf Parcel. Conceivably, the developers' proposal may not impact the developable portions of the Hoyts Wharf Parcel at all so a choice may not be needed. The Park Commission will presumably do their own evaluation about whether the Heritage Landing request will help, hurt or have no effect on their own development plans.

The Select Board will consider the developer's request and may negotiate with the developers for specific items in return that would be of value to the Town.

If the Select Board approves of the idea, then the deed restriction will probably need to go before Town Meeting. The 2023 Fall Town Meeting is the most likely Town Meeting.

I have attached the existing conditions map that the Trust's engineer prepared for the housing trust. Also, I added a GIS map showing a satellite view of the two town owned parcels. We do not yet have the developer's mapped plan. I will share it when I receive it.
