



TOWN OF GROTON

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HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Cunningham, Chair
Anna Eliot
Richard Perini

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Wednesday, January 3, 2024
Time: 6:15 pm
Location: Town Hall Lunch Room, later moving upstairs to Second Floor Meeting Room
Members in attendance: Anna Eliot, Richard Perini, Peter Cunningham
Referenced documents: draft annual report, draft letter of support for housing trust CPC application

Meeting called to order at 6:28 pm with Anna Eliot and Richard Perini in attendance.

Annual Report

After reviewing the draft annual report, *Anna Eliot moved to approve the annual report as drafted. Richard Perini seconded and the motion carried (2:0) (Cunningham absent).*

Peter Cunningham joined the meeting at 6:36 pm.

Discuss letter of support for Affordable Housing Trust's CPC application for \$400,000

Anna Eliot will abstain from the letter as she is a member of the Community Preservation Committee and also because she has concerns about the application. Richard Perini said that he is a member of both the Housing Partnership and the Affordable Housing Trust. Fran Stanley said that the wording of the draft letter closely follows the language of last year's letter of support for the Trust's \$200,000 application.

Richard Perini moved to send a letter of support as drafted to the Community Preservation Committee in support of the Affordable Housing Trust's application for \$400,000. Peter Cunningham seconded and the motion carried 2:0 (Eliot abstained).

Zoning Board of Appeals Public Hearing on Heritage Landing 40B [28 homeownership units proposed – 7 to be affordable]

Although scheduled to present the traffic study this evening, the developer reported that the traffic study is not finished. Much of the meeting focused on the ZBA's ability to regulate light pollution and radio frequency interference (RFI). Abutters also honed in on the list of outstanding items that have not been provided by the developer. Several abutters asked that the developer not be given any additional extensions as there was a view that the developer was not making use of the extension to submit the necessary documents. While it was explained that the pace of the review was largely dependent on the applicant, one ZBA member commented that the developer may need some time to adjust submission to the project size reductions.

A letter from Town Counsel about dark skies and RFI was read into the record as was the developer's response contending that the ZBA has little (on light pollution) to no (on RFI) authority to impose conditions in those areas and certainly not on the individual home level. Tim Brothers who is the general manager of the Wallace Observatory spoke about light pollution, explaining that measures taken to lower luminosity, lower color temperature for the bulbs, avoiding misdirection of lights can be more economical, reduce energy waste and avoid illuminating the night sky.

Meeting adjourned at 7:58 pm.

Text of Annual Report and Letter of Support to follow.

Housing Partnership

The Housing Partnership is appointed by the Select Board to advise and support affordable housing initiatives. Since the early 1980s, the Department of Housing and Community Development envisions a role for municipal housing partnerships. Housing Partnerships sign off on a municipality’s Local Action Units applications to DHCD.

Housing Partnerships are often the first point of contact for developers interested in pursuing Friendly 40B developments. Groton adopted a Friendly 40B policy in 2017 and the Housing Partnership is an integral part of the Select Board’s process for considering Friendly 40B applications.

This year, the Housing Partnership has followed and supported two conventional 40B comprehensive permit applications:

Heritage Landing (Cow Pond Brook Road)

The Zoning Board of Appeals continues its review of the developer’s comprehensive permit application. The initial proposal was for 40 housing units on Cow Pond Brook (Parcel 248-42). A November revision reduced the development size to 28 units. The developer continues to propose 100% homeownership and now all units will be single-family homes. Seven (7) units will be affordable to households earning up to 80% of the area median income (AMI).

Groton Farms (500 Main Street)

On November 1, 2023, the Zoning Board of Appeals unanimously approved the developer’s comprehensive permit application. Since the 20-day appeals period passed without appeal, the developer is free to begin construction of this 200-unit rental development. 50 units will be affordable to households earning up to 80% of the area median income (AMI).

Now that the Groton Farms development has been approved, the Town is expected to meet its ten percent (10%) affordable housing goal.

The Housing Partnership is closely following the Commonwealth’s rollout of the new Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities (M.G.L. Chapter 40A Section 3A). MBTA Communities like Groton are expected to create a zoning district of by right multi-family housing in order to maintain eligibility for certain state funding. Affordable housing is allowed but not required by the MBTA Communities legislation. The Planning Board has contracted for assistance from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission to advise the Planning Board of its options. Any new zoning must be approved by Town Meeting. The Commonwealth has approved the Town’s interim compliance action plan. The deadline for full compliance is December 31, 2025.

As the name implies, the Housing Partnership encourages community input and collaboration – working with developers and other town boards to support affordable housing initiatives in the Town.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Cunningham, *Chair*
Anna Eliot, *Member*
Richard Perini, *Member*

January 4, 2024

Russell Burke, Chair
Community Preservation Committee
Town Hall - 173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

RE: CPA project # 2025-10 *Affordable Housing Trust*
Housing Fund Request
\$400,000

Dear Mr. Burke,

The Housing Partnership is pleased to offer this letter of support for the above referenced application of the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) for \$400,000 to provide a stable and reoccurring resource that the AHT may use to address the needs of affordable housing in Groton pursuant to the terms of their CPA application and the Affordable Housing Grant Agreement to be established between the Town and the AHT.

The lack of affordable housing in Groton is well known to the Housing Partnership in the work we have done in encouraging developments that address that need. We are also aware that the Town's ability to partner with developers that may wish to create affordable units is sometimes limited by the access to available resources. Having an available fund that could be used to support affordable housing initiatives would greatly enhance the Town's ability to address an important goal identified in the Town's Community Preservation Plan. An obvious example of how this model has worked is the Conservation Fund administered by the Conservation Commission that has allowed the Town to move quickly on important open space acquisitions when they become available.

One of the fundamental goals of the Community Preservation Act when it was adopted by Groton was to address the need for affordable housing. That need is even greater today as housing market prices and property tax increases are forcing many townspeople to seriously contemplate their ability to remain in Groton. Having an entity in place that can address opportunities to meet that need in a timely fashion is well worth supporting.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Cunningham, Chairman
Housing Partnership