



TOWN OF GROTON

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HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Cunningham, Chair
Anna Eliot
Jeffrey Wallens

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Tuesday, August 4, 2026
Time: 10 am
Location: 1st Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall, 173 Main Street
Members in attendance: Peter Cunningham, Anna Eliot and Jeffrey Wallens
Referenced documents: Draft minutes from March 23, 2026

Peter Cunningham called the Housing Partnership to order at 10 am.

Review draft minutes from March 23, 2026.

Anna Eliot moved to approve the March 23, 2026 draft minutes as presented. Jeffrey Wallens seconded and the motion carried (3:0).

Discuss possible development plans for the former Ralph Smith land on Common Street¹.

Fran Stanley sent an email to attorney Robert Ancil inviting him and his clients to meet with the members of the Housing Partnership. The Housing Partnership would like to help the developer with its plans to build housing on the Common Street land that they recently purchased from the Ralph Smith estate. Fran Stanley did not reach out to Edward O'Neil and has not heard back from Attorney Ancil.

On April 30, 2026, the Attorney Robert Ancil represented Common Street Realty with an application to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) seeking a variance "to permit frontage on one street line of a corner lot to be reduced from two hundred twenty-five (225) feet to one hundred ten (110) feet".² The developer sought the variance in order to create 4 house lots without demolishing the existing home in order to draw lot lines conforming with current zoning requirements. The applicant provided two concept plans – one showing lots drawn that conform to present zoning and the other showing what could be done if the variance were granted. The applicant argued that granting the variance would help to preserve the existing circa 1880 house. The applicant withdrew their application on July 8, 2026 as it appeared that their proposal lacked support from the ZBA. Recent changes to state law in the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Bill related to housing and ZBAs may be helpful to the developer if they should choose to reapply for the variance.

Anna Eliot noted that she spoke with Edward O'Neil when they both attended a Historical Commission meeting. The Town has a demolition delay bylaw which is administered by the Historical Commission. The Historical Commission will be reviewing the old Ralph Smith family home at 162 Common Street. The developer may want to demolish all or a portion of the structure as part of their redevelopment of the property. It does not appear that the developer has applied for a demolition permit yet.

Partnership members agreed that they would welcome a meeting with the developers in order to encourage housing development. Anna Eliot observed that the duplexes at the new Shepley Hill 55+ development had market appeal and were quickly sold. In that development, about 80% of the land was preserved despite the fact

¹ E.P. Snyder, Inc. had an option to purchase the Ralph Smith land (approximately 28 acres) for \$1,525,000. On April 6, 2026, this land was sold as agreed by the Ralph Smith heirs to be held by Common Street Realty LLC. The address for Common Street Realty LLC is 149 B Street, Lowell, MA 01851.

² As per ZBA application.

that the developers had to build their own septic and well. As for the Ralph Smith land, Town water does not go down Common Street as the line ends at the Common Street/Hollis Street intersection. Neither is there any available public sewer.

Duplexes are allowed by right in Groton. The group wondered if increased density and smaller lot sizes might deliver housing at a somewhat lower price point than the Shepley Hill condominiums. The group agreed that they did not know if the developer's plans were sufficiently advanced to be ready to meet with the Partnership. Anna Eliot plans to reach out to the developer which may result in an individual meeting before the developer connects with the Partnership as a whole.

Continue discussion on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

Jeffrey Wallens stated that he has engaged with Board of Health (BOH) Agent Kalene Gendron to learn about the impact of BOH concerns for the viability of adding an ADU. Most of Groton is on septic and parts of Groton have private water too. Kalene Gendron explained to him that changes to an existing septic – such as to accommodate an additional ADU bedroom are not grandfathered in. And, even if a property owner decides to construct a new septic system dedicated to the ADU, the BOH's review includes a look at the other existing septic.

Jeffrey Wallens plans to follow up with Kalene Gendron on these matters. Regarding Groton's BOH bylaws, Jeffrey Wallens said that the requirements need to be data driven.

The group briefly discussed Ballot Question 7 which permits 5,000 square foot lots in areas where there is town water and town sewer. It was noted that Westford and Dracut allow one acre zoning.

Housing Coordinator update including possible application for a Housing Choice designation.

Fran Stanley shared that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission has a grant to help Groton as well as Ashby, Shirley and Lunenburg to see if the Town might qualify as a Housing Choice community. Groton can apply as a rural/small town which should make the designation more attainable.

That designation opens up access to the Housing Choice Grant Program. The other main benefit is that the state will give 'additional consideration, priority, and benefits' on state grant programs including the LAND Grant Program, the PARC Grant Program, MassWorks, Complete Streets, and the Clean Water Trust. To qualify, Groton has to building a certain amount of housing. If the 500 Main Street project gets built, that may satisfy that production requirement. Also, Groton would need to meet certain housing best practices. The regional planning commission will help Groton assess where it presently stands in relation to that program.

Meeting adjourned at 11 am.

Notes by Fran Stanley

Next meetings: Tuesday, September 8th at 10 am

Generally, every second Tuesday of the month at 10 am