



TOWN OF GROTON

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HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Peter Cunningham, Chair
Anna Eliot
Jeffrey Wallens

Regular Session Minutes

Date: Monday, September 21, 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 August 4, 2026

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

Review draft minutes from August 4, 2026.

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

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

The former Ralph Smith land is comprised of approximately 28 acres at 162 Common Street and 25 acres at 125 Common Street. Much of 162 Common Street is wooded and contains the old Ralph Smith house. 125 Common Street is more open with about half the acreage having a past use as a Christmas tree farm.

The developer has obtained a limited Stormwater permit. The Board of Health is also involved regarding permission to stockpile soil. Soil testing would also be needed to evaluate the best septic locations. Fran Stanley referenced the *Groton Herald* article about the developer's filing for permission from the Conservation Commission to install a driveway off Breakneck Road. As a part of that review, some wanted to know the overall plans for the land to help them evaluate the impact of each particular request.²

The Historical Commission will be discussing the old Ralph Smith home at its upcoming meeting on September 30. Anna Eliot is also a member of the Historical Commission. Fran Stanley emailed Housing Partnership members regarding an August 26, 2026 conversation with Ed O'Neil.³ Fran Stanley has not heard back from Ed O'Neil yet, but with Jeffrey Brem as their engineer, he is knowledgeable about what is possible under existing zoning.

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. Attorney Robert Ancil has represented the developer before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

² The Conservation Commission voted on September 22, 2026 to grant the requested driveway permit.

³ Email read as follows:

"[Ed] was following up on outreach that Anna has made about development plans for 125 Common Street. I believe that Ed is working with Common Street Realty LLC which is the business entity that is the present owner of the Ralph Smith land. Ed said that he was going to speak with his team and then get back to me next week about meeting with the Housing Partnership.

Ed said that they have a course of action for 162 Common Street and so the conversation with the Partnership would be about 125 Common Street. 125 Common Street is the parcel that is an open field with the rail trail on one side and a lot of frontage along Common Street. It is approximately 23 acres (see the attached map). [Note: The developer purchased a couple of other parcels too, but those are not the focus here.]

I will let you know when I learn more."

Discuss submitting a CPC application related to the existing home at 162 Common Street.

The discussion flowed to Anna Eliot's idea of submitting a CPC application. Anna Eliot said that she is asking both the Housing Partnership and the Historical Commission about submitting a CPC article requesting funds to preserve the existing Ralph Smith house at 162 Common Street. For a historical application, there are a number of potential elements of historic importance to preserve including the soap stone quarry, the stone bridge leading to the soap stone quarry, and the Ralph Smith house. If the Partnership applied for community housing funds, that money might be used for construction costs to preserve the existing house.

Fran Stanley was concerned that a CPC application for housing may not be feasible. The difficulty of using community housing funds is that one would need enough funds to put the home in very good condition before it is sold to an affordable homeowner. There may not be enough available money for both purchase and repairs. The large old home may be too much house for a homeowner with limited assets and limited income to maintain. A deed restriction would be needed to ensure that the home remained affordable. A historic CPC application may be a better fit because the home could be sold at a market rate price, albeit with a historic preservation restriction.

Anna Eliot liked the signal that would be sent to developers by submitting an application; specifically, the message is that the Town is open to working with them. The group discussed how the Partnership might participate given its mission – to create affordable housing – and powers – those powers may not include the ability to hold and spend money. Jeffrey Wallens said that he would need to know if there is a prospect of affordable housing before taking action. Anna Eliot would like to be more visionary and work with developers. She said that neighbors might contribute to create an apple orchard. Peter Cunningham said that the Partnership needs to be able to speak with the developer as an essential first step.

The Partnership directed Fran Stanley to reach out again to Ed O'Neil and to let him know about the upcoming Historical Commission meeting.

Continue discussion on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

The group discussed the new ADU regulations that the state has proposed. One change is to not allow local Boards of Health to impose septic requirements beyond the state's Title V law. Jeffrey Wallens commented that he does not like having two sets of rules. He observed that restricted supply adds costs so there needs to be health and safety justifications for Groton's lot size requirements as well as septic and well requirements.

The group observed that the endangered species/habit requirements of Groton's two ACECs (Areas of Critical Environmental Concern) can be a major impediment to housing and affordable housing. Jeffrey noted that our laws seemed to operate like a vehicle with brakes but no accelerator.

Meeting adjourned at 9:55 am.

Notes by Fran Stanley

Next meetings: Generally, every second Tuesday of the month at 10 am