



## TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD

173 Main Street  
Groton, Massachusetts 01450  
Tel: (978) 448-1105  
Fax: (978) 448-1113  
[Planning@grotonma.gov](mailto:Planning@grotonma.gov)

### FIREARM SALE REGULATION STUDY COMMITTEE

**Thursday, January 25, 2024 at 4:00 PM**  
**Town Hall, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room**

#### Meeting Minutes

Members present: Russ Burke, Paul Hathaway, John Smigelski, Mike Luth, Phil Francisco

Members absent: Becky Pine

Also attending: Judy Anderson, Ginger Vollmar, Takashi Tada

Russ Burke, Planning Board member, opened the meeting at approximately 4:00 PM. Members of the committee, who were appointed by the Planning Board and sworn in by the Town Clerk, introduced themselves.

- Russ Burke – Groton resident; Planning Board member
- Paul Hathaway – Groton resident
- John Smigelski – Groton resident
- Mike Luth – Groton resident; Chief of Police
- Phil Francisco – Groton resident; Planning Board member
- *Becky Pine – Groton resident; Select Board member (not present)*

Mr. Burke reminded the committee members that they must comply with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law in carrying out their charge. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner, will be the point of contact for the committee.

Mr. Burke provided a background summary of the Firearm Sale Regulation Study Committee's purpose. The Planning Board appointed the committee to study the issue of regulating firearm sales, and to provide recommendations to the Planning Board with respect to potential zoning bylaw amendments. The committee was formed after a resident and Select Board member,

Becky Pine, raised concerns with the Planning Board about the lack of specific zoning provisions to regulate the sale of firearms in Groton. The neighboring town of Littleton experienced a situation recently in which multiple firearm dealers were found to be operating out of a single commercial property. Some towns in the region, such as Acton, Littleton, Sudbury, and Westford, have recently considered zoning regulations for firearm sales, with varying results. Mr. Burke provided copies of proposed and/or approved bylaws from other towns, along with copies of an opinion from the Massachusetts Attorney General on Acton's bylaw.

According to Mr. Burke, the current Groton Zoning Bylaw would regulate a firearm retailer in the same manner as any other general retail establishment, such as a fishing supply store. The examples from Littleton and Acton seem to indicate towns may adopt zoning bylaw amendments that impose limits on the place, manner, and number of firearm sales establishments.

Mr. Hathaway pointed out that firearm sales, along with many other types of activities associated with firearms, are already highly regulated at the federal and state levels. A Federal Firearms License (FFL) is required to sell or receive a firearm. Mr. Hathaway also mentioned that most firearm transactions occur outside of traditional brick-and-mortar stores, and the profit margins tend to be very low. Mr. Hathaway suggested these factors may explain why there are currently no firearm retailers in Groton.

Mr. Francisco stated his main concern with respect to zoning is the sensitive siting of firearm retailers with respect to preserving the character of the town.

Police Chief Luth said he is concerned about the potential for firearm dealers to skirt the existing rules and regulations. He sees the benefit to regulating the place and manner of firearms sales within the local bylaws. He mentioned the existing zoning for marijuana retail establishments as providing a useful framework for the discussion of firearms sales. He also said the situation in Littleton was an anomaly.

Mr. Hathaway agreed with Police Chief Luth about the situation in Littleton being unusual and unlikely to occur in Groton. He also agreed that the existing zoning for marijuana retail establishments is a good starting point. But there will need to be a better way to define the relevant uses that would be regulated. For example, the definition of Firearm Business in the Acton Bylaw seemed to be randomly compiled and was not very practical.

Mr. Tada will provide the committee members with a link to the marijuana retail zoning provisions on the town's website, along with paper copies if preferred.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:15 PM.

*Approved 2/8/2024*