

GROTON PLANNING BOARD
JUNE 21, 2001
MINUTES

Chairman Curtis called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM in the Town Hall
Members present: Curtis, Barringer, Clements, Degen, Eliot, and Perkins
Member absent: Lewis

PUBLIC HEARING (con't) – BATTEN WOODS DEFINITIVE PLAN

The Board continued the public hearing to consider the application submitted by Orion Homes for approval of the Batten Woods definitive plan. Applicant Joseph Flaherty, and design engineers Peter Parent and Andrew Morrell of Diversified Civil Engineering were present.

Mr. Parent described the six lot definitive plan. Five lots were shown on the basic number of lots plan and one TDR lot was approved by a special permit granted by the Planning Board on April 12, 2001. Mr. Morrill said the definitive plan is very similar to the preliminary plan. Screening will be provided along the Cantrill's property line as shown on the plan. The area along Forge Village Road will be regraded to improve sight distances. The applicant will donate five 24.62 acres of open space to the Groton Conservation Commission.

Mr. Parent said they received a copy of the report dated June 19, 2001 from Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc. (JNEI) and will provide all the information requested by Mr. Schmid. The plan requires a waiver of cut and fill requirements in the area of the cul de sac. Mr. Parent said they would prefer not to construct the granite curb inlets if the Board would be willing to grant a waiver. Mr. Parent also requested a waiver to use off-set bounds to prevent damage to the wetlands. Chairman Curtis said the design engineer should work out these details with the Board's engineer.

Member Degen asked if the cut and fill waiver will result in a better road design. Mr. Parent said, "yes." Member Degen asked what impact the cut and fill will have on the high water table. Mr. Parent said the road will be located on a sand and gravel knoll. The high groundwater elevation is the same as the wetlands elevation. They did not reach groundwater when they were excavating test pits.

Member Degen asked what the groundwater elevation is. Mr. Parent said, "214." Member Degen asked how the waiver results in a better design. Mr. Parent said the road will be less steep; there will be fewer curves, and less impact on the wetlands.

Member Degen asked if the fill will be hauled off-site. Mr. Parent said, "yes" in order to avoid alteration to the wetlands. Member Degen asked if the entire area will be clear cut. Mr. Parent said 90% of the area to be developed must be cut, but they will try to leave some trees.

Member Barringer asked about the proposed screening along the Cantrill's driveway. Mr. Parent said it is shown on the plan. Member Barringer asked if the runoff will flow downhill from the street onto the lots. Mr. Parent said the runoff will be directed to the drainage system and then to the detention basin. Member Barringer asked if the driveways will be paved. Mr. Morrell said all but the two driveways serving Lots 5 and 6 will be paved. Leaching trenches will be constructed along the edge of these driveways to meet Conservation Commission requirements.

Member Clements asked what type of curbing will be used – Cape Cod or granite. Mr. Parent said the proposed road is a "lane", and Cape Cod berms comply with "lane" standards in the subdivision regulations.

Member Perkins asked if there is a detail for street trees and a clearing limitation line shown on the plan. Mr. Parent said the clearing will be up to the tree line.

Chairman Curtis read comments from the Police Chief, the Board of Health, and a copy of a letter from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife to the Conservation Commission. Chairman Curtis suggested that the applicant work with the Police Chief to address the sight distance issues.

Member Degen expressed concern about the proposed screening of the Cantrill's lot because hardwood does not provide good screening. Evergreens do a much better job. He asked that the name of the species be shown on the plan.

Member Barringer asked if a retaining wall will be constructed on Lot 4. Mr. Parent said, "yes." Member Barringer asked how deep the detention basin will be. Mr. Parent said about eight (8) feet. Member Barringer asked if the detention basin will be fenced. Mr. Parent said, "yes."

Member Degen asked why the driveway will be constructed with turf stone pavers. Mr. Parent said to reduce runoff velocity. Member Degen asked if there will be a restriction in the deed so future homeowners cannot pave their driveways.

Chairman Curtis asked if the calculations should be based upon paved driveways because the future homeowners may change the driveway surface in the future – requiring unpaved driveways may not be practical in the long run.

Member Barringer asked if the driveways meet the Town's driveway regulations. Mr. Parent said, "yes," the grade is 10% as allowed in the regulations.

Abutter Philip Trudeau asked why there is a street light at the cul de sac and at the intersection. Chairman Curtis said street lights are required in the subdivision regulations, but the Board can vote to grant a waiver.

The Board voted unanimously to extend the deadline to July 31, 2001 as requested by the applicant.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on July 19, 2001 at 9:00 PM.

ANR PLAN – WILLIAM CONLEY, LOWELL ROAD

(Note: Member Degen stepped down.)

The Board considered the Approval Not Required (ANR) plan submitted by William Conley to change a lot line between lots on Lowell Road. Mr. Conley said he would like to adjust the lot line so he will be able to maintain and care for a row of 10 year old hemlocks. The motion was made by Eliot to endorse as approval not required the plan entitled, "Owner: Marion D. Campbell Trust; Plan of Land in Groton, MA, Middlesex County," prepared by Precision Land Surveying, Inc., dated June 13, 2001. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

SITE PLAN REVIEW – GROTON DUNSTABLE HIGH SCHOOL, CHICOPEE ROW

(Note: Members Eliot and Perkins stepped down.)

The Board considered the site plan submitted by the Groton Dunstable Regional School District to construct a new high school on Chicopee Row. Architect Robert Juusola of HMFH Associates, Dennis McLaughlin of David Ross Associates, Victoria Fletcher of Epsilon Associates, and Attorney Howard Hall were present. The application and site plan were submitted at the meeting.

Mr. Juusola described the site plan for the new high school. The school will serve 990 students at the present time with the potential for 1200 students in the future. The number of parking spaces was calculated based upon both daytime and night time use of the facilities including functions in the auditorium, gymnasium, and cafeteria. Exterior lighting details were provided with the submission materials. Lighting will be similar to what is used at Fitchburg High School. Mr. Juusola stated that lights will be installed at the soccer field for evening events.

Abutter George Marsh stated his objections to the Board conducting previous pre-submission reviews of the project. This meeting is the first time abutters were officially notified.

A new well will be drilled on the site for domestic water supply. Sewer pipes will be installed in the emergency vehicle access road to connect with the Pepperell sewer system.

Victoria Fletcher of Epsilon Associates said there are vernal pools in Parcel C. This area, including upland habitat, is

under the jurisdiction of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). The secondary emergency vehicle access road must be gated at both ends to meet NHESP's requirements.

Chairman Curtis stated that this is the first presentation of the plan which was just submitted this evening. The plan must be circulated to other town departments and public safety officials for comment. The Board will walk the site on Saturday, June 23, 2001, at 9:00 AM. The Board's engineer will review the plan and submit a report to the Board.

Bruce Easom of the Trails Committee stated that the Committee's goal is to expand the trail network throughout the Town. He asked if the existing trails on the site would be marked and available for public use.

Mr. Juusola said there has been no official discussion about the use of the trails. There will be an emergency vehicle access road from the school to the rear of the site (North Street). Mr. Easom said the Trails Committee would be willing to help establish the trail network.

Abutter Robert Brown submitted a letter dated June 21, 2001 with his list of concerns to the Board.

Abutter Carolyn Perkins asked how much cut and fill will be required to construct the playing fields and what impact will there be on abutters. Landscape architect Stacey Bridge Denzak of Carol Johnson Associates said the site grading is very straightforward and the steepest slope will be 2:1. Erosion control measures will be in place. Carolyn Perkins asked if there will be any grade changes near the Spooner's land. Ms. Denzak said, "no", there will be no dramatic cuts or fills in this area. A wooden fence and plantings will be provided as screening.

Harlan Fitch asked what radius will be required to protect the proposed well. Ms. Fletcher said a 314 ft radius is required by Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This will not impact the school or any abutters. The well will produce 24,000 gpd for 1200 students. The radius depends upon the pumping rates.

Chairman Curtis requested that the required radius around the well be shown on the plan.

Robert Mignelli of Chicopee Row mentioned a recent article in the Boston Globe article about the potential water shortage along the Route 495 corridor. He asked if the school's well will have an adverse impact on abutters' wells. Chairman Curtis said the well must be permitted by the DEP and meet all DEP requirements.

Ms. Fletcher said the school's well will be a shallow well and most of the abutters' wells are deep, bedrock wells. DEP looks at impact on private wells as part of its review.

Abutter Peter Spooner asked why so many athletic fields are being proposed with the plan. Mr. Juusola said the number of fields is based upon the school's teams and use of athletic facilities.

Abutter George Downey asked if the turning radius at Chicopee Row meets requirements.

Attorney Howard Hall said all improvements will be on land owned by Groton Dunstable Schools. No easements are shown on the plan, but the school would like to discuss the possibility of acquiring an easement from the abutters.

Member Degen asked if sewer and gas mains will be installed from the rear access road. Mr. McLaughlin said, "yes."

Member Degen asked about impact on wetlands. Mr. McLaughlin described the drainage system, retention basins and groundwater recharge provisions.

Member Degen asked if there will be any dumpsters. Mr. Juusola pointed out the location on the plan. The dumpsters will be near the loading dock. Member Degen asked about disposal of paint or any other hazardous materials. Mr. Juusola said the only hazardous materials will be from the science labs.

Member Degen asked for more detail on the landscaping plans.

Member Degen asked about the access road to the well. Mr. McLaughlin said there will not be one. The pumps will be in the building.

Member Degen asked about emergency vehicle access to the playing fields. Mr. Juusola said there will be a paved area for emergency vehicle access to the fields. Member Degen said the Board must ask the Fire Chief for his opinion on the emergency vehicle access road. He said he would prefer two paved roads without gates. He asked if there will be groundwater infiltration problems on the access road.

Member Barringer agreed and noted that the gravel road must be properly compacted so it is safe and useable. He noted that the Notice of Intent states that there will be no disturbance from March 15 to June 31. He asked what will happen if the road washes out.

Mr. McLaughlin said the gravel road is designed to meet subdivision regulation standards without paving or curbing so the endangered species can migrate across the road.

Member Barringer said his primary concern is for public safety. Gravel roads wash out unless they are maintained. He asked what will happen if the sewer main has to be excavated and repaired. Mr. McLaughlin said all utilities will be installed along the side of the road, not down the center.

Attorney Hall said traffic can travel in one direction on the emergency vehicle access road. Member Barringer said only if the road is not dug up.

Ms. Fletcher said they will discuss the plan with the Fire Chief. The road has been designed so two vehicles can pass. The conservation restriction will be recorded as a condition of the MEPA and NHESP permit.

Mr. McLaughlin said the cart path will be raised and a culvert will be installed to cross the wetlands. There should be no problem getting through this area.

Chairman Curtis asked the applicant to submit a statement on how they will address Planning Board concerns. He said they must find a balance between what NHESP is requiring and a paved road constructed to subdivision regulation standards.

Member Clements asked if the issue with the school buses crossing the centerline had been resolved. Mr. Juusola said, "yes," as shown on the plans submitted with the application.

Member Clements asked who will own the open land. Ms. Fletcher said the Groton Dunstable School District will own the land, and the conservation restriction will be held by the Conservation Commission.

Member Clements asked if there will be public access to the open land. Ms. Fletcher said, "yes."

Member Clements asked if there will be any earth removal from the site. Mr. McLaughlin said, "no."

Member Degen expressed his concerns about the Planning Board approving the emergency vehicle access road as well as the proposed configuration of the main entrance on Chicopee Row. He noted that the width of the right of way on the Casella property is only 50 ft and that the right of way on the Walker site was 114 ft. He encouraged the schools to explore other options such as acquiring an easement.

Chairman Curtis asked the Board's engineer Gary Hebert of Fay, Spoffard and Thorndike for his opinion. Mr. Hebert said he agrees with the Planning Board that two access points are needed to serve the school. He asked if there were any other points on Chicopee Row where a road could be located.

The Board discussed the lighting of the soccer fields and night time events. Attorney Hall said only the soccer field with the track area will be lit at night.

Carolyn Perkins asked who owns the land at the present time. Mr. Hall said the site is under the control of the school because the towns voted to take the land by eminent domain.

Abutter George Marsh expressed concerns about his common boundary line and the accuracy of the survey. Chairman Curtis said the two parties must work out the lot line issue.

Abutter George Downey asked about the limit of work. Planning Administrator Michelle Collette noted that an Erosion Control Permit will be required and the plans must show a limit of disturbance.

Member Clements asked how many acres will be disturbed. Mr. Juusola said about 40.

The Board said it will walk the site on Saturday, June 23, 2001 at 9:00 AM.

The Board will continue its review of the site plan on July 26, 2001 at 7:00 PM.

GROTON DUNSTABLE SCHOOL MODULAR CLASSROOMS

The Board considered the GDRSD's request to modify the site plan approval for the modular classrooms at the Florence Roche School. Dennis McLaughlin of David Ross Associates presented the plan.

Mr. McLaughlin said the footings were poured in the location shown on the original site plan instead of the revised plan approved by the Board in January due to an error in the construction documents. The schools are requesting permission to modify the plan and locate the classrooms where the footings were poured.

Member Barringer expressed concern about the six foot offset from the traveled way and the fact the stair case is only six feet wide. Students will go down the stairs and into the traveled way. Mr. McLaughlin said the stairs can be relocated to the other side of the classrooms.

Member Degen requested that the schools submit an accurate plan showing exact locations as measured in the field.

Chairman Curtis reminded everyone that the site plan was revised in January because the Town's public safety officials expressed concern about the building being located too close to the access road. The Board approved the revised plan, and there was an error during the construction process. He suggested that the applicant revise the plan and that the Board request comments from the Police Chief and Fire Chief on the proposed revisions.

JANES PROPERTIES

The Board reviewed a request submitted by Stephen and Dorothy Janes to change the lighting fixture at their business property located at 116 Boston Road. Dorothy Janes said the fixture is being changed for aesthetic reasons. Member Barringer asked if the wattage will be the same. Mrs. Janes said, "yes."

The motion was made by Barringer to approve the proposed change in lighting as detailed in diagram submitted by Stephen and Dorothy Janes (catalog no. P-5663-31). The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

CAPSTONE PROPERTIES

The Board received a letter dated June 21, 2001 from Capstone Properties requesting a modification in the location of seven parking spaces at the brick house on the River Court site. David Hamilton said the relocation is necessary to avoid damage to the retention wall along the Squannacook River. In addition, the change will result in more green area. The motion was made by Degen to accept the modification as shown on the plan entitled, "River Court Assisted Living", dated June 6, 2001. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

ORCHARD HILLS SUBDIVISION

Developer James Patierno met with the Board to discuss construction of a retention pond at the Orchard Hills subdivision. He said the pond has functioned well for three years and he did not want to enlarge it as shown on the plan because the homeowner would prefer to leave it as it is.

The Board said its engineer recommended recalculating the drainage system to be sure the pond has adequate capacity. Mr. Patierno said it is cheaper to excavate the pond.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator