

GROTON PLANNING BOARD
FEBRUARY 28, 2002
MINUTES

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

ANR PLANS

Groton-Dunstable Regional School District –The Board considered the Approval Not Required plan submitted by the Groton Dunstable Regional School District for the property on Chicopee Row taken by eminent domain. Surveyor Michael Martorella of David Ross Associates presented the plan. Mr. Martorella explained that the previously endorsed plan had an error in one line. The new plan corrected the error.

The motion was made by Lewis to endorse as Approval Not Required (ANR) the plan entitled, “Taking Plan of Land in Groton and Dunstable, Mass., prepared for Groton-Dunstable Regional School District,” prepared by David E. Ross Associates, dated August, 2001, revised February 5, 2002. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING – COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN

The Board continued the public hearing to consider revisions to the Comprehensive Master Plan. GMAC members Scott Wilson, Steve Webber, Susan Horowitz and Charles McKenney; Board of Selectmen Chair Peter Cunningham, HDC Chair Dan Barton, Conservation Commission Chair Evan Owen, Sewer Commission Chair Karl Johnson, ZBA member Virginia Wood, Recreation Director Liza Judge, Mountain Lakes Club member Bev Rodrigues, Carl Flowers, Russell Harris, and others were present.

Scott Wilson read the letter dated February 27, 2002 from GMAC to the Planning Board recommending that the Planning Board hire a new consultant to complete the plan. GMAC Chair Charles McKinney said the document is better than it has been in the past, but it needs enhancements. Member Clements said GMAC’s comments are too general and do not address specific items in the plan.

Chairman Curtis said the 1990 Master Plan is still in effect today. He asked why the Board should not adopt the proposed revisions because it is a step forward, not backward. Mr. McKinney said the plan is “stale” and a few contradictions were found by GMAC. He said the plan should be more specific and have measurable goals and objectives.

Member Degen said the Board hired the wrong consultant and his ideas did not fit with a rural community such as Groton. A consultant with expertise in rural planning rather than urban planning is what is needed. He recommended that Special Permit decisions should be based upon compliance with the Master Plan.

Sewer Commission Chair Karl Johnson said the Sewer Commission would like more time to submit comments to the Board. He said the Town must look at the long-term issues impacting the existing sewer district in the Town Center as well as Lost Lake and West Groton. Chairman Curtis said the Board would appreciate receiving comments from the Sewer Commissioners.

Carl Flowers stated his concerns about Historic Preservation issues and noted that old town roads should be protected. He presented a brief history of Dan Parker Road, its inhabitants, and noteworthy historic events.

Selectman Chair Peter Cunningham said the plan overview on page 8 does not contain a statement about the need to provide affordable housing. Chairman Curtis said this was an omission and a statement about housing will be added. He thanked Mr. Cunningham for bringing up this very important point.

Russ Harris expressed his concerns about the lack of housing diversity. He encouraged the Board to investigate how to permit affordable, single-family housing on smaller lots. Chairman Curtis said the State Legislature passed provisions

allowing cluster by-right. These provisions could be used to promote construction of affordable housing.

Bev Rodrigues said she and Susan Nordberg were working on comments from the Lost Lake residents. The Board said it would be happy to incorporate the comments into the revised plan.

Christine Long asked about designating the Four Corners area as a “village”. Chairman Curtis explained how the original master plan, prepared by Charles Eliot in 1963, designated the Town Center, West Groton, and Lost Lake as village areas that were already developed. Most development in the villages took place prior to zoning and is non-conforming.

Carl Flowers asked about the definition of “historically significant” and said it should be tied to specific historical events. Historian Gray Tuttle added that historic landscapes are also important.

Chairman Curtis asked the Board if it wanted to move forward with adopting the plan and presenting it to Town Meeting.

Charles McKinney said GMAC would provide the Board with a list of more specific comments.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on March 28, 2002 at 7:30 PM.

GROWTH RATE LIMITATION

GMAC Chair Charles McKinney said consultant Ralph Willmer has been researching the Development Rate Limitation By-law and GMAC’s proposed growth limitation by-law. He determined that the two by-laws both be in the Zoning By-law concurrently. Mr. McKinney said more funds will be required if Mr. Willmer has to attend more meetings in Groton. The Board requested that Mr. Willmer come to the Planning Board and discuss his findings to date.

The Board will submit two articles for the Annual Town Meeting – one to amend the Water Resource Protection Districts and the other to endorse the Comprehensive Master Plan. If the Board decides not to go forward with the master plan, the article can be postponed.

LETTER OF SUPPORT – ACEC APPLICATION

The Board reviewed a draft letter prepared Member Clements to EOEА Secretary Robert Durand in support of the nominations of the Squannassit and Petapawag areas as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The motion was made by Degen to send the letter supporting the two ACEC nominations to EOEА Secretary Robert Durand. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator