

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
APRIL 25, 2002
MINUTES**

Chairman Curtis 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

SITE PLAN REVIEW – SHANKLIN CORPORATION, SANDY POND ROAD

The Board reviewed the site plan submitted by Garrett Shanklin for the proposed addition to the conference center on Sandy Pond Road. Garrett Shanklin and the design engineer Mikael Lassila of David Ross Associates were present.

Chairman Curtis read the comments submitted by the Water Department and the Board of Health.

Member Degen asked where the limit of pavement will be since there were no specifications shown on the plan. Mr. Lassila showed the pavement detail including information on the sub-base preparation for the area that will not be paved. This part of the parking lot will have a gravel surface.

Member Eliot thanked Mr. Shanklin for the facility often used for community events. She said she appreciated the wooded buffer for the abutters.

Member Lewis asked if there would be any new lighting. Mr. Shanklin said, "no."

Member Lewis asked that more evergreens be planted to protect the abutters. Mr. Shanklin asked if evergreens could be transplanted from the site. The Board said, "yes." Member Degen said conifers should only be transplanted in the spring before the middle of May. Otherwise, they may not survive.

Member Perkins asked about drainage. Mr. Lassila said the runoff will flow to the low point on the property and will not flow off site.

The motion was made by Lewis to approve the Level II site plan entitled, "Definitive Site Plan of Land in Groton, Mass. Prepared for F. Garrett Shanklin," prepared by David Ross Associates, dated April 11, 2002. The Board approved the site plan with the following conditions:

1. There shall be no net increase in the rate or volume of storm water runoff from the site as required in Section 218-25G(1)(c).
2. Lighting shall not intrude onto other properties or public ways as required in Section 218-25G(1)(h). The lights in the new parking lot shall be similar in design to the lights in the existing parking lot. The parking lot lights will not be left on when the parking lot is not in use.
3. If any new lighting is installed in the future, a new site plan shall be submitted to the Planning Board under §218-25 Site Plan Review, sub-section 218-25B(2)(d).
4. Existing evergreen trees will be transplanted to the area along the northern property line to provide additional screening for the abutting residents.
5. Parking for the disabled and access to the building shall comply with the requirements of the Architectural Access Board Regulations, 521 CMR, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
6. All signs must conform to the Sign By-Law, Chapter 196 of the Code of the Town of Groton.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING (con't) – ACADEMY HILL DEFINITIVE PLAN

The Board continued the public hearing to consider the Academy Hill definitive plan submitted by LandWest. Applicants Bruce Wheeler and Brian Ahern, Attorney Louis Levine, Attorney Ray Lyons, and design engineer Lawrence Beals were present.

Chairman Curtis read the comments from the Enhanced 9-1-1 Liaison and the Groton Water Department. The Board also received a report dated April 25, 2002 from its consulting engineer, John Schmid of Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc. (JNEI).

Mr. Beals said the Board conducted a site walk on the Bernier-Bissell property on April 20, 2002 to view the proposed emergency vehicle access road. Since the site walk, a more suitable emergency vehicle access has been found.

Mr. Lyons said they looked at many alternates for the emergency vehicle access road. The best route was found from Lakin Street in Pepperell. Access would go from Lakin Street onto a common driveway then over an easement that connects with the Old County Road. The Fire Chief previously viewed the Old County Road as an emergency vehicle access road. Mr. Lyons showed the Board photographs of the proposed route.

Chairman Curtis read the letter from Robert Hanninen regarding the parcel listed as "unknown" on the Assessors' records.

Mr. Beals said the land with owners unknown was not used in the calculation of the Basic Number of Lots, although it is colored in green (open space) on the plans. The parcel is landlocked and surrounded by three vernal pools. Mr. Lyons added that there is an existing stonewall surrounding this parcel.

Chairman Curtis said the Planning Board must be sure the parcel was not used to calculate the amount of open space in the subdivision. The Board will ask JNEI to review the open space calculations again.

Abutter Robert Hanninen said this parcel contains the wildlife corridor and it is a significant part of the protected open space.

Member Perkins asked about the proposed phasing plan. She asked if Lot A is included in the second phase. Mr. Beals said, "yes," Lot A is part of Phase 2.

Member Perkins asked how the road will be constructed through the open space area. Mr. Beals said it will be paved to "lane" standards with ten turtle tunnels.

Chairman Curtis said a waiver is required if the temporary road is longer than 1000 ft. He added that the affordable units must be constructed in phases along with the market-rate units.

Member Clements asked if the applicant owns the land with the proposed emergency vehicle access road. Mr. Lyons said the applicant will either own the land or have easements on it.

Member Clements said the Conservation Commission recommends that the through road have a gravel surface. He requested that the Planning Board grant a waiver to allow this section of the road to be unpaved.

Member Degen asked how many years would it take to construct Phase I. Mr. Levine said it would be a maximum of three years from the first lot release.

Member Degen said he would like to see some benefits to the Town in exchange for the waivers requested by the applicant. He said he would like to see the entire road constructed during the first phase before one lot is developed.

Mr. Lyons said there are many benefits to the Town including open space, affordable housing units, and alternative housing types.

Member Degen said the Pepperell Planning Board's approval requires that there be no access through Pepperell for construction vehicles going into Groton.

Mr. Levine said the applicant never said the entire infrastructure would be built first. The applicant must submit an Environmental Impact Report to MEPA and Natural Heritage before construction can begin. The through road will be constructed within three years.

Member Degen said this is a beautiful area – it is not the usual subdivision. He said he did not understand why the through road cannot be constructed first.

Chairman Curtis said the Board must check with JNEI to be sure the drainage system will function if the road is constructed in phases.

Member Eliot said the affordable units should be constructed as soon as possible. She said she prefers the emergency vehicle access road over Lakin Street rather than the Bernier-Bissell land.

Mr. Beals said the Board can place a condition in the approval that the Fire Chief and Police Chief must test the emergency vehicle access route before building permits are issued.

Julie Lisk stated that it is very unfortunate that this land will be lost to development. She asked that wildlife studies be done to determine the impact of the development over 10 to 20 years.

Member Eliot requested that the through road be constructed during a season when the impact on turtles and other wildlife can be minimized.

Marion Stoddart supported Julie Lisk's request for a long-term study to be funded by the developer. She added that the through road should be gravel and not paved.

Chairman Curtis noted that, even if the Board requires that the road not be paved, once it is a town road, the Town could pave the road at a later date.

Harlan Fitch asked if the affordable housing units would be in a price range that will be affordable to town employees. He asked if Town residents could be given preference for the affordable units. Mr. Lyons said perhaps they could advertise the affordable units in Groton before advertising to a broader area.

Member Eliot asked if the applicant would be willing to fund a long-term environmental study. Mr. Levine said the applicant would be funding a study as part of the Environmental Impact Report submitted to MEPA and Natural Heritage.

Member Degen asked how the applicant could propose a phasing plan before going through the MEPA process. He said if the plan changes, the applicant must re-submit the plan for modification.

Richard Murphy of Pepperell said he would like the developer to provide access to his property on the Old County Road. Member Lewis said Mr. Murphy has the same rights to use Old County Road as any other landowner. Chairman Curtis added that the subdivision plan would not alter anyone else's rights to use Old County Road.

Marion Stoddart stated that this area should be treated as an environmentally sensitive area with natural vegetation and meadows instead of lawns. The use of fertilizers should be minimized and domestic animals (predators), such as dogs and cats, should be discouraged.

Chairman Curtis said the Board cannot control what the future homeowners can and cannot do.

Member Lewis said he is opposed to a gravel road. He stated that all the Town's other gravel roads are now paved.

The Board will request that JNEI review the phasing plan and integrity of the drainage system as well as the acreage to be set aside as open space.

Members of the Board will walk the route of the proposed emergency vehicle access road on Saturday, April 27, 2002, at 7:00 AM.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on May 2, 2002 at 9:00 PM.

SITE PLAN REVIEW ISSUES – FIRST PARISH CHURCH

Member Degen noted the on-going erosion and runoff flowing onto Lowell Road from the new parking lot and drainage system at the First Parish Church. The Board will ask John Schmid of JNEI to inspect the site and submit a report to the Board.

TELECOMMUNICATION TOWERS

The Board will contact radio frequency engineer David Maxson from Broadcast Signal Lab to see if he would be interested in reviewing applications on behalf of the Planning Board. Town Counsel Patricia Cantor said she often uses Mr. Maxson as an expert witness in cases involving telecommunications towers.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator

