

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
OCTOBER 3, 2002
MINUTES**

Chairman Degen called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM in the Town Hall

Members present: Degen, Barringer, Clements, Eliot and Perkins

Members absent: Lewis and Wilson

PUBLIC HEARING (con't) – MILL STREET RELOCATION

The Board received a letter dated October 3, 2002 from Attorney Robert Collins requesting a continuation of the public hearing to November 14, 2002 and an extension of the deadline to December 31, 2002.

The Board voted unanimously to extend the deadline to December 31, 2002 as requested by the applicant.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on November 14, 2002 at 7:30 PM.

ANR PLAN – GORDON & PATEL, WHARTON ROW

The Board considered the Approval Not Required (ANR) plan submitted Jeffrey Gordon and Anuj Patel to change a lot line between their lots on Wharton Row. Mr. Gordon explained that the lot line is being changed to accommodate landscaping areas. The parcel swap results in no change to area or frontage on either lot.

The motion was made by Perkins to endorse as Approval Not Required the plan entitled, “Plan of Land in Groton, MA (Middlesex County) – Owners: Lot 30 – Anuj & Kirti Patel, Lot 23 – Jeffrey & Cheryl Gordon,” prepared by Precision Land Surveying, dated September 18, 2002. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

COMMENTS TO MEPA

The Board discussed its comments to MEPA on the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Academy Hill subdivision. Members of the Board agreed that this is a very sensitive environmental area that warrants careful review by MEPA.

Member Clements read his draft comments to MEPA and the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Chairman Degen stressed that the Planning Board did not know the results of the MEPA study when the subdivision was approved. Town Counsel advised the Board that it could not wait for the MEPA review before acting on the definitive plan.

The motion was made by Perkins to submit the following comments to MEPA:

“After many months and ten continuations of the public hearing, the Planning Board voted to grant special permits to LandWest under the provisions of Major Residential Development and Open Space Residential Development. In addition, the Board held five continuations of a public hearing to consider the Academy Hill definitive plan approved on May 9, 2002.

“During the review process, the Board expressed its serious concerns about impacts on the environment, particularly on endangered species habitat. The Board negotiated with the developer to minimize environmental impact to the extent possible under the Zoning By-law and Subdivision Regulations. The Board encourages MEPA and the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program to thoroughly review all aspects of the plan including the “turtle tunnels” and construction standards of the subdivision roads. The Planning Board’s jurisdiction and expertise was limited in this area.

“The Board is also very concerned about traffic impact on Route 119 and adjoining town roads. At the present time, there are approximately 19,000 cars per day traveling on Route 119 through Groton Center. The proposed subdivision will place additional traffic on an already overburdened road system. The Board requests your careful consideration of traffic impacts resulting from this project.”

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING (con't) – CRANSTON CONSTRUCTION AFFORDABLE UNITS

Chairman Degen called the continuation of the public hearing to order. Applicant David Moulton and Attorney Robert Collins were present.

Mr. Collins said an application for site plan approval was submitted on October 1, 2002. He submitted a new plan showing "Parcel T" with 6.28 acres to be dedicated as open space for the affordable units as required in the by-law. The parcel is located adjacent to the land conveyed to the Groton Electric Light Department and the Groton Water Department. A total of 387 acres will be dedicated as open space as part of the overall project.

Mr. Collins said the Board has different options:

1. Use Parcel T as part of the density calculations for the affordable units so that the area cannot be used for any other purpose.
2. Create a parcel on an ANR plan and gift the 6.28-acre parcel to the Groton Conservation Commission.

Mr. Collins said a new site plan was submitted showing more details than the previous plan. He said Mr. Moulton would meet with the Groton Housing Authority in November to discuss ensuring affordability of the units. He said the Housing Authority would provide a list of qualified tenants.

Member Barringer said there should be a pedestrian path connecting the housing to the commercial development on the adjoining lot. Mr. Collins said there would be a path from the future "empty nester" housing to the commercial area. This will be shown on the next special permit plan to be submitted to the Planning Board.

Member Barringer said he would prefer a sidewalk along Sandy Pond Road. Mr. Collins said the site topography might not allow it.

Member Barringer asked about trucks turning around in the parking area. Mr. Collins said the access road is 18 ft wide and trucks can turn around by using the parking space at the end of the parking lot. The Board said the Fire Chief should be asked for his comments to be sure fire trucks could turn around.

Member Eliot asked about plantings and vegetative screening. Mr. Collins said the natural vegetation would remain in the area between the development and Sandy Pond Road.

Member Eliot asked why the open space parcel is not contiguous to the lot with the affordable units. Mr. Collins said they are still working on other plans for the site so they are not sure if the adjacent area can be left as open space.

Member Eliot asked if the open space is the same as the area approved at Town Meeting. Mr. Collins said the entire site consists of 575 acres, and Town Meeting approved a concept plan for the whole project. The 6.28 parcel was created to meet the requirements of the Zoning By-law for this special permit application.

Member Perkins read the definition of a lot which states, "A single area of land in one ownership throughout defined by metes and bounds or boundary lines as shown in a recorded deed or on a recorded plan."

Member Perkins continued that § 218-27C(4)(a) states: "Lot area shall be not less than 80,000 square feet plus 10,000 square feet per bedroom." She said the open space should be part of the same lot with the affordable units. Mr. Collins said they would be able to do that eventually.

Member Eliot asked if the affordable units would be constructed first. Mr. Collins said, "yes."

Member Perkins said she appreciated the fact that the affordables would be constructed first, but this is not the way the Board normally does things. Mr. Collins said the required open space is contained in Parcel T with 6.28 acres.

Member Eliot asked if the open space would be included in the area adjacent to Lot 3 with the affordable units in the future. Mr. Collins said, "yes." Eventually 20 acres around this lot will be donated to the Groton Conservation

Commission.

Member Perkins asked about lighting. Mr. Collins said there would be lighting on residential-style posts. The Board requested more detail on the lighting design.

Chairman Degen said he is very concerned about pedestrian access from the housing to the nearby commercial development. He asked why the applicant could not install a sidewalk along the right-of-way of Sandy Pond Road.

Mr. Collins said Mr. Moulton can construct a sidewalk on his land but he cannot enter Mr. Lacombe's property to continue the sidewalk on the commercial site. The Board agreed that the sidewalk should be constructed when the commercial development is constructed.

Chairman Degen expressed concerns about the grade change near the proposed buildings. He said, according to the site plan, there will be a 12 ft drop off behind Building A and there will be a 15 ft drop off behind Building B. He said this would leave very little useable space for a playground area. Mr. Collins said there would be a decent backyard and playground area provided in the area between the two buildings.

David Martin of Shelters Road asked if the traffic impact of the proposed development had been considered as part of Shaw's traffic study. Chairman Degen said, "yes," it was included and the Board will be sure its engineer considers the impact from the residential development.

Mrs. Smith asked if there would be a turn around area for delivery trucks and school buses. Mr. Collins said the buses pick children up on Sandy Pond Road and will not go into the driveway.

Chairman Degen said the Board must receive comments from the Fire Chief before acting on the site plan since fire trucks are the largest public safety vehicles.

Member Perkins asked about trash disposal. Mr. Collins said an area for the dumpster will be shown on the plan.

Chairman Degen said the Board must have information on lighting, the location of the dumpster, and comments from public safety officials before it can act on site plan.

The Board voted unanimously to close the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING (con't) - ROCKY HILL DEFINITIVE PLAN

The Board continued the public hearing to consider the Rocky Hill (Whip-O-Will Lane) definitive plan submitted by Fox Meadow Realty Trust. Attorney Robert Collins requested that the hearing be continued to some time in November.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the hearing on November 14, 2002 at 7:30 PM.

PUBLIC HEARING (con't) – SPRINT/TABCOM SPECIAL PERMIT

The Board continued the public hearing to consider the application for a special permit submitted by Sprint PCS to construct a 120 ft monopole on land owned by the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts. Attorney Scott Lacey represented Sprint at the hearing.

Mr. Lacey said he did not want to go forward with the public hearing this evening because there are only five members (Degen, Barringer, Clements, Perkins, and Lewis) who have attended every hearing and are eligible to vote. Mr. Lacey requested that the Board continue the public hearing.

Member Perkins asked if Sprint found a new location for the tower. Mr. Lacey said, "yes." The location is on the same lot so the abutters are the same. A new balloon test will be done prior to the continuation of the hearing.

The Planning Board and Mr. Lacey agreed that the balloon test would take place on Saturday, November 2, from 9 AM to 3 PM, with November 9 as a rain date.

The Board voted unanimously to extend the deadline to December 31, 2002 as requested by the applicant.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on November 14, 2002 at 9:00 PM.

COMMENTS TO EOE – ACEC NOMINATION

The motion was made by Perkins to send a letter to EOE Secretary Robert Durand in support of the nominations for the Squannassit and Petapawag Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

NON-CONFORMING STRUCTURES

Chairman Degen reported that Selectman Dann Chamberlin expressed concern to him about demolition of historic and non-conforming structures. Chairman Degen suggested that the Selectmen sponsor a work session with the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Building Inspector to discuss the matter.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator