

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
MARCH 6, 2003
MINUTES**

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

Members present: Barringer, Clements, Lewis, Perkins and Wilson

Members absent: Degen and Eliot

PUBLIC HEARING – REZONING PETITION & GIBBET HILL RESTAURANT

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, § 5, M. G. L., the Groton Planning Board held a public hearing to consider the following proposed rezoning and concept plan:

“To see if the Town will vote to re-zone from R-A (Residential-Agricultural) to B-1 (Business) certain premises situated at 55-61 Lowell Road owned by Gibbet Hill Farm, LLC, consisting of approximately 280,697 ± square feet or 6.444± acres of area, which premises is a portion of the land described in a deed recorded with Middlesex South Registry of Deeds in Book 31800, Page 319, being shown as parcel 3 on Assessors’ Map 116, and to approve a concept plan entitled, “Concept Plan, Proposed Restaurant, Gibbet Hill in the Town of Groton, Massachusetts”, prepared by Beals Associates, Inc., said plan being on file with the Town Clerk, or take any action thereon.”

Vice Chairman Barringer called the hearing to order and read the notice published in the February 21 and 28, 2003 issues of the *Groton Herald*. Steven, Nancy and Joshua Webber were present.

Josh Webber presented the proposed rezoning and concept plan for the Gibbet Hill restaurant. He said they would like to convert one of the existing barns into a full-service restaurant. The setting is unique with its scenic view of Gibbet Hill. There will be more public access to Gibbet Hill from the proposed restaurant. He said sight distances on Lowell Road would be improved with vegetation clearing and regrading as discussed on the March 1st site walk with the Planning Board. The second barn may be used as a function hall or small retail shops in the future. The family does not want any changes to the external appearance of the buildings or character of the site.

Member Lewis asked about lighting. Josh Webber said they do not have anything specific in mind at this time. The issue will be addressed during site plan review.

Member Lewis said he prefers an open drainage system with a more natural look. Steve Webber said the driveway would be paved.

Member Clements asked if the entire 6.4-acre parcel will be rezoned. Josh Webber said, “yes.” He said they do not want anything unattractive to happen here, and they are willing to place a restriction on the deed to guarantee that the character of the site will be protected.

Member Perkins asked what will happen to the existing office building. Josh Webber said the office and garage will probably be removed.

Member Perkins expressed concerns about sight distance. Steve Webber said the existing stonewall will be lowered and vegetation removed to improve sight distances on Lowell Road.

Vice Chairman Barringer asked if the parcel is contiguous with other B-1 zoned land. Josh Webber said, “no,” but adjoining land owned by Gibbet Hill Farm abuts the B-1 zoned parcel with the Groton Inn.

Vice Chairman Barringer asked what the square footage of the restaurant will be. Josh Webber said it could be up to 7000 to 8000 sq ft. Vice Chairman Barringer asked how many parking spaces are required. Josh Webber said there will be 105 spaces – two for each seat plus five as required in § 218-23.

Carrie Kneeland asked if there will be a turning lane on Lowell Road. Vice Chairman Barringer said all the engineering issues will be addressed during site plan review.

Member Lewis suggested that the applicant look into using pavement with a grassed surface (e.g. “grass-crete”) for aesthetic reasons.

Member Clements asked if a pedestrian path can be constructed to Main Street. Josh Webber said the adjoining land is privately owned and very wet. Member Lewis suggested that the Conservation Commission select an appropriate location for a pathway. Steve Webber said the area is very wet.

(Member Wilson arrived.)

Carrie Kneeland asked if the restaurant will be served by a septic system or sewer. Josh Webber said an on-site septic system will be used. The lot is not located in the Sewer District.

Member Wilson said the sight distance issues can be addressed as discussed on the site walk. He said this is a great proposal that fits well with the Town Center development pattern. There will be no change to existing architecture or character of the land. The use will generate tax revenue for the Town. He agreed that the six-acre site should be protected with a deed restriction.

Member Lewis said he liked the idea of small retail shops in the other barn. Member Wilson agreed.

Vice Chairman Barringer said, if the business is successful, there may be more parking needed in the future. Josh Webber said the engineers have looked into options for more parking spaces. Steve Webber said typically the shops will be active in the daytime and the restaurant will be used more in the evening hours so more parking may not be needed.

Member Clements asked about hours of operation. Steve Webber said he does not want to constrain hours of operation.

Susan Horowitz asked what would happen if the business does not succeed. Member Lewis said whatever happens at the site must be consistent with the concept plan. Steve Webber added that even if the land is zoned B-1, it will be subject to a deed restriction to protect the character of the site.

The Board voted unanimously to close the public hearing.

PUBLIC HEARING WATER DEPARTMENT SHARED DRIVEWAY

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, Sections 9 and 11, the Groton Planning Board held a public hearing to consider the application submitted by the Groton Water Department for a special permit to utilize the provisions of Groton Zoning By-law Section 218-23D Shared Driveways to construct a shared driveway as shown on the plans entitled, “CY 2002 SRF Project – Water System Improvements Contract No. 3, Groton Massachusetts – Shared Driveway”, prepared by Tighe and Bond, dated February 19, 2003, and “Contract No. 3 – Water Storage Tank,” prepared by Tighe and Bond, dated October, 2002. The proposed driveway is located on land owned by Brooks Orchard, LLC, Assessors Lot 232-30 on the northerly side of Orchard Lane.

The Water Department requested a continuation of the public hearing to a time when all members could be present. The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on March 27, 2003 at 8:00 PM.

SITE PLAN REVIEW – GROTON SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Attorney Robert Collins requested that the Board continue the site plan review of the Groton School Performing Arts Center until after the Historic Districts Commission completes its review. The Board voted unanimously to continue its review of the site plan on March 20, 2003 at 8:00 PM.

TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES

The Board discussed warrant articles for the Annual Town Meeting. The Board will hold a public hearing on the proposed zoning amendments on April 3, 2003.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator

MC/lg