

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
OCTOBER 2, 2003
MINUTES**

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

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

Members absent: Barringer and Lewis

SITE PLAN REVIEW (con't) – SURRENDEN FARM LOT 8

The Board received a letter dated September 30, 2003 from Attorney Ray Lyons requesting a continuation of the site plan review for Lot 8, Surrenden Farms.

The motion was made by Clements to continue the review on October 23, 2003 at 8:30 PM. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

GROTON DUNSTABLE HIGH SCHOOL UPDATE

The Board met with School Building Committee Chairman Steve Prendergast to discuss the outstanding items at the Groton Dunstable Regional High School site.

Vice Chairman Degen said the open issues the Planning Board is concerned about are the condition of the drainage system and the required signage on Chicopee Row. Vice Chairman Degen said the need for “school zone” signals and signs stating that students should not be dropped off or picked up on Chicopee Row were discussed during site plan review. Mr. Prendergast said the school shares the Planning Board’s concerns about safety. He assured the Board that the signage would be installed very soon.

Vice Chairman Degen emphasized the need to clean out the retention basins within the next three weeks so they could be seeded and stabilized before winter. Mr. Prendergast agreed to follow-up on this matter with the contractor.

Mr. Prendergast told the Board that construction is going well at the North Middle School site. The parking lot was paved recently, and the construction fence was installed. The Board noted that there has been ponding at the intersection of the access road and Route 119. Mr. Prendergast said he has already spoken to the contractor about correcting the drainage problem.

COMMENTS TO MEPA – MILL RUN PLAZA/GROTON RESIDENTIAL GARDENS

The Board reviewed and edited the draft comments to MEPA on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for Ryan Development’s Mill Run Plaza and Groton Residential Gardens. The comments were drafted based upon a joint meeting with the Selectmen on October 1, 2003.

The motion was made by Wilson to submit the following comments:

Alternatives Analysis – The Selectmen and Planning Board agree that the proposed “Mill Run Plaza” commercial development is the preferred use of the business-zoned land. The present proposal to construct five commercial buildings will have less impact on traffic and the environment than the previous proposal to construct a 35,000 sq ft supermarket on the same site. (Please note that the supermarket proposals were defeated twice by Town Meeting.)

The Selectmen and Planning Board are concerned that the proposed 60-unit affordable housing project, “Groton Residential Gardens,” is much too dense for this location. However, the Town is supportive of affordable housing at the appropriate density. The Zoning Board of Appeals is currently reviewing three Comprehensive Permit applications with a total of 136 units.

Traffic – The Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board will work with the applicant and Mass Highway to reach a compromise on the realignment of the intersection of Mill Street and Route 119. The Planning Board has concerns about the proposed intersection because it does not line up with the access to New England Business Service (NEBS)

on the opposite side of Route 119. NEBS employs more than 700 people and generates a significant amount of traffic during peak hours. The Planning Board is also concerned that the proposed realignment may cause back up on Mill Street creating difficult access for the existing residences on Anthony Drive.

The realigned road will create new frontage on Mill Street. The Planning Board requests that the applicant clarify the different layouts shown on the alternate plans and show existing and proposed access cuts on Mill Street.

The current configuration of the intersection encourages tractor-trailer traffic on Mill Street. The realignment of the intersection may help keep heavy truck traffic on Route 119 rather than on Mill Street. The realignment may also help control the speed of traffic on Mill Street in the vicinity of this intersection.

The Selectmen and Planning Board agree with the MRPC's recommendation that right and left turn lanes would be beneficial to traffic flow and safety.

In summary, the Selectmen and Planning Board are concerned that the proposed uses will add to the cumulative impact of traffic on Route 119. The Route 119-Mill Street intersection will need signalization in the near future. The intersection design should meet the requirements for future signalization. The installation of a traffic signal, in combination with the signalization of the Four Corners intersection, will make this busy intersection safer and will provide needed breaks in traffic along the Route 119 corridor.

Pedestrian Safety – The Selectmen and Planning Board are satisfied that the applicant has addressed pedestrian safety concerns by providing sidewalks on both the commercial and residential development plans. The Board appreciates the applicant's willingness to provide bicycle racks and a school bus waiting shelter.

The nearby Nashua River Rail Trail is a benefit to the Town and the Commonwealth. The Town requests that the Massachusetts Highway Department consider constructing a sidewalk within the right-of-way of Route 119 from the commercial development to the rail trail in order to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Wetlands – The Selectmen and Planning Board support the recommendations of the Conservation Commission.

Potable Water – The Selectmen and Planning Board support the recommendations of the Water Department.

Drainage – The Planning Board is very concerned about drainage and stormwater management with the amount of impervious surface shown on the proposed plans. The area is flat, with high groundwater elevations. The soils do not drain well and there is evidence of isolated, annual flooding on both sites. The proposed stormwater management systems must be carefully designed and reviewed to mitigate any potential impact on nearby residents and adjoining public ways. The proposed grading and drainage system, as designed, is based upon the plan showing the realignment of Mill Street. If the plan is revised, the applicant must submit a modified plan to the Planning Board for site plan approval.

The Town of Groton Subdivision Regulations, Site Plan Review Regulations, and Erosion and Sedimentation Control By-law require no net increase in runoff from the site. The Town also has a local Wetlands Protection By-law that controls stormwater management where applicable. The proposed projects should be designed to meet all local requirements.

Wastewater – The Selectmen and Planning Board support the recommendations of the Sewer Department.

Mitigation – In conclusion, the Selectmen and Planning Board support the commercial development project because it is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Master Plan. As previously stated, the Selectmen and Planning Board support affordable housing at a reduced density that is appropriate for the site. However, the Planning Board noted that the Master Plan states that residential development should not be located off major highways.

The Board looks forward to working with the Massachusetts Highway Department, and the Montachusett Regional

Planning Commission on the traffic-related issues associated with the proposed projects.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

SAWTELL DRIVE CONSTRUCTION REPORT

The Board received a report dated September 25, 2003 from Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc. (JNEI) regarding the completion of Sawtell Drive in the Caldwell Smith subdivision. The only outstanding item is the size of the nozzle and adapter for the dry hydrant. The Board will request that Mr. Lunn work with the Fire Chief to address this item.

REQUEST FOR WAIVER – AL PRIME SITE PLAN

The Board received a letter dated September 29, 2003 from Attorney James Gmeiner requesting a waiver of the requirement to show topography within 200 ft of the A.L. Prime site only on the same side of Boston Road.

The motion was made by Perkins to grant the waiver so the topography on the opposite side of Boston Road (Route 119) within 200 feet of the site is not required. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

RIVERCOURT RETAINING WALLS

Members Barringer, Degen, and Lewis; Building Inspector Michael Tusino, and Planning Administrator Michelle Collette walked the Rivercourt site on Monday, September 29, 2003 to look at the retaining walls.

Member Degen said the walls are bulging, there is evidence of erosion behind the wall adjacent to the pre-school play area, and bollards are needed to protect the wall from the snow plows. He suggested that the owner hand dig holes behind the wall to ascertain that the geo-grid fabric was installed properly.

Planning Administrator Michelle Collette concurred with Member Degen's observations.

Member Degen suggested that the Board call the site plan back for modification. Member Perkins suggested that the matter be left up to the Building Inspector who has jurisdiction.

Member Degen said the grading of the emergency vehicle access road should be corrected so the pitch will be toward the railroad tracks and not toward the retaining wall to prevent runoff from undermining the wall.

The motion was made by Perkins to request that the Building Inspector require that the owner take the following action:

1. Hand dig behind the wall to determine that the required geo-grid fabric was installed properly;
2. Grade the area so the runoff is directed toward the railroad bed rather than toward the retaining wall to correct the existing erosion problems behind the wall;
3. Install bollards to prevent plows from hitting the wall or the chain link fence above the wall;
4. Submit a report from a structural engineer based upon an on-site inspection of the existing condition of the retaining walls.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

AMES MEADOW PERFORMANCE BOND

Planning Administrator Michelle Collette informed the Board that the Letter of Credit for the Ames Meadow subdivision would expire on October 8, 2003. The motion was made by Eliot to remind the developer to renew the performance bond. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

WALNUT RUN SUBDIVISION

The Board received a letter dated October 1, 2003 from the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) regarding the installation of the wrong type of street light in the Walnut Run subdivision. The motion was made by Wilson to send a

letter to the developer requesting that he contact GELD about replacing the street light with the appropriate fixture. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

OPEN SPACE BOND FUNDS

The motion was made by Wilson to send a letter to Governor Romney regarding funding the Open Space Bond bill passed by the State Legislature in 2002 to honor commitments made to landowners under the APR and other programs. Copies of the letter will be sent to State Senator Steve Panagiotakos and State Representative Robert Hargraves. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

PUBLIC HEARING – HIGH OAKS REALTY SPECIAL PERMIT MODIFICATION

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 High Oaks Realty Trust to modify special permit 2003-03, granted by the Planning Board on February 28, 2003. The special permit modification is to utilize the provisions of Groton Zoning By-law Section 218-23D Shared Driveways to construct a shared driveway serving Lots 11 and 12 as shown on the plan entitled, "Proposed Common Driveway Plan in Groton, MA. Prepared for High Oaks Realty Trust", prepared by David Ross Associates, dated October 2002, revised August 20, 2003. The proposed driveway is located on Assessors Lot 247-53 on the easterly side of Old Dunstable Road.

Vice Chairman Degen called the hearing to order. Clerk Perkins read the notice published in the September 19 and 26, 2003 issues of the *Groton Herald*. Applicant Robert Kiley, contractor Peter Bradley, and design engineer Dan Wolfe were present.

Mr. Wolfe explained that the Planning Board granted a special permit in February 2003 for construction of a shared driveway serving the two lots on Old Dunstable Road. He said when the Earth Removal Advisory Committee walked the site, the Committee expressed concern about the amount of land disturbance and excess material to be removed from the site associated with construction of the shared driveway as shown on the approved plan. Mr. Wolfe said the proposed modification is a better configuration of the driveway that addresses those concerns. The revised plan has a better balance of cut and fill than the original plan and requires less land disturbance.

Member Clements said he agreed with Mr. Wolfe's summary of the situation.

Member Wilson asked about the seven foot cut and fill limit. Mr. Wolfe said the same issue was discussed at the previous public hearing. The proposed driveway has a cut of 8 ft, as did the previous plan. Member Wilson said the revised plan makes sense because it is more balanced and will result in less erosion.

Mr. Bradley said the new plan also preserves existing trees on both sides of the driveway.

Member Eliot asked if the proposed driveway would be located on land that has been regraded or on the natural ground. Mr. Wolfe said the area would be cut on the left and filled on the right. The driveway will be compacted and the side slopes stabilized with boulders. Member Eliot recommended that JNEI review the revised plan.

Member Perkins asked for more detail on the guardrail to be installed along the left side of the driveway. Mr. Wolfe showed the detail on the plan. The guardrail will be constructed of pressure treated lumber.

Member Perkins asked for details on the retaining wall. Mr. Wolfe described how the large boulders would be used to stabilize the 2:1 slope on the uphill side and the 3:1 slope on the down hill side of the driveway. Member Perkins asked if the boulders would meet Mass Highway Standards. Mr. Wolfe said, "yes," and agreed to add a note to the plan.

Member Degen said he visited the site that day. There are substantial builders available on the site. He agreed that the plan should be sent to JNEI for review. The Board agreed.

Member Wilson asked about turn out areas for emergency vehicles. Mr. Wolfe said the driveway would be 16 ft wide with 2 ft shoulders. Member Perkins said the driveway must provide adequate access for fire trucks.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on October 9, 2003.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator

MC/lg