

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
NOVEMBER 20, 2003
MINUTES**

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

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

Member absent: Barringer

PUBLIC HEARING – ROCKY HILL SPECIAL PERMITS

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 Fox Meadow Realty Corporation for special permits to utilize the provisions of Groton Zoning By-law Section 218-26 Flexible Development and §218-27C Planned Multifamily Residential Development to construct a total of 84 dwelling units as shown on the plans entitled, “Special Permit Plan for Starter Home Phase in Groton, Massachusetts”; prepared by R. Wilson & Associates, dated September 16, 2003; Special Permit Plan for Over 55 Phase in Groton, Massachusetts”; prepared by R. Wilson & Associates, dated September 1, 2003; and Special Permit Plan for Rocky Hill in Groton, Massachusetts”; prepared by R. Wilson & Associates, dated September 16, 2003. The proposed development is located on Groton Assessors Map & Parcel 120-2.1, 120-2.2, 120-3, 121-48 and 236-24, located on the northerly side of Sandy Pond Road and easterly side of Boston Road.

Vice Chairman Degen called the public hearing to order. Clerk Perkins read the notice published in the November 7 and 14, 2003 issues of the *Groton Herald*. Applicant David Moulton, Attorney Robert Collins, and Drew Garvin of R. Wilson Associates were present.

Attorney Collins said there are seven applications pending before the Planning Board at the present time. All special permit applications were submitted prior to September 23, 2003 – two years from the date of concept plan approval by Town Meeting. Attorney Collins said there are three components to the proposed development – starter homes, empty nesters and detached single family houses. The plan is also subject to definitive plan approval and site plan review.

Planning Administrator Michelle Collette said the applications and deadlines are as follows:

APPLICATION TYPE	SUBMISSION DATE	DEADLINE	FINAL ACTION
Rocky Hill Preliminary Plan	14-Nov-01		
Rocky Hill Definitive Plan	14-Jun-02	31-Dec-03	
SPR 218-25 - 8 affordables	4-Sep-02		14-Nov-02
SP 218-27C - 8 affordables	24-Jul-02		18-Oct-02
SPR 218-25 - 12 starter homes	15-Jan-03	31-Dec-03	
SP 218-26 & 27C - 12 starter homes	15-Jan-03		
SP 218-26 & 27C - 12 empty nester	4-Mar-03		
SP 218-26 & 27C - 84 unit overview	18-Sep-03		
SP 218-26 & 27C - 39 detached	18-Sep-03		
SP 218-27C modification - 9 affordables	18-Sep-03		23-Oct-03

Attorney Collins submitted a letter requesting an extension of the Board’s deadline to act on the definitive plan and site plan review to April 30, 2004. This will give the applicant enough time to complete the process with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) prior to going forward with fully engineered plans.

The concept plan consists of a total of 650 acres with a substantial amount of land to be protected open space. There will be 12 starter homes on a six-acre parcel with a community sewage disposal system. The starter homes will have three bedrooms, but will be designed to add a fourth bedroom in the future. The development will be served by town water and natural gas. A buffer will be created between the rear of the houses and the powerlines.

Member Wilson said the design of the homes is very attractive, but he questioned the option to expand from three to four bedrooms. Mr. Garvin said the sewage disposal system is designed to accommodate four bedrooms per unit. Applicant David Moulton said the units would have 1600 sq ft floor area not including the garages.

Member Wilson said calling a four bedroom house a starter home is a stretch. The number of school children may be a problem if the Board considers the financial impact on the Town's ability to provide schools. This may be a budget buster for the Town.

Attorney Collins said the homes would start out with three bedrooms for young families. The houses can be expanded in the future as families grow.

Member Wilson asked what would prevent people from adding studies or other rooms to the houses. Attorney Collins said there would be covenants in place with the condominium documents. Member Wilson reiterated that the architectural design of the proposed homes is very attractive.

(Member Lewis arrived.)

Member Eliot said she agreed with the concern about the possibility of adding a fourth bedroom to the units. These are large starter homes. Attorney Collins said 1600 sq ft is not really very large. Member Eliot said she thinks of starter homes as having two bedrooms.

Attorney Collins said there is no other construction like this in Groton today except on lots of record in the Lost Lake area. This is a very modest development plan. Member Eliot said three bedroom units would impact the schools. Attorney Collins said they would eliminate the potential expansion to four bedrooms in the future if the Board wishes. He agreed to amend the special permit application.

Member Wilson suggested that the developer consider enlarging the size of the rooms instead of adding a fourth bedroom.

Member Eliot asked if the road system would be constructed in phases. Attorney Collins said there are multiple special permits tied to one definitive plan. A site area will be completed before the next phase of the development is begun. Attorney Collins said they would discuss the phasing plan with the Board during the definitive plan process.

Member Eliot asked how the lots would be graded. Attorney Collins said this is a sloped site so cut and fill adjustments will be needed. The proposed grading plans will be submitted to the Board for review. Mr. Garvin added that the road would follow existing contours.

Member Wilson asked about the slope. Mr. Garvin said it varies from 370 ft to 320 ft elevations so there is a 50 ft change in grade on the site.

Member Eliot asked if underground electric or gas lines would be installed under the powerlines. Attorney Collins said, "no." The gas main will be extended from Ayer to the Shaw's supermarket.

Member Wilson asked about the community sewage disposal system. Attorney Collins said it is subject to review by the Board of Health and the Department of Environmental Protection.

Member Eliot asked about landscaping. Attorney Collins said a detailed landscaping plan would be submitted during site plan review.

Member Eliot asked if private driveways would serve the units. Attorney Collins said, "yes."

Vice Chairman Degen read the letter dated January 30, 2003 from National Grid regarding work in the powerline easement area.

Member Perkins asked if there would be any sewage disposal systems in the open space area. Attorney Collins said there might be systems located in the open space area subject to conservation restrictions, similar to the Deer Haven subdivision.

Member Perkins asked how the water would drain from the site. She asked if the development could be designed to prevent runoff from flowing into the wetlands. She asked if there would be any restrictions on the use of lawn chemicals in order to prevent contamination of wetlands. Attorney Collins said NHESP will be sure runoff does not impact the resource areas.

PUBLIC HEARING – WEST THRONE MODIFICATION

(Vice Chairman Degen stepped down.)

The motion was made by Wilson to extend the deadline to act on the West Throne definitive plan modification to December 31, 2003 as requested by the applicant. The motion was seconded and passed with Clements, Eliot, Lewis, Perkins and Wilson in favor.

The motion was made by Wilson to continue the public hearing on December 11, 2003 at 7:30 PM. The motion was seconded and passed with Eliot, Lewis, Perkins and Wilson in favor;. Clements abstaining.

PUBLIC HEARING (con't) – ROCKY HILL SPECIAL PERMITS

Member Lewis said he disagreed with other members of the Board regarding the question of adding a fourth bedroom to the starter homes. He said a starter home should be able to be expanded as families grow. He asked why Board members did not want children in town. Educating children is part of being a community. Member Lewis said without children, there is no community. He suggested that people move to Florida if they do not like children.

Applicant David Moulton said perhaps six units could be expandable and six could not.

Vice Chairman Degen said he agreed with Members Eliot and Wilson that three bedrooms should be ample for starter homes. This will help keep these homes more affordable.

Vice Chairman Degen asked if the special permit application is being considered under the new Flexible Development provisions. Attorney Collins said, "yes." Vice Chairman Degen asked if a conventional plan was submitted. Attorney Collins said, "no," the Board voted that the Basic Number of Lots is 82 based upon the concept plan approved by Town Meeting. If you add the Drubin's lot and the ninth affordable unit, it brings the total number of units to 84.

Vice Chairman Degen said the plan must comply with the requirements of Section 218-26 and the roads should be upgraded to minor streets since they will serve more than 10 lots.

Vice Chairman Degen asked if any waivers would be requested. Attorney Collins said he did not know at this time because all the engineering work has not been completed.

Vice Chairman Degen read the comments from the Board of Health, the Police Chief, the letter dated November 18, 2003 from Oxbow Associates, and the letter from Attorney Collins requesting an extension of the Board's deadline.

The motion was made by Wilson to extend the deadline to act on the definitive plan and site plan review applications until April 30, 2004 as requested by the applicant. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on December 18, 2003 at 8:30 PM.

SPECIAL PERMIT DECISION – ROCKY HILL AFFORDABLE UNITS

Attorney Collins said the sewage disposal system for the nine affordable units fits on Lot 3 so an ANR plan to change lot lines would not be required. Mr. Collins said developer David Moulton is discussing the possibility of selling the

units to the Groton Housing Authority (GHA). If the GHA buys the units, they would all be rental units. If not, the units will be sold as condominiums.

Planning Administrator Michelle Collette noted that the concept plan approved at the September 23, 2001 Special Town Meeting stated that the units would be rentals. Attorney Collins said he and Mr. Moulton would meet with the GHA and update the Board on December 18, 2003.

SPECIAL PERMIT DECISION – A.L. PRIME ENERGY

The Board received a letter from Attorney James Gmeiner representing A.L. Prime requesting an extension of the Board's deadline to act on the site plan to December 8, 2003 and requesting that the Board not act on the special permit until all seven members are present.

The Board voted unanimously to extend the deadline to act on the site plan to December 8, 2003. The Board will act on the special permit at its meeting on December 4, 2003.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN RPF

The motion was made by Wilson to send a memorandum to the Board of Selectmen requesting the Planning Board's participation in the selection process for the RFP on the Town's telecommunication tower on Cow Pond Brook Road in order to optimize the Town's interests. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator