

GROTON PLANNING BOARD
APRIL 15, 2004
MINUTES

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

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

Members absent: Barringer and Lewis

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

The Planning Board continued the public hearing on the Rocky Hill special permits and definitive plan. Applicant David Moulton, Attorney Robert Collins, and Drew Garvin of R. Wilson Associates were present.

Starter Homes

Mr. Collins described the revised plan for the 12 starter homes. The access road is longer and not as steep as the road shown on the previous plan. The new road is 1100 feet long with a “T” turn-around as requested by the Fire Chief. The driveways have 2 to 8% grades. One house has been moved from the east to the west side of the street. The new design fits the land better than the previous design. Drainage calculations will be submitted with the site plan review application. Mr. Collins requested that the Board close the public hearing.

Vice Chairman Degen read the comments dated March 18, 2004 from the Fire Chief requesting a 45 ft “T” turn-around at the end of the road.

Member Wilson said the Board’s concerns have been addressed by the latest revisions to the plan. He said he is satisfied as long as the public safety officials approve the design of the road.

Member Clements asked if the new plan meets the Fire Chief’s requirements. Mr. Collins said, “yes.”

Member Perkins expressed concern that the “T” turn-around is located in someone’s driveway and may lose its viability as a turn-around area if the homeowner’s vehicles block it. Mr. Collins said they could modify the plan so a shared driveway is used to serve the two houses at the end of the road. The “T” turn-around will be separate from the driveways.

Vice Chairman Degen said he liked the new road layout and driveway alignments. He expressed concerns about the grade of the subdivision road at the intersection with the access road to the starter homes. Mr. Collins said the grade is about 3% in this area. Mr. Garvin said there would be a leveling area as required in the Subdivision Regulations.

Vice Chairman Degen asked if there would be sidewalks along the access road. Mr. Collins said, “yes,” on one side of the road only.

Member Eliot said there should be sidewalks throughout the development to encourage people to walk. Member Clements agreed.

Member Wilson said he would prefer trails through the woods rather than sidewalks. Mr. Collins said the sidewalk could meander through the site.

Member Perkins said many people do not like the public walking between their yards. She said she would rather have the sidewalk along the side of the road.

Member Eliot asked if there is a trail system for the overall development. Mr. Collins said, “yes,” trails will be located on the cart roads and there will be a trail at the entrance to the land to be donated to Massachusetts Audubon.

Vice Chairman Degen asked if the homeowners association would maintain the sidewalks. Mr. Collins said, “yes.”

Member Wilson asked if the sidewalks would be concrete or asphalt. Mr. Moulton said poured concrete sidewalks would be fine with him.

Mr. Collins said he would put together a letter with the list of changes discussed at the hearing for the Planning Board's decision.

The Board voted unanimously to close the public hearing on the special permit for the starter homes. The Board will act on the special permit at its meeting on May 13, 2004.

Housing for 55 and Older

Mr. Collins updated the Board on the housing for people 55 and older. The project will consist of 24 units in 11 buildings located in the center of the site. A loop road rather than a cul de sac will be used to provide access. The area will include amenities such as a pool and community center. A community sewage disposal system will be constructed to serve these units. The applicant will submit architectural plans as soon as the building locations are fine tuned.

Member Eliot said she would like to see sidewalks constructed in this area. She asked if garages would be included with the units. Mr. Collins said, "yes," with all the two-bedroom units. Mr. Moulton added, "and for all the three bedroom single-family units."

Mr. Collins said the knoll area would be flattened for roadway construction. Member Eliot said the applicant must submit the before and after topography. She said she wanted to look at a plan for the entire site. Mr. Collins said pre- and post-construction grades would be submitted. This is a separate special permit application for this portion of the development. Member Eliot noted that landscaping would be very important.

Member Eliot asked how many of the units will be affordable. Mr. Collins noted that the nine affordable units for this development would be located on Sandy Pond Road.

Member Perkins agreed that landscaping would be very important. She asked the developer to leave as many mature trees as possible. Member Perkins said a meandering sidewalk would be nice in this area of the development.

Member Clements asked if the homeowners association would be responsible for maintenance of the sidewalks. Mr. Collins said the homeowners would take care of the site, summer and winter.

Member Wilson asked if there would be any work in the buffer zone of the wetlands located in the northwest area of the site. Mr. Collins said, "no," the development was laid out so there is no work in the buffer areas. The applicant will file a Notice of Intent for one wetlands crossing for the main subdivision road.

Member Wilson said it is very important to delineate the edge of disturbance on the plan and in the field. Mr. Collins agreed.

Vice Chairman Degen said the site would be clear cut and leveled so landscaping will be critical. He noted that the units to the east do not have good views because they will be looking at the versa-lok wall at the edge of the Shaw's parking area. He requested that the developer provide sufficient plantings to screen the view of the wall.

Mr. Collins said the wall is 500 ft away from the housing so it will not be visible. Mr. Collins said the scale of the plan is 1"=120', so things appear closer on the plan than they are in the field.

Vice Chairman Degen requested that the applicant submit cross sections of the roadway elevations, the lot profiles, the building profiles, and the retaining wall profile. He asked the applicant to calculate the acreage for this area. Mr. Garvin said he would submit the calculations at the next meeting.

Member Eliot asked if the applicant would construct a pedestrian access to Shaw's. Mr. Collins said the topography is too difficult. The sidewalks should go along the subdivision roadways.

The Board voted unanimously to extend the deadlines to June 30, 2004.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on the special permits on May 13, 2004 at 7:30 PM.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on the definitive plan on May 27, 2004 at 8:00 PM.

SITE PLAN REVIEW – EMERSON HOSPITAL OFFICE SPACE

The Board reviewed the site plan submitted by Charles Giacchetto of By Design Construction to convert the third floor of the Emerson Hospital building to new medical offices. Applicant Charles Giacchetto, Attorney Robert Collins, and surveyor Stan Dillis were present.

Mr. Collins said the additional offices on the third floor would increase the office space by 2500 sq ft for a total of 9533 sq ft in the building. The by-law requires a total of 121 parking spaces and there are 121 spaces there today. A few minor site problems will be addressed including:

- The exit lanes from the Post Office site;
- The ponding at the CVS entrance;
- The lighting will be removed from the westerly façade of the building;
- A crosswalk from the Emerson building to CVS will be added;
- Trees in the center area planters will be replaced.

Vice Chairman Degen read the comments from the Fire Chief regarding the deficiencies with the sprinkler system that must be corrected. He also read comments from the Water Department, Building Inspector, Police Chief, and Board of Health. Mr. Collins said all the departments' issues will be addressed.

Member Wilson said he is pleased to see that the drainage will be corrected.

Member Perkins asked about installing granite curbing at the CVS entrance. Mr. Giacchetto said the whole corner would be repaved. Additional curbing would create more ponding. Mr. Dillis said the catch basin would be lowered to correct the problem.

Member Perkins said the European Beech shown on the plan is not on the site. Mr. Giacchetto said there is a flagpole in this location. The Planning Board approved the change when it was installed.

Member Eliot asked about the Fire Chief's concerns with the sprinkler system. Mr. Collins said Mr. Giacchetto does not own the CVS building now. If the Board makes it a condition of site plan approval, CVS will have to correct it.

Member Eliot requested that the applicant address the pedestrian walkway system between the Post Office, Emerson building, and CVS at this time. Mr. Collins said they would paint the crosswalks. Member Eliot said a pedestrian walkway should be provided because this is a real safety issue. Mr. Giacchetto agreed to construct a sidewalk in the access right-of-way and paint the crosswalk.

Vice Chairman Degen said he wanted the Building Inspector to confirm the number of parking spaces on the ground for compliance with the by-law.

Vice Chairman Degen expressed concern about using the parking spaces near the retention pond for snow storage. When the snow melts, sand flows into the basin and will clog the system. Mr. Giacchetto said the drainage system is cleaned annually.

Vice Chairman Degen said the crates in the back of CVS are not attractive and should be stored inside the building. Mr. Giacchetto agreed and will remind CVS.

The motion was made by Eliot to ask the Building Inspector to address outside storage at the CVS and to confirm the

number of parking spaces on the site. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

The Board voted unanimously to extend the deadline to May 31, 2004.

The Board voted unanimously to continue its review of the site plan on May 13, 2004 at 8:00 PM.

MILL RUN PLAN – OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Board met with Attorney Robert Collins to discuss outstanding engineering issues at the Mill Run Plaza site. These issues must be resolved before the Board will endorse the site plan. The Board received a letter dated April 13, 2004 from Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc. (JNEI)

Vice Chairman Degen said, as noted in the JNEI report, the site plan prepared by the engineer is not consistent with the site plan prepared by the architect. There are outstanding issues with the landscaping plan, and a Registered Structural Engineer must stamp the retaining wall plan. Mr. Collins said all these outstanding issues will be addressed.

Member Perkins asked about the emergency vehicle access road at the intersection of Arlington and Mill Streets. Mr. Collins said this was added at the request of the Fire Chief.

Vice Chairman Degen expressed concern about the retaining wall because the original plan showed a stonewall in this location. The versa-lok wall will run along Mill Street with a height of 2 ft to 4.5 ft. The Planning Board has not reviewed a plan submitted by a structural engineer. Headlight glare will increase with the height of the proposed retaining wall.

Mr. Collins said the planting variety in this area will be changed from 211 globe arbor vitae with a 2-3 ft height to 160 upright arbor vitae with a 3-4 ft height. Vice Chairman Degen agreed with the proposed change in the planting plan.

Vice Chairman Degen said a full geo-grid is required for the retaining wall. Since the original plan showed a stonewall, this is still an outstanding issue. Mr. Collins said it will be resolved.

Abutter Carrie Kneeland requested that the applicant plant 8 – 10 ft tall trees to address headlight glare. Mr. Collins said the change in plantings will address this concern.

Abutter Ron Alcott expressed concern about structural damage to his home caused by vibrations from construction activity on the site. Vice Chairman Degen said the Board does not have any jurisdiction in this area and recommended that Mr. Alcott contact his homeowners insurance company. Mr. Collins said he would inform his client about Mr. Alcott's concerns.

Carrie Kneeland said she saw the applicant pumping water from one side of Mill Street to the other during heavy rains. Planning Administrator Michelle Collette asked Ms. Kneeland to call the Planning Board office if she sees this happening again so enforcement action can be taken.

Brian Alcott asked what guarantee do they have that the plantings will survive. Vice Chairman Degen said the shrubs and trees are guaranteed for one year. The Planning Board can visit site in a year and call the plan in for compliance if necessary.

Abutter Mary Durham thanked the Board for its attention to all the details with this site. She said she would prefer a stonewall along Mill Street rather than a retaining wall. She asked if lighting would be turned off at night.

Member Wilson asked about the discrepancy between the architectural plans and the engineering plans. Mr. Collins said the architect's plans are correct. The engineering plans will be revised to be consistent. The revised plans will be submitted to the Board and JNEI within a week.

ACCESS ADEQUACY - HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

(Vice Chairman Degen stepped down.)

The Board met with June Johnson of the Groton Conservation Trust, Steve Boczenowski of Habitat for Humanity, and Attorney Robert Collins to discuss frontage and access adequacy for the lot on Wolf Trail.

Mr. Collins wrote a letter dated April 15, 2004 to the Building Inspector regarding the non-conforming lot of record with frontage on a paper street (Wolf Trail). Access to the lot will be from Whitney Pond Road to Wachusett Trail and across Wolf Trail. Ms. Johnson said Wolf Trail is considered an "e" road in Section 218-22A Frontage.

Member Eliot asked if the house would meet setback requirements. Ms. Johnson said the ZBA granted a variance for setback.

The motion was made by Wilson to amend the Board's previous access adequacy determinations dated December 9, 2003 and March 19, 2004 for Habitat for Humanity as follows:

1. The Board understands that legal frontage for Habitat for Humanity's lot is on Wolf Trail, an "e" road under Chapter 218, Section 22A(1)(e).
2. Access to the lot is from Whitney Pond Road to Wachusett Trail and across Wolf Trail.
3. A section of Wolf Trail, approximately the width of the private driveway from Wachusett Trail over Wolf Trail, will be improved to provide adequate access to the lot for the purpose of constructing a three-bedroom house.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

GROTON WOODS LOT RELEASE

The motion was made by Wilson to release Lots B-21 through B-47 and B-51 in the Groton Woods subdivision. ***The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.***

Meeting adjourned at 10:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator