

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**MAY 27, 2004**

**MINUTES**

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

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

Member absent: Degen

**MILL RUN PLAZA**

Attorney Robert Collins, representing Ryan Development, requested that the Board endorse the approved site plan. The Board received a report dated May 20, 2004 from Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc. (JNEI) indicating that all outstanding engineering issues have been resolved.

Planning Administrator Michelle Collette asked about the pathways from the parking lot to Mill Street. Mr. Collins said steps would be constructed as shown on the plan.

Abutter Lillian Alcott asked why a retaining wall would be constructed instead of the stonewall shown on the plan. Mr. Collins said there was always a retaining wall shown on the plan, but the developer changed the type of concrete block to be used. He submitted the "Keystone" specifications to the Board for its review and approval. A fence will be installed at the top of the wall as recommended by JNEI.

Member Barringer said he agreed that the fence should be installed along Arlington and Mill Streets because the wall is higher than three feet. Mr. Collins noted that the wall is only two feet high in some locations.

Member Perkins said, for aesthetic reasons, the fence should be installed along the entire length of the wall.

The Board discussed the type of fence to be installed. Mr. Collins suggested using a split rail fence. He said he would submit the fence specifications to the Board prior to installation of the fence.

Mrs. Alcott asked about water flowing from the site where the pathways should be. She asked why the Board was considering a split rail fence in this location.

Member Wilson agreed that a split rail fence would be out of character and would not last. He agreed that the applicant should submit a fence design to the Board for its review and approval. Mr. Collins agreed.

Connie Sartini asked about the grade in the location of the pathways. Mr. Collins said there is a two-foot grade change in this area.

Mrs. Alcott stated that the sidewalks will direct people to walk out into traffic on Mill Street. Member Wilson agreed that it makes no sense to put the pathways in locations without a sidewalk. Mr. Collins said the pathways were shown on the plan at the Planning Board's and Fire Chief's request. The Board approved the plan more than 14 months ago.

Planning Administrator Michelle Collette read the Condition #8 of the site plan approval, which states:

"As recommended by the Fire Chief, access from Mill Street shall be provided for non-vehicular fire apparatus."

Member Wilson said the Board should consult with the Fire Chief to be sure access meets his needs without inviting pedestrian access.

The motion was made by Lewis to endorse the site plan entitled, "Site Plan – Mill Run Plaza," prepared by LandTech Consultants, dated January 20, 2003 with revisions through April 26, 2004, with the following conditions:

1. The retaining wall shall be constructed of the Keystone Classic Split block submitted with the above-referenced site plan.
2. A design for the fence to be installed on top of the retaining wall, as recommended by JNEI, shall be submitted to the Planning Board prior to construction of the wall.
3. The Public Safety Departments must review and approve the pedestrian pathways from Mill Street to the site prior to construction of the retaining wall.

*The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

### **SPECIAL PERMIT DECISION - ROCKY HILL STARTER HOMES**

The Board discussed the draft of the special decision on the Rocky Hill starter homes. Mr. Collins was present.

The Board discussed whether the restriction limiting the houses to three bedrooms should be in the deed. Mr. Collins said the number of bedrooms is limited by the size of the sewage disposal system. Member Lewis objected to having such a restriction. Member Clements left the meeting.

Mr. Collins requested that the Board postpone voting on the special permit until more members are present.

The motion was made by Barringer to postpone the vote until June 17, 2004. *The motion was seconded and passed with Barringer, Eliot, Perkins, and Wilson in favor; Lewis abstaining.*

### **PUBLIC HEARING (con't) – ROCKY HILL SPECIAL PERMIT**

The Board continued the public hearing on the Rocky Hill special permits and definitive plan. Attorney Robert Collins requested that the Board continue the public hearing to June 17, 2004.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on June 17, 2004 at 7:45 PM.

### **COMMENTS TO MEPA – ROCKY HILL ENF**

The Board discussed its comments to MEPA on the Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the Rocky Hill development in Groton and the Stratton Hills development in Ayer.

Mr. Collins summarized the ENF for the Board. He cited that the applicant would be donating 400 acres of open space, a site for the Water Department's storage tank, land for the Groton Electric Light Department's offices, affordable housing units, etc. as benefits to the Town.

Members of the Board expressed concern about the environmental impact for the proposed topographical changes, especially in the area where the units for people 55 and older will be sited.

Member Lewis said this portion is only ten acres of a site where more than 400 acres of open space will be protected. He said the Board must look at the bigger picture.

The Board will review the draft of its comments to MEPA at its next meeting.

### **EMERSON HOSPITAL PARKING SPACES**

Attorney Robert Collins requested that the Board grant a waiver of the requested number of parking spaces at the Emerson Hospital office building and CVS site. He said the Building Inspector determined that 39 additional parking spaces are required by §218-23 as detailed in the memorandum dated May 18, 2004 from the Building Inspector. Mr. Collins stated that there are 122 spaces on the site today and it is never difficult to find a place to park. The by-law gives the Planning Board the authority to waive parking spaces if the circumstances warrant it.

Member Barringer asked if the new offices would be used for medical and dental offices. Mr. Collins said, "yes."

The motion was made by Lewis to waive the required number of parking spaces to 122. The Board will review the

parking requirements in one year and will require a modification of the site plan if the Board deems it to be necessary. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

### **SITE PLAN REVIEW – SEVEN HILL EXTENDED CARE FACILITY**

The Board continued its review of the site plan submitted by the Seven Hill Foundation to construct an addition on the existing hospital. Design engineer Robert Hitchcock and architect Richard Monohan were present.

Mr. Hitchcock submitted revised plans and a revised narrative dated May 27, 2004. He said the parking area has been changed, as requested by the Conservation Commission, so snow would not be plowed into the wetland area. The Fire Chief's concerns about access around the entire building have been addressed. The 14 ft wide access road will be increased to a width of 16 ft. Access to the site from Fairview Avenue will be one way, and access from West Street will be two ways. The design of the detention basin has been changed as recommended by Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc. (JNEI). They will continue to work with JNEI on stormwater management issues.

Mr. Monohan described the changes to the lighting fixtures and landscaping plan. More decorative trees and denser evergreen plantings have been added to the plan to enhance the buffer between the facility and Fairview Avenue. New trees will be planted in the parking lot and along West Street. A wheelchair pathway will be constructed around the site.

Mr. Hitchcock presented an analysis of traffic during the three shifts. The number of parking spaces will be increased from 108 to 135 to accommodate the need for parking during shift changes.

Member Lewis said the 16 ft wide access is better than 14 ft. He expressed concern about drainage flowing onto the rail trail. He suggested that the applicant consider installing a subsurface drainage system under the parking lot. Mr. Monohan said they will continue working with JNEI on drainage issues.

Member Lewis said he would prefer less lighting of the parking lot overnight. He said motion detectors could be used to minimize lighting. Member Perkins noted that the applicant must comply with OSHA standards and light the parking area for its employees.

Member Wilson said the impact on abutters should be minimized, including the abutters who are located on the other side of the rail trail. He said 16 ft high poles may not be the right height, but he will wait until the photometric diagram is submitted for the Board's review. He agreed that drainage is a critical issue with this site.

Member Perkins agreed that drainage issues, including runoff from existing roadways, is critical. She asked if the road drains into the parking lot now. Mr. Hitchcock said, "yes," but this will be corrected with the improvements to the site. Member Perkins noted that the new drainage system must be in place prior to removing the pipe that drains runoff from West Street.

Mr. Monohan said the new retention basin would be constructed first.

Member Perkins asked when the new trees would be planted. Mr. Monohan said he did not know yet. Member Perkins said she would like the applicant to work with the Fire Chief to save the sycamore tree.

Member Barringer asked about the parking lot on Hillside Avenue. Mr. Monohan said some of the parking spaces will be removed. Member Barringer asked that the limit of clearing be shown on the plan. Mr. Hitchcock agreed.

Member Barringer asked about the wooded buffer along the rail trail. Mr. Monohan said there is a 30 ft buffer between the site and the paved rail trail. The plan has been designed to minimize visual impact on the rail trail.

Member Barringer asked if the applicant would construct a pathway to the rail trail. Mr. Monohan said the applicant has no intention of constructing such a trail because it does not want to incur the liability.

Abutter Kathleen Kummer of Westbrook Lane expressed concern about the drainage swale at the northern end of the

site and water flowing onto the rail trail. She said the lights will be visible from her home. Mr. Monohan said the lights will be pointed downward onto the parking lot. There will be no other lights to be installed, which is the minimum needed for basic safety.

Abutter Sheila Flynn asked if the retention pond would be covered. Mr., Hitchcock said it would be open.

Member Wilson noted that the Site Plan Review regulations require that there be no net increase in runoff from the site.

Abutter Thomas Fleming of Fairview Avenue asked about snow removal. Mr. Hitchcock said the snow will be hauled off the site whenever there is a heavy snowfall. Mr. Fleming requested that snow banks not be plowed onto his yard. Member Lewis said Fairview Avenue is a public way plowed by the Town. Chairman Eliot suggested that Mr. Fleming call the Highway Surveyor about his concerns.

Abutter Donna Fleming asked about the proposed screening of the parking lot. Mr. Hitchcock pointed out the location of the ten trees to be planted in this area. Mrs. Fleming asked about the expansion area of the trees. Member Barringer said about 80 ft. Chairman Eliot said the trees would be 7 to 8 ft tall.

Member Perkins requested that the trees be staggered for a more natural look. Mr. Hitchcock agreed. Member Perkins asked if clusters of other trees could be added. Mr. Hitchcock agreed to add a mix of species to the planting plan.

Member Lewis asked about access for construction vehicles, trucks, and school buses. Darrell Howe of Macmillan and Company, site contractor, said they would try to minimize impact on abutters. They will park vehicles elsewhere whenever possible. There will be a construction trailer at the site. He welcomed abutters to let the contractor know about any problems during construction.

The Board voted unanimously to extend the deadline to July 16, 2004 as requested by the applicant.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the site plan review on July 1, 2004 at 7:30 PM.

#### **GIBBET HILL RESTAURANT – LIGHTING PLAN**

Joshua Webber submitted a request to modify the lighting plan for the Gibbet Hill Restaurant. Member Barringer asked if there would be sufficient lighting for pedestrians. Mr. Webber said, “yes.”

The motion was made by Wilson to approve the lighting plan dated February 9, 2004 with the condition that the plan be reviewed by JNEI. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

#### **COMMENTS TO THE SELECTMEN – CHAPTER 61 RELEASE**

The Board considered the request submitted by the Macmillans to release 12 acres on Jenkins Road from Chapter 61. The land is listed as a third-tier priority on the Land Acquisition Priority List.

The motion was made by Perkins to the Board of Selectmen not exercise its right of first refusal under Chapter 61 for the above-referenced property. *The motion was seconded and passed with Barringer, Eliot, Perkins, and Wilson in favor; Lewis abstaining.*

#### **MEETINGS WITH MARK BOBROWSKI**

The motion was made by Barringer to post the June 2, 2004 department meeting with Mark Bobrowski to discuss Groton Residential Gardens at a Planning Board meeting. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

The Board will meet with Mark Bobrowski on June 9, 2004 to discuss proposed zoning amendments to be presented at a Special Town Meeting in the fall. The Board will discuss accessory apartments and scenic corridor provisions.

Member Wilson stated that he would like to revisit the Rate of Development by-law and proposed it again in the fall.

**MINUTES**

The motion was made by Lewis to approve the minutes dated April 22, 2004. *The motion was seconded and passed with Eliot, Lewis, Perkins, and Wilson in favor; Barringer abstaining.*

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

The motion was made by Lewis to enter into executive session to discuss the Brooks Orchard litigation and that the Board would not return to open session. *The motion was seconded and passed by roll call vote with Barringer, Eliot, Lewis, Perkins, and Wilson in favor.*

The motion was made by Lewis to end executive session and adjourn the meeting. *The motion was seconded and passed by roll call vote with Barringer, Eliot, Lewis, Perkins, and Wilson in favor.*

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette  
Planning Administrator

