

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
SEPTEMBER 23, 2004
MINUTES**

Chairman Eliot called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM in the Town Hall
Members present: Eliot, Clements, Degen, Lewis, Perkins and Wilson
Member absent: Barringer

PLANNING BOARD LIAISON REPORTS

Weed Management – Member Lewis reported that the Board of Selectmen decided to combine the Weed Management Committee and Great Ponds Advisory Committee. The Weed Management Committee is still trying to eradicate the invasive weed Cabamba and may try using the weed harvester again.

SITE PLAN REVIEW REVISION – GIBBET HILL RESTAURANT

The Board met with Josh Webber who requested a change in the landscaping plan for the Gibbet Hill Restaurant. Mr. Webber said he would like to plant Hatfield Yews along the edge of the parking lot to prevent headlight glare. His landscaping contractor advised that the Hatfield Yews would be a better choice than the trees shown on the plan because the slope is steep in this area.

Member Perkins asked about the height of the yews. Mr. Webber said they start off at a height of three feet. Approximately 130 yews will be planted along the edge of the parking lot.

Member Degen agreed that the plantings shown on the site plan would be difficult to plant on the slope. He expressed concern about headlight glare in the area where cars turn around. He suggested planting the yews every three feet with breaks for snow plowing. Member Degen suggested planting six-foot arbor vitae in the areas where snow would be plowed. Mr. Webber agreed.

The motion was made by Degen to approve a change in the landscaping plan for the westerly edge of the parking lot by deleting the plantings shown on the site plan and replacing them with three-foot high Hatfield Yews, planted three feet on center, and six or seven foot high Dark American Arbor Vitae, planted four feet on center, in the snow disposal areas. *The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.*

HOUSING STRATEGY PLAN

The Board met with Selectmen Virginia Wood and Peter Cunningham to discuss the Housing Strategies Plan prepared by the Housing Task Force and submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Selectman Wood said the Town submitted the plan to DHCD on August 6, 2004, but DHCD has not finished reviewing the plan to date.

Selectman Wood said there are several action items under the Planning Board's jurisdiction including increasing the percentage of affordable units required under Flexible Development and proposing an accessory apartment by-law. In addition, Selectman Wood said the Planning Board should consider adopting acceptable design standards for affordable housing plans.

Member Perkins noted that the Housing Task Force would sponsor a Saturday workshop for open discussion with residents on affordable housing issues.

Chairman Eliot noted that the Board should look at modifying Section 218-27B so it could be used as an alternative to Chapter 40B.

Member Lewis expressed his concerns about mixing family and elderly housing. He stated his opposition to using the land on Cow Pond Brook Road for affordable housing because of the close proximity to the transfer station, highway garage, and police department's firing range. He said there may be potential liabilities for residential use in this area.

Member Degen said the mixed-use development on Station Avenue would be a real opportunity for the Town to provide some additional rental units.

The Board scheduled a meeting to work on design guidelines for affordable housing on October 21, 2004 at 8:00 PM. Selectmen Wood said the Housing Task Force would schedule a public forum in the near future.

The Board thanked the Selectmen and Housing Task Force for all the effort that went into preparing the housing plan for submission to the DHCD.

MEETING WITH MARK BOBROWSKI

The Board met with its consultant Mark Bobrowski to develop proposed zoning amendments including accessory apartments and scenic corridors.

Mr. Bobrowski presented a second draft of the accessory apartments by-law with revisions suggested by the Planning Board at its meeting on June 9, 2004. He noted that the required owner-occupancy provisions could be enforced by the Building Inspector.

Member Lewis expressed concerns about the parking requirements in the by-law. Planning Administrator Michelle Collette said the parking by-law contains similar provisions. The Board suggested that the language in the by-law be drafted so that the parking requirements can be waived when circumstances warrant it.

The Board discussed whether some accessory apartments should be subject to a deed restriction so the units would count toward the Town's required 10%. The Board debated the advantages and disadvantages of this provision. The Board agreed it could provide a sample deed restriction for applicants who are interested.

The Board discussed how to permit the construction of accessory units on hammerhead lots or lots created under the provisions of Flexible Development in effect from 1980–2003 because such lots are limited to single-family use. Mr. Bobrowski said allowing accessory apartments in flexible development subdivisions would require modifying the original special permit granted by the Planning Board. In that case, it would make sense for the Planning Board to be the Special Permit Granting Authority, rather than the Zoning Board of Appeals, for the accessory apartment by-law.

Al Collins asked if the number of bedrooms would be limited in accessory apartments. Mr. Bobrowski said the units would be limited to 800 sq ft and the number of bedrooms would be governed by Title Five. However, the Board could decide to limit the provisions to one bedroom.

Mr. Bobrowski will revise the proposed by-law and forward the changes to the Board.

The Board, Historical Commission members Al Collins and Robert DeGroot, and Mark Bobrowski discussed the development of a new Scenic Corridors By-law and a substantive amendment to the existing Scenic Roads provisions adopted in 1976. The Board reviewed a draft map prepared by Applied Geographics, Inc. (AGI) based upon a Scenic and Distinctive Landscapes Survey prepared by the Department of Environmental Management in the 1980's.

Mr. Bobrowski suggested that the Board select only a few of the most important scenic roads for the Scenic Corridors by-law. Construction within 150 ft of such Scenic Corridors would require site plan review by the Planning Board. If structures are located greater than 150 ft from the road, then site plan review is not required.

Member Degen said he would like to continue working on the Hilltop and Slope by-law as well as the Scenic Corridors by-law for presentation at the Annual Town Meeting. The Board agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Planning Administrator

