

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
SEPTEMBER 18, 2008
MINUTES**

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

Members present: Perkins, Burke, Capes, Giger, Hess, and Wilson

Member absent: Barringer

SITE PLAN REVIEW – GROTON SCHOOL BIOMASS BOILER HOUSE

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, §§ 9 and 11, M. G. L., the Groton Planning Board held a public hearing to consider the application submitted by Groton School, under the provisions of Groton Zoning By-law Section 218-25 Site Plan Review, for approval of the Level II site plan entitled, “Groton School Bio-Mass, Farmers Row, Groton, MA,” prepared by Samiotes Consultants, Inc., dated August 25, 2008. The site plan shows the proposed renovation of and addition to the boiler house in order to accommodate a bio-mass boiler. The proposed project is located on Assessors’ Map 219, Parcel 2, located on the easterly side of Farmers Row and southerly side of Peabody Street.

Chairman Perkins called the public hearing to order. Member Giger read the notice published in the August 29 and September 5, 2008 issues of the Groton Herald. Hale Smith of Groton School, Attorney Robert Collins, Architect Preston Richardson, Andrew Truman of Samiotes Consultants, and Jeff Forward of Richmond Energy Associates were present.

Attorney Collins said the proposed plan replaces the existing oil-fired burner with a new bio-mass boiler. The new boiler will be located in the existing turn-of-the century building with a tall chimney. The proposed renovation includes the restoration of the building. The present boiler burns Number 6 crude oil. The new boiler will burn wood chips. The proposed addition is designed to accommodate photo-voltaic cells on the roof.

Attorney Collins reminded the Board that Groton School is exempt from zoning and site plan review. He acknowledged that the Board has authority over size, bulk, height, parking and setbacks under Chapter 40A, §3.

Architect Preston Richardson presented the plans showing a small-scale, individual building with three elements:

1. The restoration of the existing boiler house and entire building envelope;
2. The bio-mass boiler including pollution control and ventilation equipment;
3. The storage facility for the wood chips.

Mr. Richardson said the existing chimney will remain.

Engineer Andrew Truman described the site plan including three bays for trucks delivering wood chips and a new loading area. There will be one truck delivery per day at the most and about 2-4 trucks per week.

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Mr. Truman noted that the Conservation Commission is reviewing the proposed loading area and stormwater management system because they are located in the wetlands buffer zone.

Jeff Forward described the bio-mass fuel process as a local, renewable, sustainable method of reducing green-house gases. He said the wood chips are a by-product of local timber harvest.

Mr. Forward said there are 30 schools in Vermont, three in New Hampshire and two in Maine that use this technology. In addition, the Vermont State Capital Building, the New Hampshire State Offices, and Mount Wachusett Community College in Gardner, MA all use bio-mass boilers. Groton School will buy its chips locally from timber harvests in MA, NH, VT, ME and CT.

Mr. Forward said the chips are feed by a hydrological system that unloads in 20 minutes. The boiler burns hot at 2000° Fahrenheit so there will be no smoke, only steam. State of the art air pollution controls will be installed. The ash (which is like lime) that is generated is benign and will be used on the playing fields.

Attorney Collins said Groton School has presented its plans to the Historic Districts Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Sustainability Commission, and the Board of Health. The school is exempt from zoning under Chapter 40A, section 3, because it is an educational use. However, the school would like to receive the Board's comments and recommendations.

Chairman Perkins read letters from the Board of Health, the Water Department, and the Historic Districts Commission.

Members of the Board commented that this is a very exciting project.

Member Giger asked where the ashes would be stored. Mr. Forward said they would be stored in metal containers until they are cool. Only one trash can of ash is generated for every tractor trailer truck of wood chips.

Member Giger asked about the provisions for fire suppression. Mr. Richardson said the building would have fire sprinklers and that the fire suppression system would be built into the mechanical and electrical systems.

Member Burke asked about the detention forebay in the stormwater management system. He asked if drainage calculations were prepared for this area. Attorney Collins said, "yes." He added that the stormwater management system will improve conditions because there is no system there now.

Member Burke asked about the existing tanks for oil storage. Attorney Collins said they are inspected annually by the Fire Chief. Number six fuel oil does not leak because it is too thick.

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Member Capes asked about the second stack on the site. Mr. Richardson said it is for the gas boiler.

Member Capes asked if there is any potential noise problem. Mr. Forward said there would be no audible noise.

Chairman Perkins asked about the work near the wetlands. Attorney Collins said the Conservation Commission is reviewing the plan.

Chairman Perkins asked if there would be any additional lighting. Attorney Collins said the two bays will have box lights and there is a light fixture at the front door. Mr. Richardson said there is an existing street light that provides lighting in this area.

Member Capes asked about the elevation of the water table. Mr. Richardson said the foundation walls would be two feet thick to compensate for any buoyancy. Mr. Collins added that the project must also receive permits from the Department of Environmental Protection.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the hearing on September 25, 2008 at 8:30 PM.

MONARCH PATH NOISE COMPLAINTS

The Board had received a number of complaints from abutters about noise and vibration from constant jack hammering of bedrock. Member Giger said the Board should ask Mr. Masalehdan to explain his options to the Board such as blasting rather than jack hammering. Member Burke noted that the developer must prepare a survey of nearby homes to use as a baseline if he is going to blast.

The motion was made by Wilson, seconded by Giger, to send a letter to Mr. Masalehdan requesting that he attend a Planning Board meeting with his expert to address measures to mitigate noise at the Monarch Path subdivision. *The motion passed unanimously.*

PUBLIC HEARING - PHOENIX CONSTRUCTION, TAVERN ROAD

At the request of the applicant, the Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on October 23, 2008 at 7:30 PM.

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Board will interview candidates interested in serving on the Design Review Committee at its regular meeting on October 2, 2008.

PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENTS

Accessory Apartments - The Board reviewed and edited the language for the proposed Amendment to the Accessory Apartment by-law. The Board agreed that such apartments could be detached as well as attached and that they would all be subject to the grant of a special permit by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

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The motion was made by Hess, seconded by Wilson, to file the proposed Accessory Apartment amendment with the Town Clerk and to advertise the public hearing. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

Wind Energy Conversion Facilities – The Board reviewed the latest draft of the Wind Energy Conversion Facilities amendment. The Board agreed to change the name “utility scale” to “large scale” and to send the draft to Town Counsel for review.

The motion was made by Burke, seconded by Wilson, to file the proposed Wind Energy Conversion Facilities amendment with the Town Clerk and to advertise the public hearing. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

FLEXIBLE DEVELOPMENT – The Board reviewed the draft of the Flexible Development amendment prepared by Ray Lyons.

Member Hess drafted a list of criteria to be used to permit an increase in density. He cautioned the Board that this amendment is a major effort that requires a considerable amount of discussion.

Member Giger said the working draft by Ray Lyons causes him some concern.

Member Burke agreed that a serious philosophical discussion is needed before the Board goes forward with the proposed amendment.

The Board decided not to submit the Flexible Development amendment at this time.

MINUTES

The Board voted to approve the minutes of August 7, 2008 and August 21, 2008.

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Town Planner