

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
JANUARY 8, 2009
MINUTES**

Vice Chairman Capes called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM in the Town Hall

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

Member absent: Wilson

PUBLIC HEARING – CRYSTAL SPRINGS ESTATES SPECIAL PERMIT

The Board held the continuation of the public hearing to consider the special permit application submitted by High Oaks Realty for approval of the Crystal Springs Estates subdivision plan. Applicant Robert Kiley, landowners Robert and Mary Gamlin, Attorney Robert Collins and surveyor Stan Dillis of Ducharme & Dillis Civil Design Group, Inc. were present.

Mr. Dillis presented the latest revisions to the plan based upon review by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). Thirteen (13) acres will be set aside as open space including a 50 ft buffer around the site. The open space is about 55% of the total land area. The Department of Fish and Game will hold a conservation restriction on the open space as required by NHESP. There will be a common area for residents to gather at the end of the roadway as requested by the Planning Board. He summarized the list of requested waivers.

Mr. Dillis showed the Planning Board a map of the proposed subdivision and surrounding open space. He said the Gamlins once owned 135 acres, and only eight (8) acres will be developed as shown on the proposed Crystal Springs plan. The remaining 127 acres is permanently protected open space. The Board thanked the Gamlins for their generosity and good stewardship of the land for many years.

Mr. Dillis reviewed the waivers requested in his September 2, 2008 letter.

1. **§ 381-9D(1) Requirement for a park** - Mr. Dillis said the park is not necessary since the donation of open space exceeds the requirements.
2. **§ 381-10D(5) Cut and fill greater than seven (7) feet** – Mr. Dillis said allowing great cut and fill will allow a safer location for the curb cut on Old Dunstable Road.
3. **§ 381-11D Catch basins at all low point** – Mr. Dillis said the drainage system would incorporate LID design techniques.
4. **§ 381-12A(1) Installation of water main for future connection to water system** – Mr. Dillis said the water system is a great distance from the site so it is highly unlikely that public water could be extended to this area.
5. **§ 381- 12A(2) Installation of water connections to each lot** (see #4 above)
6. **§ 381-13A Sidewalks** – Mr. Dillis said a stonedust trail would be provided instead of sidewalks.
7. **§381-13D Curbing** - Mr. Dillis said the drainage system would incorporate LID design techniques.

8. **§218-260(1) 50 ft buffer around the perimeter of the site** – Mr. Dillis said this waiver is no longer necessary since the 50 ft buffer is shown on the plan as requested by NHESP.

(Chairman Perkins arrived and chaired the remainder of the meeting.)

Member Barringer commented that children may need a sidewalk to walk to the bus stop at the intersection of Old Dunstable Road.

Town Planner Michelle Collette asked if the public would have access on the stonedust foot path. Mr. Dillis said, "no, only the homeowners."

Chairman Perkins asked who would own the open space. Mr. Collins said the open space would be publicly owned with a conservation restriction. The 50 ft buffer would be part of individual lots with a conservation restriction.

Mr. Dillis noted that the issues with Mr. Stevenson's easement had been resolved.

Mr. Collins stated that the Gamblins have been good stewards of the land and have donated a significant amount of property in the surrounding area abutting the Wharton Plantation.

Member Capes asked about the amount of the cut and fill waiver. Mr. Dillis said the waiver would be two feet at the most and would result in safer sight distance on Old Dunstable Road.

Member Hess asked about the common area at the end of the road. Mr. Dillis said it would be a gathering spot for the neighborhood. The area has access to trails and the surrounding open space.

Member Hess asked who would maintain this area. Mr. Dillis said the area includes a rain garden as part of the drainage system. Mr. Collins said the area would be maintained by the Highway Department when the road becomes a public way. Mr. Collins said creating a homeowners association would be cumbersome.

Member Hess asked about the diameter of the cul de sac. Mr. Dillis said it is a 50 ft diameter circle.

Member Hess asked if access to the lots would intrude on the open space. Mr. Dillis said shared driveways could be used to avoid crossing the open space.

Member Burke asked about the proposed use of LID techniques. Mr. Dillis said it would be a combined conventional-LID drainage system with swales along the edge of the road and bioretention areas. There will be a rain garden in the cul de sac and in the common area.

Member Burke asked about the foot print of the houses. Mr. Dillis said about 70' x 30'.

Member Burke asked if significant trees had been identified yet. Mr. Dillis said the trees would be shown on the definitive plan. Member Hess said this is a neighborhood in the woods, so the trees should be preserved, if possible. Member Burke said he understands that some trees must be removed for construction, but mature trees should be left to enhance the site.

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Member Giger said the stonedust path should connect with a future sidewalk on Old Dunstable Road. There should be an open area at the intersection so the children would have a safe place to wait for the school bus. He said he would like to see shared driveways rather than individual driveways to reduce impervious surface.

Member Giger agreed that the applicant should preserve as many trees as possible and leave the yards natural. Mr. Gamlin agreed. Mr. Collins said building envelopes will be shown on the definitive plan.

Member Burke asked who would be building the homes. Mr. Kiley said some would be on speculation, some would be custom built by different builders. He said he agreed that the yards should be natural.

Member Barringer asked if the subdivision road could be constructed without the cut and fill waiver. Mr. Dillis said, "yes," the road would meet sight distance requirements. However, the sight distances would be better in the location that requires a cut and fill waiver.

Member Barringer said he likes the common area, but the lots in the road should have direct frontage on the paved road so they will have the ability to access the road. He said the new plan is superior because it preserves more trees. He thanked the Gamlins for their generous land donations.

Abutter Maurice Accomozzo stated that the Gamlins have conserved their land for more than 30 years. He urged the Board to grant the waiver to allow a safer curb cut location. He said the speed limit on Old Dunstable Road is 25 mph, but cars exceed 40 mph.

Suzanna Black asked if lawn irrigation systems would be allowed with an LID drainage system. Mr. Dillis said lawn watering is not addressed under the guidelines. Member Giger said if the lawns are more natural, there would be less lawn to mow and water.

The Board voted unanimously to close the public hearings.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION APPLICATION

Michael Roberts presented the Historical Commission's application for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to the Planning Board. Mr. Roberts said the funds would be used to perform an archaeological and historic preservation survey. He requested that the Planning Board write a letter of support or co-sponsor the application.

Member Barringer asked about the projected cost of the project. Mr. Roberts said about \$20,000 to \$40,000. The application will request \$30,000 with an additional \$5000 for contingencies.

Member Hess asked how the Town would benefit from such a study. Mr. Roberts said the study would identify significant cultural landscapes and structures. The Town would have a better understanding of its heritage. It is another layer in the planning tools because the Town would be able to protect its historic resources.

The motion was made by Hess, seconded by Barringer, to co-sponsor the Historical Commission's application for CPA funding for the archaeological survey. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES

The Board discussed possible warrant articles to submit for the Annual Town Meeting. The Board agreed to resubmit the articles on Wind Energy Conversion Facilities and Accessory Apartments. The Board discussed possible changes to the Wind Energy Conversion Facilities provisions and will wait for a recommendation from the working group prior to advertising a public hearing.

Member Burke suggested that the Board amend the Schedule of Use Regulations as part of the Accessory Apartment amendment. At the present time the entry in the Schedule of Use Regulations states:

| Use | R-A | R-B | B-1 | M-1 | C | O | P |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|---|---|
| 2-family detached dwelling, provided that its external appearance is not significantly different from a single-family dwelling | Y | Y | Y | N | N | N | N |

The text should read "2-family attached dwelling, provided that its external appearance is not significantly different from a single-family dwelling."

The Board discussed amending the Flexible Development provisions to include density bonus incentives to encourage increased density in appropriate areas. The Board agreed that more public participation and consensus building is needed before such an amendment is presented at Town Meeting.

MINUTES

The Planning Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of December 4, 2008 and December 18, 2008.

STATION AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT

Selectman Anna Eliot informed the Selectmen and the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) Commissioners would meet on January 29, 2009 to review Capstone's revised proposal for Station Avenue. The Planning Board will post a meeting so a majority of members can attend the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Town Planner