

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
MARCH 19, 2009
MINUTES**

Chairman Perkins called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM in the Town Hall
Members present: Perkins, Barringer, Burke, Capes, Giger, Hess, and Wilson

PRE-SUBMISSION REVIEW – GROTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The Board met with Attorney Robert Collins, Surveyor Stan Dillis, and Betsy Alter of the Groton Community School for pre-submission review of the plans to build an addition on the existing school building located 110 Boston Road.

Attorney Collins said the school is exempt as an educational use under Chapter 40A, section 3, so Site Plan Review is not required. Attorney Collins said the applicant is requesting that the Board accept a Level I site plan. He said the school was constructed in 1984 at the present site. However, the school has been in existence in various locations since 1944. The present 2.3 acre site is located on Route 119. The existing building has many deficiencies. Administrative space is limited and there is no multi-purpose meeting space. The school does not have a library. The building is 5670 SF today. The proposed additions will add 2000 SF and 4400 SF at both ends of the building. The renovated building will have a total of 12,130 SF with the additions. A new drainage system and new landscaping will be installed. There are 50 parking spaces at the site today based upon one space for each classroom and two spaces for non-teaching staff. A total of 20 people work there now. Attorney Collins asked the Board to approve a Level I submission.

Member Capes noted that the proposed addition will more than double the floor area. Attorney Collis said, "yes," but only one new classroom will be added. Member Capes asked about increase in enrollment and staff. Ms. Alter said there are 150 students at the school now, and there will be no increase in enrollment.

Attorney Collins reiterated the exemption under Chapter 40A, section 3, limits the Board's jurisdiction to size, bulk, parking and access. The applicant will submit more information than is legally required.

Member Burke asked about ownership of the land. He noted that there are a number of cross easements shown on the plan. Attorney Collins said the school owns the lot with shared access to Route 119.

Member Burke asked about water and sewer. Ms. Alter said the site has public water and an on-site sewage disposal system.

Member Burke asked who licenses the school and what the maximum number of students is. Ms. Alter said the State licensed the school. There were 180 students in the past, but there are 150 students at the present time.

Member Giger said he preferred that the Board require a Level II site plan with a request for waivers.

Member Barringer asked if a lighting plan would be submitted. Attorney Collins said, "yes," if required by the Board.

Member Barringer asked about the holding tank. Attorney Collins said it is for stormwater management.

The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Wilson, to allow a Level I site plan for the Groton Community School as requested in the letter dated March 12, 2009 from Attorney Collins. In addition to the items included in the letter, the Board requires submission of a light plan, detailed information on the easements, information on the enrollment, and a landscape and irrigation system plan. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

STATION AVENUE UPDATE

Selectman Joshua Degen informed the Planning Board that the Board of Selectmen voted to reject Capstone's proposal for the redevelopment of the Groton Electric Light Department's (GELD) property. The Selectmen and GELD Commissioners will meet on March 30, 2009 to discuss issuing a new RFP. The Selectmen will sponsor an article at the Special Town Meeting on April 27, 2009 for engineering design for the road and infrastructure in Station Avenue.

The motion was made by Burke, seconded by Barringer, to send a letter to the Selectmen and GELD strongly urging them to issue a new RFP and that the draft be circulated for review by the Planning Board members prior to the Planning Board meeting on Monday, March 23, at 6:45 PM for presentation at the Selectmen's meeting that evening.

The motion was made by Giger, seconded by Barringer, to hand deliver the letter to GELD and the Groton Herald on Tuesday, March 24, 2009. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

The main motion passed unanimously.

PRE-SUBMISSION REVIEW – NASHOBA VISION

The Board met with Dr. Michael O'Neill and Kevin Hardimann of David E. Ross Associates for pre-submission review of the site plan for 148 Main Street.

Member Capes disclosed for the record that Dr. O'Neill is his eye doctor.

Mr. Hardimann said Dr. O'Neill plans to expand the interior space of the offices by adding 7-8 feet to the rear of the building. The floor area is greater than 1000 SF so it triggers a Level II site plan review. However, there are no other changes to the site. He requested that the Board grant a waiver to allow a Level I submission.

Member Giger asked about the curb cuts on both sides of the building. Mr. Hardimann said they provide vehicular and pedestrian access.

Member Burke asked about review by the Historic Districts Commission (HDC). Mr. Hardimann said HDC review is in process.

Member Hess asked if there are any other occupants in the building. Dr. O'Neill said, "no." He stated that the proposed addition will bring the building up to code and will include installation of a ramp for accessibility.

Mr. Hardimann said there are 13 spaces on site now. Section 218-23 requires 30 spaces.

The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Giger, to require a Level II site plan.

Member Wilson said the Board should encourage small businesses rather than making the process more difficult.

Member Burke said he supports the use of older homes for business use. The Board can perform the same type of review under Level I.

March 19, 2009

Page 3 of 3

Member Barringer said he, too, supports small businesses, but the site is located in a densely developed area with traffic issues.

Member Hess said the volume of the business will not change – there will be the same number of rooms and the same number of patients. This is a thriving business located in the Historic District.

Member Barringer said the Board has more control over the medical office with a Level II Special Permit. He asked if Dr. O'Neill was the sole practitioner. Dr. O'Neill said, "yes."

Member Giger took exception to the Board being characterized as pro- or anti-business. The Board must look at the application and do the job it is elected to do.

Member Wilson said many businesses find it difficult navigating the various Boards and permitting process. The Planning Board should promote and enable local businesses. A Level II site plan review is more time-consuming and expensive.

Member Barringer said he does support local businesses. However, the Board must perform its due diligence.

The motion to require a Level II submission was defeated with Barringer, Capes, and Giger in favor; Members Perkins, Burke, Hess and Wilson opposed.

The motion was made by Wilson, seconded by Hess, to require a Level I site plan submission. The motion passed with Members Perkins, Burke, Hess and Wilson in favor; Members Barringer, Capes, and Giger opposed.

GROTON TRADING COMPANY

The Board met with Jim Ryan of Groton Trading Company for the annual compliance review as required in the approval of the site plan on March 17, 2008.

Mr. Ryan informed the Board that the café had closed about a month ago. He said they are working to re-open the café and understand that they must submit a plan to provide access for the handicapped. He requested an extension of the compliance review.

The motion was made by Burke, seconded by Wilson, to extend the one-year compliance review of the Groton Trading Company to September 19, 2009. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN RFP

The Board reviewed the draft RFP for the Comprehensive Master Plan. The project will be advertised in May, proposals will be due in June, and the selection will be done by September for the Fall Town Meeting in October.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Town Planner