

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
JUNE 4, 2009
MINUTES**

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

STATION AVENUE INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The Board considered the Selectmen's conceptual plans for the proposed improvements to Station Avenue. Design engineer John Schmid of Nitsch Engineering, landscape architect John Copley of Copley Wolfe, and historic preservationist Virginia Adams of PAL Associates were present.

Mr. Schmid said Nitsch Engineering has completed the survey work. The right-of-way from Main Street to the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) property is 46 ft wide and then narrows to 33 ft from GELD to Court Street. The proposed improvements will comply with the design guidelines and vision for Station Avenue. The road will be designed to meet the Subdivision Regulations "minor street" standards with a 22 ft pavement width. The sidewalks will be 7-8 ft wide with a pedestrian friendly streetscape. Mr. Schmid said the 25% design must be submitted by the end of August for a Public Works Economic Development (PWED) grant.

Member Hess asked if all the work is within the public right-of-way. Mr. Schmid said, "yes." Member Hess asked about the through road to Broadmeadow Road. Mr. Schmid said Broadmeadow Road was not part of the scope of services for this project.

Member Perkins asked whether parking is part of the scope. Mr. Schmid said the Fay, Spofford and Thorndike (FST) study addressed parking. The FST recommendations will be used as a guide for the Station Avenue infrastructure project.

Member Giger asked about utilities. Mr. Schmid said all utilities will be underground. Member Giger asked about Verizon and other private utilities. Mr. Schmid said they would reach out to the private utilities as part of this project.

Member Wilson asked how many parking spaces would be required. Mr. Schmid said they are looking at various options that comply with the Station Avenue Design Guidelines.

Member Barringer asked about traffic calming. Mr. Schmid said there would be traffic calming features at the intersection of Main Street and Station Avenue and the road would narrow down to a width of 20 ft which is the minimum for emergency vehicles.

Member Burke said on-street parking is important. He asked what the provisions are for new curb cuts. Mr. Schmid said curb cuts would be included for existing properties.

Member Burke asked if the funding agencies would approve the use of Low Impact Development stormwater management techniques. Mr. Schmid said the Town would be able to defend the use of LID techniques as sustainable.

Chairman Capes asked if Nitsch Engineering would have time to present a detailed summary and plans to the Board prior to submission to PWED at the end of August. Mr. Schmid said, "yes."

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Mr. Webber said there are many constraints on the project from the existing right-of-way. He asked why the plan does not include all the properties in the Station Avenue Overlay District.

Ted Roselund asked what would happen on both sides of the road after Station Avenue is improved. He said this is a historically significant area and the Town must consider more than just the street.

Member Barringer said the Town's willingness to improve the public infrastructure encourages developers to build in this difficult economy. There is no right-of-way to Broadmeadow Road at the present time.

Mr. Webber said he did not think the Town should improve the infrastructure. He said the private developers should do the work as part of their development plans. Dan Barton, Historic Districts Commission chairman and member of the Design Review Committee, said the proposed plan is an extension of the Town Center. He said he supports putting the utilities underground. The project will enable the future redevelopment of Station Avenue Overlay District.

GELD Commissioner Chris Christie expressed his support for the proposed plan to improve Station Avenue. However, he stated that he cannot speak for GELD.

Mr. Webber said it is a waste of money to improve Station Avenue now if it has to be torn apart later. He said any new water mains should include mains for potable and non-potable water. He said the Town must look at how the area will be developed.

Member Hess said the installation of the infrastructure on Station Avenue allows other things to happen in the future. He asked if work is limited to the existing right-of-way. DPW director Tom Delaney said the Town must own the property in order to apply for funding.

Member Barringer said installation of basic infrastructure does not preclude extending it at a later date.

SITE PLAN REVIEW – GROTON WELLNESS CENTER

(Chairman Capes and Member Wilson stepped down.)

The Board continued its review of the site plan submitted by Dr. Evans for the bistro at the Groton Wellness Center. Dr. Evans submitted a letter dated June 3, 2009 regarding hours of operation.

Member Barringer asked about seating. Dr. Evans said the bistro will be strictly take-out. Seating is only for patients and staff.

The motion was made by Perkins, seconded by Burke, to approve the modification of the site plan for the Groton Wellness Center, located at Mill Run Plaza, Units 493A-D, to allow the "Bistro" to be operated as a take out restaurant without seating as requested in the follow-up letter dated June 3, 2009.

Section 218-23C requires a total of 31 parking spaces for the combined professional office and bistro. On June 5, 2008, the Planning Board determined that 28 parking spaces would be sufficient to serve the Groton Wellness offices and bistro serving clients only. At its meeting on June 5, 2009, the Board determined that the 28 parking spaces are adequate to accommodate the professional office and take-out bistro based upon the following findings:

1. The Bistro is an incidental use and not the primary use of the premises located at 493 Main Street, Units A, B, C & D.
2. The total number of parking spaces at Mill Run Plaza is 217 as approved by the Planning Board in the site plan review modification dated February 21, 2007.
3. There are only three vacant units totaling 4189 square feet which is less than 10% of the total 49,000 square feet at Mill Run Plaza.
4. The applicant submitted evidence that approximately 100 parking spaces are empty and available at any time of the day. Additionally, the Board has not received reports from public safety officials regarding parking problems at Mill Run Plaza.

The Board approved the modification of the site plan with the following conditions:

1. If there is a proposed change of use, change of occupant, change in the hours of operation, or any expansion of the Bistro operations or in the amount of allocated space beyond what was described in the June 3, 2009 letter from Dr. Evans, the applicant shall meet with the Planning Board, pursuant to Section 218-25F. The Planning Board shall determine if a modification to the site plan is required.

The motion passed unanimously.

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN RFP'S

The Board received an inquiry from a prospective bidder on waiving the professional liability insurance for the Comprehensive Master Plan.

The motion was made by Hess, seconded by Wilson, that the Board waive the professional liability insurance requirement contingent upon confirmation from the Inspector General that there is no risk to the Town.

Board members expressed concern that there may be issues if the consultant has financial problems or fails to complete the work in a timely manner.

The vote was defeated with Hess in favor; Capes, Barringer, Burke, Giger, Perkins and Wilson opposed.

CRYSTAL SPRINGS ESTATES - COMMENTS TO MEPA

The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Giger, to send comments to MEPA in support of the Crystal Springs Estates subdivision. The comments will cite the plan's compliance with the regulations and acknowledge the generosity of the Gamlins' gift of 130 acres of protected open space. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Town Planner