

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
JULY 30, 2009
MINUTES**

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

Others present: Selectmen Cunningham, Dillon, Eliot and Schulman; GELD Commissioners Lindemer, Hersh, and Christie; Town Manager Mark Haddad; GELD Manager Kevin Kelly and Executive Assistant Tammi Lemire; DPW Director Tom Delaney; John Schmid and Rafael Urbina of Nitsch Engineering

SELECTMEN'S PUBLIC HEARING – STATION AVENUE INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The Planning Board met with the Board of Selectmen and Groton Electric Light Commissioners to review the proposed Station Avenue Infrastructure plans prepared by Nitsch Engineering.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Peter Cunningham called the public hearing to order by reading the notice published in *The Groton Herald* on July 24, 2009.

Design Engineer John Schmid presented the plans with two options for Station Avenue:

Option C-1A shows all the proposed improvements within the existing right-of-way which is 46 ft wide from the intersection of Main Street and Station Avenue to the GELD property and 33 ft wide from GELD to Court Street.

Option C-1B shows the proposed improvements within the existing right-of-way from the intersection of Main Street and Station Avenue to GELD with the addition of a cul de sac on GELD's property. Traffic would be one-way from GELD to Court Street with the exception of Buckingham's buses.

Both plans showed turning lanes onto Main Street with traffic calming "bump-out" areas. Pedestrian crosswalks will be elevated above the traveled way. Sidewalks will be installed on both sides of Station Avenue from Main Street to GELD. One sidewalk will be installed from GELD to the crosswalk providing access to the Nashua River Rail Trail (NRRT). The plans both allow sufficient room for Buckingham buses to turn the corner and pull out on the section of Station Avenue between GELD and Court Street. Underground utilities are shown on both plans. The proposed stormwater management system will use Low Impact Development (LID) techniques.

Town Manager Mark Haddad asked how the configuration would change if Buckingham moves. Mr. Schmid said the plan could be modified and the right-of-way could be widened.

Member Burke asked if Buckingham had seen the plan yet. Mr. Schmid said, "no," but Selectman Anna Eliot, Town Manager Mark Haddad, Town Planner Michelle Collette met with Kim Buckingham and David Elliot to discuss the project about two or three weeks ago. Mr. Schmid said the group also met with GELD once and with the Design Review Committee on several occasions.

Town Planning Michelle Collette read the comments submitted by the Design Review Committee:

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The DRC has met at Town Hall twice during the past month to review work by the consultants. We have reviewed our comments and questions with the consultant team directly, and have most recently provided some written and graphic remarks in response to their updated work.

At this time, the DRC recognizes that the present effort represents a 25% design level, as defined by Mass Highway standards. As such, the DRC is satisfied with the design progress made thus far, and is in support of schematic plans that stay within the legal right-of-way and which provide appropriate access to existing properties along the corridor.

On behalf of the Design Review Committee, thanks for your continued work with respect to Station Avenue.

Member Wilson asked about other parcels in the 12-acre Station Avenue Overlay District that are not accessed by the proposed roadway plan. Mr. Schmid said the plan only includes land owned by the Town and does not show any work on private property. The plan can be modified when future development projects are submitted.

Mr. Schmid said the 25% design plan must be completed by the end of August for submission to the Public Works Economic Development (PWED) program for funding. The remaining 100% design work and all permits are required before PWED will release the funds. He said a Notice of Intent would be submitted with the Conservation Commission as soon as possible.

Selectman Cunningham asked if the project has to be on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) list to qualify for funding. DPW director Tom Delaney said the project is not eligible because it is a local road.

Selectman Dillon asked about the loss of parking spaces on Main Street. Mr. Schmid said two parking spaces would be lost on Main Street, but more parking spaces would be created on Station Avenue.

Member Giger said the parking spaces near the fire station must be reserved for on-call fire fighters.

Town Manager Mark Haddad said the plan would have more definition at later stages – this proposal is only 25% design.

Member Wilson asked about establishing a partnership with landowners and whether the Town could submit a more conceptual plan. Mr. Schmid said PWED requires a 25% design plan with the application; the plan could be modified in the future. The Town can only submit an application for work on town-owned land. Mr. Schmid added that it is more difficult to make changes at the 75% design stage. Town Manager Mark Haddad said the Town would work with MassHighway and the PWED program throughout the process. The proposed work must stay within the existing right-of-way.

Selectman Eliot asked if the crosswalk on Main Street would be moved closer to the Groton Historical Society's driveway. Mr. Urbina said he did not think that would be a problem.

Selectman Eliot asked if the crosswalk on Main Street could be elevated. DPW Director Tom Delaney said the crosswalk on Main Street could not be elevated but it could have a different type of surface.

Mr. Delaney said Town officials and Nitsch Engineering will meet with Ann Sullivan of MassHighway on Friday, August 7, 2009, to discuss details about the project.

Town Manager Haddad asked what information should the Board of Selectmen provide at this time. Mr. Schmid said he needed to know whether to submit Plan C-1A or C-1B to PWED. Mr. Haddad said Plan C-1A with work in the existing right-of-way is the only option until GELD makes a decision about moving. Selectman Cunningham asked if the Town submits Plan C-1A now, could the plan be changed in the future. Mr. Schmid said the first 600 ft is the same on both plans. Nitsch Engineering must know which plan to submit by August 15, 2009 in order to meet with September 1, 2009 deadline. Selectman Cunningham asked if the Town could go with Plan C-1B at a later date. Mr. Schmid said we could ask MassHighway and the PWED program.

Member Giger said there are problems with Plan C-1B because the Town may want to allow two-way traffic beyond GELD in the future. Mr. Schmid said the Town is locked into the existing road configuration at the present time. Changes can be made in the future at the developer's expense.

Landowner Steve Webber asked why the Town would bother with the project now if it is going to be redone in two years. Mr. Schmid said the plan works with the roadway as it exists today.

Member Hess said the proposed infrastructure is the supporting sub-structure below the ground that will enable future development. Mr. Schmid agreed and added that above-ground features like trees and lights could be moved by a developer in the future. The proposed utility work includes subsurface work such as upgrading the water system, placing wires underground, and treating stormwater. Connection stubs would be provided for domestic water and water for fire protection. The sewer system will be changed.

GELD Commissioner Lindemer asked why the Town would use PWED funds to build a road that may be changed in the future. Selectman Cunningham said the future changes will be superficial and the Town would work with the developer to make those changes. Mr. Schmid said the future changes would be above-ground, not below ground.

Member Burke said it is preferable to have all the work done at once, but that is not likely to happen. Modifications to the plan will be required along the way.

Member Giger said a conduit for communications utilities must be provided at this stage. Mr. Schmid said he spoke with representatives at Verizon and Charter and both companies support the propped plan.

GELD Commissioner Christie asked about impact on wetlands and other environmental resources. Mr. Schmid said the plan will use LID techniques such as rain gardens and pervious sidewalks. Town Planner Michelle Collette said the Town received an Urban Stormwater Improvement Grant for James Brook from Main Street to the end of Court Street. The Town could apply for funding for future phases such as the area where Station Avenue crosses James Brook.

The Selectmen voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on Monday, August 11, 2009 at 7 PM.

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MONARCH PATH – FIELD CHANGE REQUEST

The Board received a letter dated July 20, 2009 from TF Moran and a report dated July 24, 2009 from Nitsch Engineering regarding a proposed field change at the Monarch Path subdivision. The developer is proposing to end the sidewalk at the driveways on the corner lots (Lots 1 and 11) rather than at the intersections of Monarch Path and Gilson Road.

Board members expressed concerns about the safety of children walking in the street and waiting for the school bus in the street at the intersection.

The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Perkins, to deny the request to terminate the sidewalk on Monarch Path as detailed in the letter dated July 20, 2009 from TF Moran. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

ROCKY HILL – FIELD CHANGE REQUEST

The Board received a letter dated July 15, 2009 from Attorney Robert Collins and a report dated July 24, 2009 from Nitsch Engineering regarding the field change at Rocky Hill subdivision. The developer would like to install the sidewalk on Mockingbird Lane on the opposite side of the street. William Maher of Nitsch Engineering stated that he had no concerns with the change and it would not create stormwater runoff problems.

The motion was made by Burke, seconded by Perkins, to approve the change to the sidewalk location to the interior of Mockingbird Lane in the Rocky Hill subdivision as requested in the letter dated July 15, 2009 from Attorney Collins. ***The motion passed unanimously.***

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The Board reviewed the draft interview questions for the comprehensive master plan. The Board will interview three consultants on August 13, 2009.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Town Planner