

**GROTON PLANNING BOARD
OCTOBER 29, 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

ACADEMY HILL AFFORDABLE UNITS

The Board met developer Bruce Wheeler and Attorney Louis Levine to discuss the affordable housing units to be constructed in the Academy Hill subdivision. The developer had agreed to construct two of the affordable units for occupancy by October 31, 2009. However, the Board of Health agent has issues with the community sewage disposal systems which caused a delay in issuance of the building permit. Attorney Levine said they are meeting with the Board of Health to resolve any outstanding issues.

Chairman Capes asked when the developer expects the two affordable units to be completed. Mr. Levine said the developer will complete three affordable units by May 31, 2010. He would like to begin construction of 35 single-family homes by that date. After May 31, 2010, one affordable unit will be constructed for every four single-family units. All ten affordable units will be completed before 63 market rate units are completed. Mr. Levine said his letter dated October 29, 2010 states that the three affordable units and adjacent units must be completed by May 31, 2010. The previous ratio of affordable to market rate units was 1:9. After May 31, 2010, the ratio will be 1:4.

Member Burke asked about the number of units built to date. Mr. Wheeler said seven units are occupied and four others are finished. Mr. Levine said 15 permits have been issued for single-family houses to date, and only seven have been occupied. Mr. Wheeler added that the remaining eight units include four that have been completed and four that are still under construction.

Member Hess asked if the ten affordable units are all townhouses. Mr. Levine said, "yes," they are in duplexes or triplexes. He reiterated that three affordable units will be completed by May 31, 2010.

Member Giger said the developer's letter must be clear that the market rate units attached to the affordable units are not included in the ratio. Mr. Levine stated that there will be a total of 94 units: 70 single-family, 14 market rate units in duplexes or triplexes, and 10 affordable units in duplexes or tri-plexes.

Member Giger asked if there are any obstacles to having the proposed sewage disposal system up and working by May 31, 2010. Mr. Levine said they have some issues with the Board of Health agent, but they have an approved sewage disposal system permit in hand. They will meet with the Board of Health on November 2, 2009 to resolve any outstanding issues. Mr. Wheeler said he is confident that he can deliver the three affordable units by May 31, 2010.

The motion was made by Perkins to accept the letter dated October 29, 2010 from Bruce Wheeler of Academy Hill Realty Trust with the condition that the terms are contingent upon approval of the Board of Health. The motion was seconded by Barringer.

Member Giger expressed concern that the letter dated October 29, 2009 should be re-written for clarity so it would be understood by all parties in the future.

The motion passed with Barringer, Burke, Capes, Hess, Perkins and Wilson in favor; Giger opposed.

ROCKY HILL FIELD CONDITIONS

Attorney Robert Collins met with the Board to request that additional manholes be installed in Mockingbird Lane in the Rocky Hill subdivision. The proposed change is necessary due to the presence of ledge in the roadway.

The motion was made by Perkins, seconded by Barringer, to accept the additional manholes as a field change with the condition that the accurate location of the manholes be shown on the as-built plans. The motion was passed unanimously.

CRYSTAL SPRING ESTATES CONSERVATION RESTRICTION

Attorney Robert Collins met with the Board to discuss the proposed conservation restriction on a portion of the lots in the Crystal Spring Estates subdivision. He said the smaller lots shown on the approved subdivision plan do not meet with nitrogen loading requirements of Title Five, so the lot size must be increased. Mr. Collins said he would submit an Approval Not Required plan showing the larger lots with a conservation restriction on the rear portion of the lots.

Chairman Capes asked if there are any alternatives. Mr. Collins said the applicant could apply for a variance through the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), but it is difficult to get a variance for new construction.

Member Burke asked if the location and design of the sewage disposal systems were the same. Mr. Collins said, "yes," the only difference is the nitrate-loading calculations.

Member Giger asked if the conservation restriction on the lots would impact Mr. Stevenson's ability to use his land or easement. Mr. Collins said there would be no impact on Mr. Stevenson's rights.

Town Planner Michelle Collette asked if public access would still be allowed on the existing cart path. Mr. Collins said, "yes."

Member Barringer noted that Mr. Stevenson's easement crosses private lots. Mr. Collins said, "yes," the easement provides a border. Member Hess said it is an awkward overlap to have the easement in the area subject to the conservation restriction.

Member Perkins said she did not have a problem with the cart path in the restricted area, but she did have a problem with public access on private property.

Mr. Collins said he would submit the ANR plan for the Board's endorsement prior to the closing on November 12, 2009.

COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The Board met with Selectman and Economic Development Committee member Anna Eliot, Conservation Commission members Bruce Easom, Marshall Giguere, and Craig Auman, Historical Commission members Michael Roberts and Al Collins, and Sustainability Commission member Steve Webber.

Chairman Capes said the Town Meeting voted to fund the Comprehensive Master Plan with the amendment that the Town Manager should work with the Planning Board to find a more cost-effective solution. He said the Board would like to combine efforts with other Town Departments in the planning process.

Conservation Commission Chairman Bruce Easom said the Conservation Commission must update its Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) every five years in order to apply for state grants. Conservation Commission member Craig Auman said the integration of the master plan and OSRP makes sense provided the time frame works for both plans. A draft of the OSRP must be completed by the end of 2010.

Member Burke said this is an ideal opportunity for everyone to work together on both plans. The combined public participation process will give a truer sense of what the Town wants.

Mr. Easom asked if the Conservation Commission would be required to solicit quotes for the OSRP. Member Burke said the Commission might want to investigate the costs of preparing the OSRP as a stand-alone plan or in combination with the Comprehensive Master Plan.

Michael Roberts of the Historical Commission, Sustainability Commission, and Community Preservation Committee said the Comprehensive Master Plan must consider sustainability issues. In addition, the Community Preservation Plan references the goals and objectives of the master plan and uses it as a factor in recommending funding for projects.

Member Hess asked about the interaction with the consultants at Communities Opportunities Group. Member Burke said the Board could establish different sub-committees to work on the different elements of the plan.

Michael Roberts said the goal of the Sustainability Commission is to get everyone on the same page. He noted that sustainability can be explained using the "three-legged stool" with the local economy, environment and social issues as the three legs of the stool.

Al Collins of the Historical Commission said sustainability should be integrated into every element of the Master Plan. The Historical Commission is guided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Comprehensive Master Plan, and the Community Preservation Plan. He said the Historical Commission will work with the Planning Board as part of the team.

Member Perkins said the historical inventory and archaeological study funded by Community Preservation funds must be integrated into the Master Plan.

Mr. Easom said the focus on sustainability is pre-mature. He asked what the Town wants the plan to be. Member Perkins said the Master Plan has to reflect what the whole Town wants – not just what public officials want.

Chairman Capes said the Economic Development Committee is very supportive of the master plan effort. Selectmen Eliot said the economic development element is a high priority. She said the Economic Development Committee will assist the Planning Board in gathering data.

Chairman Capes said the Board should get together with other departments and meet with the consultants to revise the scope of services. Member Burke said the scope should be expanded to include the OSRP, if everyone agrees.

October 29, 2009

Page 4

The Board will meet with the other departments and Communities Opportunities Group within the next two weeks.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Land Use Director/Town Planner