

GROTON PLANNING BOARD
January 27, 2011
MINUTES

Chairman Capes called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM in the Town Hall

Members present: Capes, Barringer, Giger, Parent, and Perkins

Members absent: Burke and Wilson

PRE-SUBMISSION REVIEW – CROSSROADS PLAZA MODIFICATION

The Board met with Realtor Frank Hartnett, Jr., design engineer Douglas Hartnett of Highpoint Engineering, and Thomas Hartnett to discuss possible changes to the approved Crossroads Plaza site plan. The property is located at 788 Boston Road. The Board granted two special permits in 2006 – one for Water Resource Protection Districts and one for Site Plan Review. Both special permits were renewed in 2008 and in June 2010.

Frank Hartnett said he is representing the owner, Nam Hang, LLC, at the meeting. He said the economy has prevented the approved site plan from moving forward because it is too expensive to permit. He said the owner would like to revise the plan to make the site more developable.

Engineer Douglas Hartnett said the proposed revisions will reduce the number of buildings from four to three by eliminating the restaurant. The proposed uses will be retail and a bank. The total gross area of the buildings will be reduced from 33,000 SF to 17,700 SF. The number of parking spaces will be reduced from 131 to 71. The sewage disposal system will be reduced by 60%.

Douglas Hartnett said the applicant will request a waiver requesting that the Board not require architectural review at this time because the end-users are not known. They will also request a waiver of the internal landscaping islands in the parking lot. The revised site plan is more traditional retail space with the buildings facing the street and parking in front of the buildings.

Member Barringer said he would agree to postpone architectural review pending tenant selection but would not waive it altogether.

Member Perkins said she preferred the previous plan with the parking in the rear of the buildings rather than in front. She said she would like to see more landscaping in the front of the buildings.

Member Giger asked about the type of businesses in addition to the bank. Frank Hartnett said they would be looking for general retail. There is not enough sewage capacity for a gym or a 250-seat restaurant.

Member Giger said there was a considerable amount of effort, by both the applicant and the Planning Board, put into the previously permitted site plan. He said he did not want to lose the benefits achieved in the past plan and encouraged the applicant to use the same building envelopes. He said he would like to see a successful outcome without damaging the aesthetics. The Board made a commitment to the neighborhood. For example, the traffic flow was designed to avoid cut through traffic, landscaping along the road was key, and Low Impact Development (LID) techniques were used for stormwater management. Other Board members agreed with Member Giger's comments.

Douglas Hartnett asked about peer review of the revised plan since the traffic and amount of pervious surface would be decreased. He said they expect that a peer review would still be required for drainage, but not for traffic.

The Board said it would not require a new traffic study but would be looking for traffic counts. Traffic flow and circulation would be reviewed and peer review of the new calculations and plans would be required.

DRAFT GOALS

The Board discussed the draft goals prepared by the eight Advisory Groups and compiled by Community Opportunities Group (COG). The Board decided to combine the following:

Community Facilities & Services

Continuously assess the needs for citizen services and institute appropriate planning to meet desired goals. Citizen services include recreation, senior services, library services, transportation services, public meeting spaces, and health services.

Strengthen Groton's commitment to municipal facilities and infrastructure by addressing needs such as energy conservation, technology, accessibility, waste water management, and deferred maintenance.

Develop and implement an all-inclusive ten-year capital improvements plan that includes such needs as construction of new central fire station, repair of the Squannacook dam, energy efficient renovation of Legion Hall, and construction of centralized storage facility. *(To be considered with Land Use # 4)*

Consider regionalization to meet certain municipal needs provided that all such proposals receive thorough analysis from town leadership and continuously review relationships, roles and responsibilities between town departments, regional service organizations, public and private schools, private non-profit affiliates and various support organizations. *(To be considered with Housing # 2)*

Invest in the expansion, renewal and revitalization of parks, athletic fields, greenways and waterways by improving access, encouraging use, and enhancing environmental quality. *(To be considered with OSR #3)*

Economic Development

Create the perception that Groton is a business-friendly town.

Create a detailed incentive plan to encourage new businesses and retain current businesses.

Expand and apply the overlay district (Chapter 43D) concept to other areas of Groton.

Define what economic development means for the people of Groton and educate the community on the importance and impact of economic development to Groton.

Create a comprehensive database of all Groton businesses.

Transportation

Adopt the Complete Streets philosophy

Create alternative network by connecting roads/sidewalks with trails and paths *(To be considered with Transportation # 5 and Land Use # 3)*

Identify rail road and former rail road right of ways for acquisition or use

Designate a resource dedicated to finding alternative funding to implement Master Plan Transportation goals

Explore motorized multi-passenger modes of transportation for Groton residents *(To be considered with Transportation # 2 and Land Use # 3)*

Historic & Cultural Resources

Adaptive reuse of Historic properties

Use of Historic and Archeological resources as tools for economic development and education

Foster pride in Groton's Historic and Cultural resources

Use Historical and Archeological studies for regulatory analysis of development projects

Expand Historical Districts to reflect property boundaries and add a West Groton Historic District

Housing & Residential Development

To encourage housing that meets the needs of people at all stages of their lives, income levels, and ability levels. To encourage housing that promotes racial, ethnic and cultural diversity. *(To be considered with Land Use # 5)*

Explore opportunities to regionalize and provide housing and social services with surrounding communities *(To be considered with CFS # 4)*

To provide options for future use of existing homes in a manner that fits within the physical landscape of Groton and complements the attributes of Groton's New England town character.

To encourage the continuation of Groton's character as a town of individuals and families who feel that they are a part of a community

Encourage good architectural design and a greater variety of housing styles *(To be considered with Land Use # 6)*

Land Use

Adopt Land Use provisions that promote thoughtful and sustainable growth and maintain an appropriate mix and intensity of uses in village center, agriculture, forested, institutional, and open space lands, cohesive neighborhoods, and places of commerce. *(To be considered with OSR # 1)*

Encourage sustainable land use patterns which balance environmental and economic interests and the Town's ability to efficiently provide services.

Establish land use policies that encourage greater connectivity and promote alternative transportation modes and less reliance on single occupancy automobile travel. *(To be considered with Transportation # 2 and Transportation # 5)*

Coordinate the Town's capital improvements and infrastructure expansion with the goals of the Master Plan *(To be considered with CFS # 3)*

Encourage and support housing diversity through local efforts that are proactive and consistent with the goals of the Master Plan *(To be considered with Housing # 1)*

Cherish the character of the Town and embrace its future by formulating development regulations which foster creative and thoughtful design that is respectful of the environment and compatible with the community context and architectural vernacular. *(To be considered with Housing # 5)*

Open Space and Recreation

To ensure that Groton's wildlife habitat, greenways, agricultural, forested, and recreational open spaces are protected, enhanced and expanded for present and future generations. *(To be considered with Land Use # 1)*

To promote the efficient and effective management and maintenance of open space and recreational parcels in Groton. To use stewardship and parcel specific plans to achieve the best status for each piece of land (e.g., identify those parcels best used for agriculture, or open habitat versus forested habitat etc.)

Improve, enhance, and diversify passive and active recreational activities for all Groton residents. *(To be considered with CFS #5)*

Natural Resources, Water, and Energy

Natural environment

Identify and protect the remaining critical lands

Prevent degradation of the landscape

Water resources

Protect all existing and potential municipal well sites

Understand and protect the natural hydrologic systems

Minimize water use and maximize ground water quantity and quality

Energy

Minimize energy use

Maximize the use of renewable energy

Plan now for reduced availability, and increased but volatile cost, of energy

Agriculture

Ensure that the local agricultural community will be able to produce enough affordable, high-quality food to meet a greater percentage of the town's future needs.

Improve general health and quality of life by supporting a sustainable and robust local agricultural community.

Change public attitudes about food and farming (to be discussed).

The Board will expand on the goals prepared by the NRWE Group by extracting a sentence from the group's vision statement so the format is similar the other elements. Footnotes will be used to define terms such as "Complete Streets" and Chapter 43D.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Land Use Director/Town Planner