

**PLANNING BOARD  
MARCH 15, 2012  
MINUTES**

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

Members present: Burke, Barringer, Giger, Parent, Perkins and Wilson

Members absent: Capes

**PUBLIC HEARING – COMPREHENSIVE MASTER PLAN**

The Board held the continuation of the public hearing to consider adopting the “Groton Master Plan, Town of Groton, Massachusetts, Prepared for Groton Planning Board – Land Use Department, Prepared by Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Dodson Associates, Ltd; and Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, Inc.,” dated September 2011.

Chairman Burke called the continuation of the public hearing to order. The Board distributed the attached handout with an executive summary of the Comprehensive Plan with the eight elements required in MGL Chapter 41, Section 81D:

- Natural Resources, Water & Energy
- Cultural and Historic Resources
- Open Space & Recreation
- Transportation
- Land Use
- Housing & Residential Development
- Economic Development
- Community Facilities

Chairman Burke described the public participation process including work done by the eight Advisory Groups, meetings with stakeholders and Town Departments, three well-attended public forums, and a number of working sessions. The Master Plan is a vision of the Town’s direction and guides policy decisions. The draft Master Plan was available for comment in April 2011 and the final plan was published in September 2011. The Board received comments on both the draft and final plan by letter, email, and via the comment section on the Town’s website. The Board held the first session of the public hearing on January 19, 2011. This hearing is the second session.

Chairman Burke said the Planning Board has the responsibility and authority to adopt the Master Plan in accordance with MGL Chapter 41, section 81D. The Board will present the Master Plan to the Spring Town Meeting for endorsement by the voters. The Master Plan is not a static document and will be amended over time. The Master Plan provides recommendations and sets priorities. Public engagement is an important part of the process.

Chairman Burke opened the hearing to comments from the public.

Scott Harker read the attached two-page statement objecting to the reference to “sustainability” throughout the plan. He referred to the Wikipedia definition of “sustainability” and an article he found on “rudi.net” (Resource of Urban Design Information) from the United Kingdom. Mr. Harker recommended that the Planning Board “trash” the document and start all over again.

Penny Hommeyer asked if there would be any changes to the document prior to the presentation to Town Meeting. Chairman Burke said that would be determined by the Planning Board when all members are present. The Master Plan is a guiding instrument. He stressed that any changes to zoning, general by-laws, or funding must be adopted by a vote of Town Meeting. The Board is in the implementation phase of the project which includes visioning for the Town Center with Dodson Associates.

Mr. Harker reiterated that the Board is looking to support the concept of “sustainability” rather than developing a programmatic plan. He said “sustainable development” should be removed as a concept.

Selectman Peter Cunningham said the Transportation section focuses on “Complete Streets” and safe routes to schools. He urged the Board to look at specific goals for pedestrian and bicycle safety.

Member Giger said he did not want to debate the definition of “sustainability.” He said the Board did not want the concept to drive the plan but it did not want to ignore it either. He compared the term to “office automation,” “paperless society,” and “artificial intelligence” that were in vogue in the information technology industry.

Boy Scout Travis Anttil spoke about the need to control duck weed and invasive plants in Lost Lake. He commented on the need to raise awareness about this important issue. He noted that Lost Lake/Knops Pond is one of the most beautiful parts of Groton.

Chairman Burke asked if weed harvesting is effective. Mr. Anttil said “no, not really.”

Connie Sartini asked if the Town Center visioning process with Peter Flinker would change the results of the Master Plan. Chairman Burke said the Town Center visioning process has not been completed yet. The Master Plan does not contain that level of specificity.

Judi Barrett of Community Opportunities Group said Peter Flinker of Dodson Associates is part of the Master Plan team. The Town Center visioning process and development of design guidelines is part of the implementation phase.

Bruce Easom, member of the Transportation Advisory Group, said the message from the public was to connect the trails and sidewalk network as envisioned in the “Complete Street”

program. Construction of a sidewalk on Boston Road from Old Ayer Road to CVS and the Post Office is a top priority.

Chairman Burke said the Board sponsored a workshop on “Complete Streets” with Gary Hebert of Fay, Spofford and Thorndike on February 9, 2012.

Leo Laverdure, member of the Natural Resources Advisory Group, applauded the Planning Board on including sustainability as a major theme in the Master Plan. He said sustainability achieves a balance of economic development, environmental protection, and societal aspects. He said there are disruptive elements from society, the economy, and the environment. We must learn to deal with such disruptions – both foreseen and unforeseen.

Chairman Burke thanked Boy Scout Troup #1 for attending the public hearing.

Penny Hommeyer asked how the voters will know if there are any changes to the document and what they will be voting on at Town Meeting. Chairman Burke said the Board would prepare a summary of any changes.

Carol Canner said she and her husband Carl were involved in the creation of the park along the Squannacook River in West Groton. She said it is used by many people including children and elders. It is nice to have parks for people to enjoy. Chairman Burke agreed and noted that the creation of “contemplative parks” is included in the Master Plan.

Mr. Harker said he shares a professional heritage with Member Giger and understands the reference to “artificial intelligence” and “paperless society.” He said these are buzzwords that fade over time. The focus on sustainability may detract from the Master Plan. He said it comes down to money, not sustainability. He requested that the Board remove the concept of sustainability from the plan.

Member Giger comments on the weeds in Lost Lake and the relationship of the lake with the public water supply well on Whitney Pond, the town’s primary water source. He said the Town must focus on protecting the Town’s water supply no matter what you call it.

The Board voted unanimously to continue the public hearing on April 12, 2012 at 7:45 PM.

#### **TOWN MEETING ARTICLES**

The Board discussed the articles for Town Meeting for adoption of the Master Plan and to amend the Zoning By-law to define square footage. The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Parent, to advertise the public hearing on the proposed Zoning Amendment for the Spring Town Meeting.

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**CONSERVATION COMMISSION HEARING ON GELD PROJECT**

Board members were encouraged to attend the Conservation Commission's public hearing on the Notice of Intent filed by the Groton Electric Light Department to construct its new office and operation facilities on Station Avenue on Tuesday, March 19, 2012, at 7 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette  
Land Use Director/Town Planner