

**PLANNING BOARD
MAY 31, 2012
MINUTES**

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

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

TOWN CENTER DESIGN GUIDELINES

Peter Flinker of Dodson Associates facilitated a presentation of the vision for the Town Center and the development of design guidelines as part of Phase II of the Comprehensive Master Plan (slides from power point presentation attached).

Mr. Flinker said the Town has an opportunity to protect its historic Town Center while allowing change that is sensitive to the Town's character. He described the historic streets and mix of uses in the center, the views from the village and surrounding landscape which contribute to the sense of place. He outlined design principles and different architectural styles with consistent massing and materials. The views from the Main Street and signage are very important features. He noted that the traffic study prepared by Fay, Spofford & Thorndike (FST) counted 475 on-street parking spaces.

Mr. Flinker described the different zoning districts including R-A, B-1, R-B and Conservancy District. In addition, the former Station Avenue Overlay District, now the Town Center Overlay District, allows a variety of mixed uses. The issues and concerns include:

- Traffic on Main Street
- Dangerous intersections
- Difficult crosswalks
- Parking spaces are not marked
- Properties are vulnerable to encroachment
- Historic Districts apply to a limited area
- Loss of the Groton Inn
- Above-ground utilities spoil the views

Jessica Madoc-Jones asked about the Elm Street area and street trees. DPW Director/Tree Warden Tom Delaney said he planted 30 new street trees this year. Chairman Burke asked if the Town has a succession plan for tree plantings. Mr. Delaney said he works with the Friends of the Trees to plant new trees every year.

Mr. Flinker said comments at previous public forums stated that the following areas should stay the same: large homes on the easterly side of Main Street, Court Street, and the area around the Old Burying Ground on Hollis Street. The areas to be redeveloped include the Town Center Overlay District, the Groton Inn, and Donelan's Market. The areas in-between preservation and redevelopment should be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. Streetscapes, sidewalks, parking lots behind buildings and connected parking lots are all important considerations.

George Wheatley expressed concerns about early morning deliveries in residential areas.

Connie Sartini said parking lots located behind buildings would be in people's back yards. Mr. Flinker said parking areas must be carefully designed with landscaped buffers and pedestrian access to the street.

Greg Sheldon asked about parking for Station Avenue including the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD). Mr. Flinker said the plan for Station Avenue was done five years ago and did not anticipate GELD staying on Station Avenue.

Mr. Sheldon asked if the Station Avenue plans include buses, oil trucks, fire trucks and utility vehicles. Mr. Flinker said, "no," it would be better if the uses with large trucks were located elsewhere.

Alison Eydenberg asked if the Town had any action plans to enhance safety on Main Street including a time line and budget. Land Use Director/Town Planner said the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) is completing a Walkability Study funded by MassDOT. the report should be available in the near future.

Steve Webber said some parking spaces on Main Street should be removed for pedestrian safety.

Selectman Anna Eliot said the Station Avenue plans prepared by FST included proposed improvements to the Main Street/Hollis Street/Court Street intersection.

Scott Harker asked what percentage of land for parking is for the public and what percentage is private. Mr. Flinker said parking must be provided as required in zoning. Private parking lots can be shared as encourage in the Town Center Overlay District provisions. Mr. Harker said it is up to the landowner to decide, not the Town.

Bruce Easom said he is annoyed by the above-ground utilities in Groton. He said the Town of Concord Electric Light Department charges a fee that is used to install utilities underground in the Historic District.

GELD Commissioner Chris Christie said the Town must also consider Verizon and Charter when it discusses underground utilities.

DPW Director Tom Delaney said it would cost about a million dollars a mile to put utilities underground.

Mr. Flinker's slide presentation showed a sketch up of Main Street with new crosswalks, a center median, and landscaping options for discussion purposes.

Alison Eydenberg suggested installing signs that state "Entering Historic Districts" as a way to slow traffic.

DPW Director Tom Delaney asked if Main Street can handle the 20,000 trips per day that use the road at the present time. Mr. Flinker said a Complete Street program, as recommended by FST, could accommodate more traffic and improve pedestrian access.

Connie Sartini asked if the existing building in the Center would be private homes or businesses. She asked why homeowners would want shared parking in their back yards. Mr. Flinker said the design would be done on a case-by-case basis for each property.

Bob Pine said many different ideas have been presented this evening. The streetscape of the Town Center is a very important investment. The center should be attractive and more useable. The Town should view the improvements to the center as an investment, rather than expense.

Becky Pine asked if the Town wants infill between existing buildings. She said the views of Gibbet Hill and agricultural land should be preserved. Mr. Flinker said these decisions are entirely up to the Town.

Chairman Burke agreed that the Town has control over the streetscape and the public realm. He agreed that such improvements should be considered as an investment, not an expense. Private owners that have the potential to grow and change include the Groton Inn, the Prescott School, and the Station Avenue area. The Board's next step is to draft the Design Guidelines rather than recommend zoning changes at this time.

Greg Sheldon said the town is now in Phase II of the Master Plan. The Town must think about improvements to the Town Center as an investment in the future. We should not lose sight of the vision of a vibrant Town Center.

Member Giger agreed that what the Town does today will be there for future generations.

Scott Harker said the first thing the Town should invest in is safety on Main Street.

Steve Webber said GELD trucks on Station Avenue will prevent the redevelopment of Station Avenue.

Fran Stanley agreed that safety at crosswalks needs immediate attention.

Chairman Burke thanked Mr. Flinker for his excellent presentation. He invited the public to continue to participate in the implementation phase of the Master Plan.

SPECIAL PERMIT DECISION – JUSKALIAN HAMMERHEAD LOT

The Board reviewed the draft decision of the special permit for the proposed hammerhead lot on Dale Lane.

The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Parent, to **GRANT** a special permit Edward and Karen Juskalian to utilize the provisions of the Code of the Town of Groton, Chapter 218 Zoning, Section 218-23.1 Hammerhead Lots, to create one hammerhead lot as shown on the

plan entitled, "Plan of Land in Groton, Massachusetts, Prepared for Edward Juskalian" prepared by Ducharme & Dillis, Civil Design Group, dated January 20, 2012, with the following findings and conditions:

Findings:

The Planning Board made the following findings based upon the criteria set forth in Zoning By-Law § 218-23.1 and 218-32.1:

1. **Social, economic and community needs:** The creation of the proposed hammerhead lot results in low density development because the 7.5 acre hammerhead lot will be joined with the abutting 20-acre parcel shown as Map 222/Parcel 43, presently owned by Ronald Sandquist, et al.
2. **Traffic flow and safety:** The proposed hammerhead lot has safe and adequate access on Dale Lane, a road constructed to subdivision standards in 1964. The proposed driveway is shown on the plan entitled, "Notice of Intent Plan (M-P 221-13, 221-14, 221-43) Dale Lane," prepared by Ducharme & Dillis, dated March 1, 2012, revised April 24, 2012.
3. **Adequacy of Utilities:** The proposed hammerhead lot will be served by a private well and an on-site sewage disposal system. The proposed hammerhead lot will not have a negative impact on utilities.
4. **Neighborhood character:** There will be no adverse impact on neighborhood character with creation of the 7.4+ acre hammerhead lot with a house set back more than 500 ft from Dale Lane.
5. **Impacts on the environment:** The creation of the proposed hammerhead lot is subject to an Order of Conditions for construction of a driveway within 100 feet of wetlands. A Conservation Restriction will be placed on approximately ten acres of the abutting parcel, Map 222/Parcel 43 as required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.
6. **Fiscal impact on the Town:** There will be minimal fiscal impact on the Town from the creation of the proposed hammerhead lot.

Conditions:

1. Any development of additional lots on this property requires review and approval by the Planning Board. As offered by the applicant, the applicant shall apply for a special permit for a shared driveway to provide access to any additional lots created on this property in the future.
2. Construction of the proposed driveway shall include the turnout areas for emergency vehicles as shown on the plan entitled, Notice of Intent Plan (M-P 221-13, 221-14, 222-43) Dale Lane, Groton, Massachusetts," prepared by Ducharme & Dillis Civil Design

Group, dated March 1, 2012, revised April 24, 2012. The Fire Chief shall approve driveway construction to provide adequate access for emergency vehicles prior to the issuance of a building permit.

3. Construction of the proposed driveway, house, sewage disposal system and related grading changes shall not extend beyond the limit of disturbance shown as the "tree line" on the plan entitled, Notice of Intent Plan (M-P 221-13, 221-14, 222-43) Dale Lane, Groton, Massachusetts," prepared by Ducharme & Dillis Civil Design Group, dated March 1, 2012, revised April 24, 2012.
4. The applicant applied for a Stormwater Permit for construction of the proposed driveway, house, sewage disposal system and related grading changes. There shall be no net increase in runoff from the lot onto abutting properties or the public way during or after construction.
5. This special permit shall not be in effect until a certified copy of the special permit decision and ANR plan are recorded at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds as required in GL Chapter 40A, Section 11, and Groton Zoning By-Law Section 218-32.1. No construction or site alteration shall commence nor shall any necessary permits be issued by any Board or official until evidence of such recording is submitted to the Planning Board by the applicant.

The motion passed with Burke, Barringer, Giger, Parent, Perkins, and Wilson in favor; Svarczkopf abstaining.

ANR PLANS

Gilson, Dale Lane -The motion was made by Barringer, seconded by Parent, to endorse as Approval Not Required the plan entitled, "Plan of Land in Groton, Massachusetts prepared for Edward Juskalian," prepared by Ducharme and Dillis Civil Design Group, dated January 20, 2012. The motion passed unanimously.

Chapel Hill Realty Trust, Dale Lane -The motion was made by Perkins, seconded by Parent, to endorse as Approval Not Required the plan entitled, "Plan of Land in Groton, Massachusetts prepared for Edward Juskalian," prepared by Ducharme and Dillis Civil Design Group, dated January 20, 2012. The motion passed unanimously.

RECOMMENDATION TO SELECTMEN – CHAPTER 61A

The Board discussed its recommendation to the Board of Selectmen on whether the Town should exercise its right of first refusal under Chapter 61A to purchase the Gilson property, with 7.4 acres, on Dale Lane. Conservation Commission member Bruce Easom and Bob Lotz of Indian Hill Road were present for the discussion.

Mr. Lotz said the hilltop is a very special location with no man-made structures. It would be wonderful if the Town could preserve the area. Mr. Lotz said the Gilson property abuts land owned by the Groton Conservation Trust and is near the Half Moon Swamp owned by the Conservation Commission.

Chairman Burke asked if the Commission had voted on its recommendation yet. Mr. Easom said, "no," the Commission will vote on June 12, 2012. He said the Commission has \$825,000 in the Conservation Fund at the present time.

Member Svarczkopf asked about the landowner's interest in the property since the Board just voted to grant a special permit to create the hammerhead lot. Board members explained the Chapter 61A Agricultural Land tax classification and how the Town has the right of first refusal.

Member Perkins said she is inclined to support the purchase if the Gilson property abuts other conservation land.

The motion was made by Perkins, seconded by Wilson, to recommend that the Board of Selectmen exercise the Town's right of first refusal and purchase the 7.4 acre lot owned by Jodie Gilson on Dale Lane.

The motion passed with Burke, Giger, Parent, Perkins, and Wilson in favor; Svarczkopf opposed; Barringer abstaining.

ACADEMY HILL BOND ESTIMATE

The Board received a report dated May 29, 2012 from Nitsch Engineering with the cost to complete construction of a portion of Cherry Tree Lane (from Station 22+50 to Station 32+67) of \$150,871.35. The motion was made by Perkins, seconded by Barringer to accept the bond estimate of 150,871.35. The motion passed unanimously.

REORGANIZATION

The Planning Board voted to elect the following officers:

Chairman	John Giger
Vice Chairman	Jason Parent
Clerk	Tim Svarczkopf

The Planning Board voted to appoint the following representatives:

Community Preservation Committee	Russell Burke
Earth Removal Stormwater Committee	Raymond Capes
Montachusett Regional Planning Commission	David Manugian
Montachusett Joint Transportation	David Manugian
Williams Barn	TBD

The Planning Board voted to appoint the following members to act as liaisons to other Town Departments and Committees:

Board of Appeals	George Barringer
Board of Health	Jason Parent
Board of Selectmen	Chairman John Giger, ex officio
Conservation Commission	Scott Wilson

Economic Development
Finance Committee
Groton Dunstable School District
Groton Electric Light Department

Russell Burke
Chairman John Giger, ex officio
George Barringer
George Barringer

Historic Districts Commission
Historical Commission
Housing Authority
Housing Partnership
Prescott Reuse Committee
Public Safety Officials
Sewer Department
Sign Committee
Sustainability Commission
Water Department
West Groton Water Supply District

Scott Wilson
Scott Wilson
Carolyn Perkins
Carolyn Perkins
Russell Burke
Tim Svarczkopf
Scott Wilson
Russell Burke
Tim Svarczkopf
Jason Parent
George Barringer

Meeting adjourned at 10:45 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Collette
Land Use Director/Town Planner