

TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD

March 8, 2018
Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, March 8, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. in the second floor meeting room at Town Hall, 173 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450

Members Present:

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair
Mr. Russell Burke, Member
Mr. John Giger, Member
Ms. Carolyn Perkins, Member

Members Not Present:

Mr. Timothy M. Svarczkopf, Vice Chair
Mr. George Barringer, Clerk
Mr. Michael Vega, Member

Also Present:

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Public Hearing – Site Plan Review – Proposed Senior Center, 163 West Main Street

Chairman Wilson opened the public hearing and read aloud from the Public Hearing Notice as summarized below:

§218-25 - Site Plan Review - In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 48, 9 and 11 Massachusetts General Laws, of the Code of the Town of Groton, Chapter 218, the Groton Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, March 8, 2018, at 7:00 p.m.** in the Town Hall (second floor meeting room) 173 Main Street, to consider the application submitted by the Town of Groton under the provisions of the Groton Zoning by-law, §218-25, Site Plan Review, for the demolition of the existing Senior Center facility and construction of a new 10,900 square foot Senior Center facility with associated parking, septic system, utilities and landscaping. The proposed project is shown on the plans entitled Groton Senior Center, 163 West Main Street, Map 106, Parcel 38, Groton, MA, prepared by Ducharme & Dillis, Civil Design Group, Inc., dated February 9, 2018. The proposed project is located on Assessor's Map 106, Parcel 38, on the northerly side of West Main Street, which is Route 225.

Copies of the application are on file in the Planning Board office and the Town Clerk's office at the Town Hall. The Town of Groton does not discriminate against on the basis of disability and further, a signed translation of this public hearing will be provided for the hearing impaired upon request by contacting the Planning Board at 978-448-1105 at least one week prior to the hearing.

Presenting the application on behalf of the Town were Mr. Greg Roy, Principal, Ducharme & Dillis Civil Design Group, and Mr. Gregg Yanchenko, Vice President, Helene-Karl Architects. Also present were Ms. Michelle Collette of the Senior Center Building Committee, and Ms. Kathy Shelp, Director of the Council on Aging.

Mr. Roy said that Wrangling Brook, a perennial stream, ran through the site and played a role in their site planning. There is a 200-foot riverfront area associated with the brook, which is a regulatory resource area under the Wetlands Protection Act and the local by-law. Mr. Roy said, additionally, there is a bordering vegetated wetland along Wrangling Brook that had an associated 100-foot buffer zone. He said the existing stormwater area for the site is within these zones and includes mature trees that had grown in over the last couple of decades.

Mr. Roy said they had their first public hearing with the Conservation Commission last week and subsequently made some site plan revisions. He said one of the most significant changes was to move the building approximately 20 feet further from the wetland so they could have the building be completely outside of the 100-foot buffer zone. He also said they went to the Senior Center Building Committee meeting on Thursday morning and talked it over with the design team but they did not get the plan published until this week. Mr. Roy said in order to accommodate the building shift they had to reduce the green space between the sidewalk and the building and also relocate a few of the parking spaces. He said the net result was the same number of spaces in the initial plan, which was 71.

Mr. Roy stated that they would maintain the existing driveway and would only be re-doing a very small portion to accommodate the revised grades on the site and most of it would be left in its existing configuration. He further stated that they propose a parking layout consisting of two bays for better traffic circulation. He said the configuration would allow for a drop-off zone under a portico and it could accommodate a two-way traffic flow.

Mr. Roy noted that they were asked by the Town to oversize the parking stalls, pointing out that the bylaw allowed for 9 x 18 feet parking stalls whereas the proposed parking stalls are 10 x 20 feet with a 24-foot aisle. He said given the senior demographic the facility serves, a total of eight handicapped spaces are proposed, which was well in excess of what they would otherwise be required to do under the state Architectural Access Board standards or the federal ADA requirements.

Mr. Roy said another topic of discussion at the Conservation Commission hearing was the site's location in a habitat area for the state-listed Blanding's Turtle. The Town filed a MESA Project Review Checklist and received a conditional "no take" letter from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. He said the preference, with regard to the movement of turtles across the site, was to have a sloped curb treatment rather than vertical curbing. The proposed plan includes a mix of curbing types. Vertical granite curbing is proposed where the parking spaces are adjacent to sidewalks, sloped curbing is proposed along the northern limit of the parking area, and at-grade curbing is proposed along all of the handicap accessible parking spaces.

Chairman Wilson asked if the Conservation Commission was okay with the vertical curbing. Mr. Roy replied that the Conservation Commission asked them to consider sloped curbing. The revised plans have been submitted and the hearing will continue on Tuesday next week. Mr. Burke commented that technically it was outside of the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction so it should not matter. Mr. Roy replied that the entire pavement area was outside of their jurisdiction.

Mr. Roy stated that they had two stormwater management areas and they were proposing underground infiltration; one would pick up the roof and the pavement area and the other area would pick up the bulk

of the parking. He said the soil consisted of sand and gravel with a good depth to groundwater. He further said that there was not a lot of space on the site to place an above ground detention system. He said the Stormwater Advisory Committee voted to issue the stormwater permit on Tuesday night with a couple of stipulations to revise the plans as follows:

- To incorporate some above-ground recharge in the overflow area for the catch basin on the driveway; noting that the catch basin also functioned as the emergency overflow in the event there was a large storm or a condition where the other basin got clogged for some reason. He said they would likely add a drainage swale along the driveway.
- To add a trash rack (grate) on the overflow pipe.
- To include a construction gate and fencing.

Mr. Roy said that they were working on the revisions. He further said that there was an on-site sewage disposal system that served the existing building and it would be replaced because they would be increasing the size of the building. He said they were proposing to put the leaching field under the green space/garden area at the request of the Board of Health agent, Ira Grossman, who did not want the leaching area to be under the pavement. Mr. Roy stated that they performed soil testing witnessed by Mr. Grossman, including deep holes and perc tests to determine the groundwater depth and the percolation rate. He said that the percolation rates were very fast and the groundwater was pretty consistent at about 8 feet below the existing grades.

Mr. Burke asked if the site was on the West Groton Water District or a well. Mr. Roy replied it was on a 6-inch line of the West Groton Water District.

Mr. Roy stated that they decided to use electric heat as opposed to natural gas, and GELD would be re-doing the overhead service up the driveway and then they would go underground from the last pole.

Ms. Perkins asked if the applicant had looked at the turning radius for the fire safety vehicles that may come in, particularly if there was parking there. Mr. Roy replied that the Fire Chief was present at the department head meeting and that was a design consideration for the turning radius' and also the height of the portico. He further said that a fire truck could go into the site, negotiate it and come out in one turn.

Ms. Perkins also asked to clarify the number of parking spaces. She counted 68 and the narrative also says 68, but the plans say 71. Mr. Roy said they would take another look at the count.

Mr. Giger asked if the existing access road was a private drive or a town road. Ms. Collette replied that it was not a road but part of the property that was acquired from the VFW. She said the access road into the site was located on the old railroad bed that underlies Spencer Circle on the northern side and also the access road into the town forest to the West Groton Water Supply well south of West Main Street. Mr. Giger asked if the town owned the underlying land. Ms. Collette replied that the town did own the underlying land and it came with the piece of property that the Senior Center was located on. She further replied that it was not laid out as a public way but it was publicly known and maintained by the town's DPW.

Mr. Giger asked if the proposed generator was sufficient to keep the heat going. Mr. Yanchenko replied that there was a discussion whether they should use a fossil fuel or electricity and that GELD had agreed to install the service in-kind. He said they ran the calculations to determine the most cost-effective method and the differential between using a natural gas versus electric was approximately \$5.00 per month, and it made more sense to go with electric. Mr. Yanchenko stated that the building envelope was designed to conform to net zero energy guidelines; but there would be no renewables on-site and they would be using the electricity provided by GELD.

Mr. Giger stated that there was a generator on-site and asked if it had the capacity to not only deal with lighting but also the kilowatts of power sufficient to keep the heat on. Mr. Yanchenko replied that there were two showers added to the new Senior Center and by adding those it could also be used as an emergency shelter that could house 120 people in case of an emergency. He said there would be a diesel tank underneath the generator to provide 72-hours of run time.

Mr. Burke asked if there was a landscaping plan. Mr. Yanchenko replied there was not because of the location of the leach field and the community garden, and the shifting of the building outside the buffer zone. He said that there was only a 7-foot wide strip where plantings could go and they decided on low grass, annuals and perennials. Mr. Roy noted that the building will not be visible from the road.

The Board reviewed the architectural renderings included in the application packet. Mr. Tada stated that there was a photometric lighting plan handout with cut sheets that was not included in the packets.

Mr. Roy commented that the lighting plan had been evolving and they regrettably did not get it to the Board prior to the meeting. He said there would be eight shielded LED parking lot lights mounted on 20-foot poles.

Chairman Wilson asked what the Kelvin number was. Mr. Roy replied that he did not have that on the lighting schedule, but they were open to any lighting recommendations from the Board.

Mr. Burke said the Board generally prefers the warmest lighting possible. Chairman Wilson commented that he would like to see the lighting at 3,000 Kelvins. Mr. Roy said it would be specified on the plan.

Mr. Roy said there would be bollards to light the walkway and wall pack lights in the back of the walkway. He further said the portico/canopy would have downlights underneath it.

Mr. Burke asked if the pole lights would be on all night. Mr. Roy replied if there was an event going on or if it was an emergency it would make sense to have them on but said he would defer that to the Council on Aging. Ms. Shelp said they don't schedule programs late at night.

Mr. Tom Murray, 63 Spencer Circle (nearest abutter), addressed the Board and stated that he had some concerns. He asked if the lights would face the Senior Center so they did not shine on his house. Mr. Roy replied that the lights on the poles would shine downwards and they could put a shield on the back so there was no backlight. He further said that by code, they needed to have a wall pack for egress purposes.

Mr. Murray asked if there were not a function or an emergency if the lights would shut off at approximately 10:00 p.m. or 11:00 p.m. Mr. Burke commented that he would like to see a protocol that

if there was nobody there the lights should be shut off, other than some lights on for security purposes. Mr. Roy replied that he would let the Council on Aging propose a lighting schedule.

Mr. Murray said there was a 60-foot wide section of trees between his house and the Senior Center and asked if any of those trees were going to be removed. Mr. Yanchenko replied that they may take out a few trees in one area but essentially the edge would remain undisturbed because it was not their land to disturb.

Ms. Julie Lisk, also of 63 Spencer Circle, addressed the Board and asked if they could do a site walk so they could see which trees were going to be removed. Mr. Giger replied they could schedule a site walk and ask the applicant to flag the trees that were subject to be removed. Ms. Lisk said that the trees served as a noise, light and visual buffer. Chairman Wilson commented that the Planning Board's objective was to see as few trees come out as possible.

Ms. Lisk commented that she was opposed to vertical curbs in developments because it becomes a trap for the Blanding's Turtles when they came up to nest. Chairman Wilson replied that hopefully they could work with alternatives to vertical curbing, such as a railing with gaps in it or something along those lines. Mr. Yanchenko replied that they had taken out as much of the vertical curbing as possible in the revised plans, and there was an entire corner of the parking lot that was flush for handicap access, so the turtles could move through without getting trapped. He further replied that he had hoped they could come to a happy medium between the concern for turtles and the safety concerns of the senior demographic, which is why they propose vertical curbing where vehicles pull in adjacent to sidewalks.

Ms. Shelp commented that there were no late night programs that would be going on at 11:00 p.m. at the Senior Center so the lights could be turned down or off. Mr. Giger replied that something needed to be proposed to the Planning Board for their consideration regarding a schedule for the lights. Ms. Shelp also said that they would be happy to assist in any way with regard to protecting the turtles.

Ms. Lisk said that it was her understanding that the construction on the site would take place from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; any sort of excessive noise could happen between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and there was no limit on general construction. She further said she wished the site work could be moved up to at least 8:00 a.m. Chairman Wilson replied that they would definitely pay attention to the hours of construction and the control of noise.

Mr. Yanchenko stated that after the initial grading was complete the noise level would go down. He also said if they pushed the start time up to 8:00 a.m. there could be a significant increase of cost to the project.

Ms. Lisk stated that she had a serious problem with her wet basement. She said the builders of her home had told her that the water table was 5' below the basement floor and within three months there was 18 inches of water in her basement. Ms. Lisk commented that she had a hard time believing that the water table was as low as they were saying. Chairman Wilson replied that they would do their best to ensure that there was no net run-off of surface water but controlling what happened underground was a bit trickier. Mr. Burke stated the Board of Health agent witnessed the soil testing and was very particular. Mr. Roy said the testing concluded that there was coarse sand and gravel under the site.

Mr. Giger stated the he felt the best way to handle the noise issue was when there was excellent communication between the developer and the neighbors.

Mr. Giger asked if the applicant was seeking waivers of any town by-laws that related to the construction. Mr. Roy replied that they had asked for two waivers relative to the traffic analysis and development impact statement.

Mr. Giger asked what their plan was for snow removal. Mr. Roy replied it would be up to the Town. Ms. Collette replied that Tom Delaney, DPW Director, informed her that the DPW was responsible for removing snow on town property and the snow would be removed promptly because there was not a lot of room to store it on the site. She further said that the snowbanks would not be any higher than 2'.

Ms. Perkins noted that neighbors could also call Mr. Tada if they had questions or concerns.

Mr. Burke observed that the cut-fill plan indicates a net importing of fill. Mr. Roy confirmed that approximately 1,000 cubic yards of fill was needed to achieve the grades around the back of the building and also the septic leaching field which requires 6 feet of clearance above groundwater.

Ms. Perkins asked if there would be dumpsters outside the building. Mr. Roy said no, only trash cans are used. The DPW collects the trash.

Mr. Burke made a motion to continue the public hearing to a date certain of Thursday, March, 2018, at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Yanchenko stated that the project was going out to bid the following Wednesday any initial feedback, even in draft form, would be helpful to receive. He further said that they wanted to have the construction cost estimate ready for the Spring Town Meeting.

Mr. Giger suggested that they write down a list of items to be addressed at the March 22, 2018, meeting so the Board and the applicant would all be on the same page:

- Lighting schedule and specifications
- Curbing alternatives
- Number of parking Spaces (68 versus 71)
- Amend application cover sheet to indicate Site Plan Review (not a special permit)
- Possible revision to the plan regarding a drainage swale
- Construction hours of operation
- Site Walk (trees to be removed should be flagged)
- Soil Evaluator Forms (providing the groundwater elevation)
- Confirmation from the Fire Chief that he has no concerns about emergency vehicle access

Mr. Giger seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED

Discussion - Master Plan Implementation Committee

Mr. Tada stated that he drafted a letter of introduction from the Planning Board to assist members of the MPIC as they got closer to going into the field to gather data from various stakeholders.

Chairman Wilson stated that he thought the letter was very well written.

Discussion - Regulation of Marijuana – Draft Proposals for the Spring Town Meeting

Mr. Burke said that the Cannabis Control Commission meeting that was scheduled for March 7th had been cancelled; they were scheduled to vote on the final regulations.

Mr. Giger stated that he saw an article in *The Lowell Sun* which said the regulations had gone for a final review by the lawyers and they had finished their work relative to what they would get on the 15th.

Ms. Perkins mentioned that Selectmen Jack Petropoulos wanted to propose competing zoning regulations that would further restrict or prohibit recreational marijuana establishments. She felt it would be a shame to confuse the issues at Spring Town Meeting.

Mr. Burke agreed that having different zoning proposals at Spring Town Meeting could result in neither of them passing, even if the temporary moratorium is extended. He was concerned that January 1st would arrive and there would be nothing on the books and someone could request a license and they would have the same amount of zoning review as a shoe store would.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 8, 2018

Ms. Perkins made a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the February 8, 2018, meeting. Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED

Discussion:

Mr. Tada stated that for the foreseeable future, all public hearing, legal notices and any other Planning Board notices would be advertised in the Nashoba Valley Voice rather than the Groton Herald as directed by the Town Manager.

Planning Board Meeting Schedule

2nd & 4th Thursday of the Month:

- March 17 – Citizen Planner Training Collaborative
- March 22
- April 12 & 26
- April 30 – Spring Town Meeting
- May 24 & May 25 – MA Association of Planning Directors

Adjournment

Mr. Giger made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Perkins seconded the motion. The meeting was declared adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Gedziun
Recording Secretary