

## TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD

**April 12, 2018**  
**Meeting Minutes**

A meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, April 12, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. in the second floor meeting room at Town Hall, 173 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450

### Members Present:

Mr. George Barringer, Clerk  
Mr. John Giger, Member  
Ms. Carolyn Perkins, Member  
Mr. Michael Vega, Member

### Members Not Present:

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair  
Mr. Timothy Svarczkopf, Vice Chair  
Mr. Russell Burke, Member

### Also Present:

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

### **Public Hearing – Concept Plan, 279 Main Street**

Mr. Barringer opened the public hearing and Mr. Giger read aloud from the Public Hearing Notice as summarized below:

In accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, §5 & 11 of the Code of the Town of Groton, Chapter 218, the Groton Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, April 12, 2018, at 7:00 p.m.** in the Town Hall (second floor meeting room) 173 Main Street, to consider the concept plan submitted by Chris Lewis to convert the former Sacred Heart Church into four dwelling units as shown on the plan entitled “Concept Plan, 279 Main Street, Conversion of Church to Four Condominiums,” dated March 18, 2018 and the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, 279 Main Street, Groton, MA prepared by Chris Lewis. The proposed project is located at 279 Main Street, Assessor’s Map 160, Parcels 60, 61 and 62 on the northerly side of West Street. The concept plan was submitted under the provisions of Chapter 218, Zoning, §218-27(C), Planned Multi-Family Residential Development of the code of the Town of Groton. The concept plan will be considered at the Spring Town Meeting.

Copies of the concept plan submittal 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 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.

Mr. Chris Lewis, the applicant, addressed the Board and stated that the Massachusetts Historical Commission recommended it to be listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

Mr. Lewis said that the site consisted of one acre located on West and Main Streets and was comprised of three contiguous lots. He said the church was located on Lot #1 and Lots #2 and #3 were primarily the paved parking lot. He said it was situated in the RA Zoning District and it did not meet some of the lot size requirements and setbacks.

Mr. Lewis noted that the plan would be to refinish the outside of the building, keeping all four of the existing entrances so there would not be a common space. He said he was proposing to renovate the church into four condominiums and construct a single-story parking garage with four individual parking stalls. He also said there would be minimal site work and he wanted to update the landscaping and reduce the existing paved parking area.

Mr. Lewis commented that Unit #1 would be 1,370 square feet with 2-bedrooms and 2 ½ bathrooms. He said that Units #2 and #3 had the same concept and mirrored each other. He further said that Unit #4 was larger than the other units at 1,600 square feet with 3-bedrooms and 2 bathrooms.

Mr. Lewis stated that he would maintain the exterior appearance of the church. He said his request would be on the Spring Town Meeting Warrant, Article #36.

Mr. Giger commented that he felt it was a good use of the site and a significant improvement over an earlier proposal to convert the church into a movie theater. He also said he felt it would alleviate a traffic problem because drivers currently cut through the unused parking lot.

Ms. Perkins said that normally under the multi-family zoning regulations the applicant would be limited to 3-bedrooms and asked if the applicant would have to go to the Board of Appeals to get an exception to do that. Mr. Tada replied that he did not think the applicant had to limit the amount of bedrooms to three.

Ms. Perkins asked Mr. Lewis if he planned to have a dumpster on the site. Mr. Lewis replied that he would if it was required but he did not plan on it. He said he hoped that the individual home occupants could have their own containers in their garage.

Ms. Perkins asked Mr. Lewis if there would be additional lighting. Mr. Lewis replied the only additional lighting he might propose would be on the entrances to the parking garages.

Ms. Perkins asked if the proposed driveway would be a one-way or two-way. Mr. Lewis replied it would remain a two-way with two existing points of egress, but he was open to alternative suggestions.

Ms. Perkins commented that she was happy the applicant wanted to maintain the exterior of the building and felt it was a good use of the property.

Mr. Vega asked if fire suppression was required in a multi-family property that had more than three units. Mr. Tada replied that fire suppression would be required regardless of the number of units. Mr. Lewis said that every bedroom would have the required light and emergency egresses. He said the lower level windows would have to be reconfigured so there would be a single pane which would meet the required square footage for an emergency exit.

Mr. Vega commented that the applicant had proposed to utilize the space well, with an increase in green space.

Mr. Barringer asked how many total bedrooms there would be. Mr. Lewis replied there would be nine.

Mr. Barringer asked Mr. Lewis how he was able to get around §218-27.C(4)(a) which stated that the lot area shall be not less than 80,000 square feet plus 10,000 square feet per bedroom. Mr. Lewis replied that because it was a non-conforming lot, there was no way around some of the existing regulations and there was no additional acreage to add.

Mr. Barringer asked if the garage would be built to the same exterior appearance as the current church structure. Mr. Lewis replied that the garage would have an understated "New England" look so as to not detract from the historic church.

Mr. Barringer said that he was going to take the design requirements under advisement because the Board had not seen a multifamily concept plan in quite a while.

Mr. Barringer asked if there was any member of the public who had questions or comments.

Mr. Michael Woods, an abutter at 20 West Street, addressed the Board and stated that he commended the effort that was being made. He asked if the landscaping would include any massive elevation changes. Mr. Lewis replied there would not be any massive elevation changes. He further replied that he had not planned on a lot of site work other than removing the pavement, putting top soil down and adding some plantings.

Mr. Barringer and Ms. Perkins commented that the drainage would have to be managed to avoid causing runoff onto abutting properties.

Mr. Giger said that the amount of impervious surface was being reduced which they seldom saw with new developments, and which would help to attenuate runoff.

Mr. Barringer asked if there were any other members of the public who had questions or comments.

Mr. Dave Whelan, an abutter at 297 Main Street, addressed the Board and asked if the siding of the proposed garage would be the same siding as the church. Mr. Lewis replied it would be a painted barn board.

Mr. Frank King, co-owner of 297 Main Street, addressed the Board and said that he had some concerns with the drainage. Ms. Perkins asked if there were existing drainage problems from the property. Mr. King replied that the runoff currently flowed over onto his property.

Mr. Barringer stated that the installation of grass would reduce runoff and if the concept plan passed at the Town Meeting then it would come back to the Planning Board and that was when they would get into the details of the drainage.

Mr. Bill Bickmore, the Pastor of the congregation that is selling the church, said he was very excited that the church building would be preserved and he liked the plan.

Mr. Barringer asked Mr. Lewis if he was the current owner of the property. Mr. Lewis replied that he would be the owner; he had made an offer on the property that was accepted and the sale is contingent upon receiving the appropriate permits.

Ms. Perkins commented that she was concerned that the proposal did not meet the zoning regulations. Mr. Lewis conceded that it did not meet the area requirement.

Mr. Barringer stated that the Planning Board was hearing the case in order to make a recommendation for the Town Meeting. He further stated that he shared Ms. Perkins' concern that the property was too small but he felt it would be a good re-use of the property if feasible.

Ms. Perkins made a motion to continue the public hearing to a date certain of Thursday, April 26, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Giger seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED**

**Public Hearing (cont'd) – Rezoning Request & Concept Plan, 186 Main Street**

Attorney Robert Collins, representing the applicant, addressed the Board and stated that it was suggested at the last meeting that including the property in the Overlay District was not necessary.

Attorney Collins said the Board also had a question with regard to lighting in the back of the property and reiterated that his client wanted the property to maintain the look of a residential structure. He said there were a couple of Gooseneck lamps of a residential scale that were by the door that would be added to the back of the building which would be the entrance to his client's office. He further said that perhaps two additional fixtures could be added to either side of the existing door to the Carriage House which would light the parking lot. Attorney Collins noted that when they came back for the site plan review he would have already consulted with the Historic District Commission regarding the fixture type and could bring a photometric plan with regard to the lighting. He said he wanted to be clear that the lights would not be on all night but would be shut off at the close of business.

Attorney Collins stated that the second issue that came up was that the Board wanted to see language that would amend the Warrant Article. He said he provided the Board with the motion as it would be read at the Town Meeting which eliminated the reference to the Overlay District. He said the motion that would be put on the floor would be "to see if the Town would vote to zone the property situated at 186 Main Street, shown on the Groton Assessor's Map as parcel 113-1 and described in a deed recorded with the Middlesex County South District Registry of Deeds in book 70228, page 254, as RB, Residential Business, or take any action thereon."

Attorney Collins said that the Warrant Article contained a request for an amendment. Mr. Giger pointed out that the Warrant is already closed and is being printed ahead of Town Meeting; he urged Mr. Collins to coordinate the amendment with the Town Manager and the Town Meeting Moderator.

Mr. Barringer asked what the gross floor area of the house was. Attorney Collins replied that it was about 4,400 square feet and that included the basement. Mr. Barringer asked if the applicant needed to go to the Town Meeting for the Concept Plan Review because it was under the square footage. Attorney Collins clarified that he was required to submit a Concept Plan because of the proposed zoning change from R-A to R-B.

Attorney Collins stated that the Historic District Commission had opened their public hearing and it was continued to April 24<sup>th</sup>. He further stated, however, that they voted to support the request at the Town Meeting.

Attorney Collins said that he would also meet with the Board of Selectmen on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to solicit their support. He noted that he still needed to come back to the Planning Board for site plan review but he would also have to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals for a special permit.

Mr. Barringer pointed out, for the record, that there was a letter addressed to the Planning Board from Attorney Collins which explained the proposal and that letter was now a matter of public record.

Mr. Barringer asked if there were any members of the public who had questions or comments.

Ms. Sheryl Robinson, an abutter at 176 Main Street, addressed the Board and stated that she was happy with the proposal as described.

Ms. Perkins made a motion to close the public hearing for the re-zoning request and concept plan regarding 186 Main Street. Mr. Vega seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED**

Mr. Giger made a motion that the Planning Board give a favorable recommendation of the Article at the Town Meeting. Ms. Perkins seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED**

### **Field Change, Oriole Drive**

Attorney Collins, representing the applicant, Mr. David Moulton, addressed the Board and stated they were requesting a field change which consisted of reverting back to the original “T” turn-around design at the end of Oriole Drive. He said the field change was endorsed by the Fire Chief with a recommendation to maximize the width of the “T” for fire trucks. The original plan was modified in 2016 to include a full circle (cul-de-sac), but in hindsight the construction would have required an exorbitant amount of fill (more than allowed under the bylaws) backed by a huge retaining wall.

Mr. Giger made a motion to approve the field change to convert the cul-de-sac into a T turn-around for Oriole Drive, contingent on submittal of a clean copy of the revised plan. The plan reference is, “Site Plan With Overlay, Oriole Drive, For The Rocky Hill Subdivision, Groton, Mass.”, last revised on September 28, 2017, prepared by R. Wilson & Associates as annotated and signed on April 12, 2018 by the Fire Chief. Ms. Perkins seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED**

### **ANR Plan, Robin Hill Road, Lot A-10**

Attorney Collins, representing the applicant, addressed the Board and stated that they had added language regarding having a no disturbance area where the vegetation was.

Mr. Giger made a motion to endorse the ANR request on a plot of land in Groton, MA, dated April 10, 2018, prepared for Fox Meadow Realty Corporation by Ducharme & Dillis, Civil Design Group, Inc. Mr. Vega seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED**

**Minor Plan Modification, 788 Boston Road – Medical Building Sign**

Mr. Damon Irby, Capital Sign Group, representing the applicant, Nashoba Medical Center, addressed the Board and stated that there were presently two signs on the building. He said the request was to move one of the signs to face Route 119 for better visibility.

Ms. Perkins asked if the sign was bigger. Mr. Irby replied it was actually slightly smaller. Mr. Barringer asked if that request was the only modification. Mr. Irby replied it was.

Mr. Tada noted that one of the signs was already approved to be on the side facing Route 119.

Ms. Perkins made a motion to approve the minor plan modification for 788 Boston Road to relocate a sign from one side of the building to a more visible location facing Route 119. Mr. Vega seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED**

**Discussion – Ms. Nadia Madden, NRWA Wild & Scenic River Study Committee**

Ms. Nadia Madden, the Groton representative for the Wild & Scenic River Study Committee, addressed the Board and stated that they wished to receive a favorable endorsement from the Planning Board prior to the Town Meeting.

Ms. Perkins asked why the Committee was going to the Town Meeting. Ms. Madden replied that to be considered by Congress each of the nine communities in Massachusetts, as well as the two communities in New Hampshire, had to vote on an Article at the Town Meeting to authorize and approve the stewardship plan.

Mr. Barringer noted that the text on the Warrant Article reads “to see if the Town of Groton will accept the Nashua, Nissitissit, and Squannacook Rivers Stewardship Plan developed by the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Committee together with its recommendation to seek Wild and Scenic River designation or to take any other action relative thereto.”

Mr. Giger asked if it obligated the town to spend any money. Ms. Madden replied that there were no financial obligations and it actually opened up opportunities to receive funding from the federal government for various programs to protect and improve the river.

Mr. Barringer asked if it would prohibit any private uses of riverfront land. Ms. Madden replied that it would not.

Mr. Giger stated that he did not have a copy of the actual final plan which he felt he would need to reference to make a motion. Mr. Tada also said that he did not have a copy of the final plan. Ms. Madden replied that it was on their website.

Mr. Giger made a motion that the Planning Board provide a favorable recommendation to the Town Meeting regarding the Article which read “to see if the Town of Groton will accept the Nashua, Nissitissit, and Squannacook Rivers Stewardship Plan developed by the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Committee together with its recommendation to seek Wild and Scenic River designation or to take any other action relative thereto.” Ms. Perkins seconded the motion.

Mr. Barringer stated that the plan could be found at [www.wildandscenicnashuarivers.org](http://www.wildandscenicnashuarivers.org).

**VOTE: 4 – 0 - MOTION CARRIED**

**Discussion - Amelia Way (Bertozzi Farms)**

Mr. Tada commented that he put the discussion on the agenda just as a note to the Planning Board members that he had a number of communications with Grand Coast Capital Management, the firm that now owns the subdivision project. He said they would like to be on the Fall Town Meeting Warrant for street acceptance as well as to request the release of the bond from the Planning Board which they wanted to do sometime over the summer. He further said that they would finish the work in the spring, submit as-built plans for Nitsch Engineering to review and provide a recommendation to the Planning Board as to whether to release the bond or to retain a certain amount of it.

**General Business – Marijuana Zoning Maps**

Mr. Tada explained at the last meeting the Board had asked him to see if he could get some additional maps that could blow up the inset maps and change the color scheme for better visibility.

After some comments and suggestions from members of the Board, Mr. Tada stated that he would make some revisions to the maps.

**Master Plan Implementation Committee**

Mr. Tada stated that he had wanted to have a revised letter of introduction from the Planning Board but did not have it available yet.

Ms. Perkins said that they were looking for another person to join the MPIC. She said the group was making a lot of progress and they would start the interviews and data gathering process in May.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 8, 2018**

Mr. Barringer made the following edit:

Page 2, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph – “Principle” was changed to “Principal”

Ms. Perkins made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of the March 8, 2018, meeting, as amended. Mr. Giger seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0**

**MOTION CARRIED**



**Site Plan Review Decision, 163 West Main Street, Senior Center**

Mr. Barringer stated that due to a lack of a quorum of the members eligible to vote on this matter, the Site Plan Review Decision would be addressed at the next scheduled meeting.

**Planning Board Meeting Schedule**

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the Month:

- April 26
- April 30 – Spring Town Meeting
- May Meeting Dates TBD
- May 24 - 25 – MA Association of Planning Directors Conference

**Adjournment**

Ms. Perkins made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Vega seconded the motion. The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Gedziun  
Recording Secretary