

## **TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**October 10, 2019  
Meeting Minutes**

A meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, October 10, 2019, at 7:00 p.m. in the second floor meeting room at Town Hall, 173 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450

### **Members Present:**

Mr. Russell Burke, Chair  
Mr. Scott Wilson, Vice Chair  
Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Clerk (Arrived at approximately 7:20 p.m.)  
Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

### **Members not Present:**

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member  
Mr. Timothy M. Svarczkopf, Board Member

### **Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

At the beginning of the meeting, Mr. Burke pointed out there were only three Planning Board members present and therefore, did not constitute a quorum. He also pointed out that a fourth member was expected to arrive late.

### **Presentation – Housing Production Plan – Progress Report**

Ms. Karen Chapman from the Montachusets Regional Planning Commission addressed the Board and stated the purpose of the Housing Production Plan was a proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing which included a comprehensive housing needs assessment, affordable housing goals, and an implementation plan.

Ms. Chapman reported some of the key demographic findings were the Town of Groton's total population increased by 83% from 1980 with a projected small increase of 20% by the year 2040. She also reported the median age increased 49% from 30.6 years in 1980 to 45.6 years in 2017 and from 1990 to 2017, the number of people over the age of 65 had increased by 247%. Ms. Chapman said the young adult category, age 25 to 44 had decreased by 27% in the same time period which indicated young families were unable to purchase a home in the town.

Ms. Chapman said the median household income was \$123,918 and the median family income was \$141,667.

Ms. Chapman indicated 19% of owners without a mortgage were cost-burdened, 30% of owners with a mortgage were cost-burdened, and 42% of renters were cost-burdened which meant they paid more than 30% of their gross monthly income on housing costs.

Ms. Chapman stated the surrounding towns' property values had all increased significantly with Groton's increasing by 121% but that taxes only increased by 112%. She said a person would have to make an average of \$73,000 not be cost-burdened to purchase even a modest condo and would still cost well over \$200,000, pointing out many people who lived in the Town of Groton did not make that salary.

Ms. Chapman reviewed guidelines surrounding income limits and fair market rents as determined by HUD.

Ms. Chapman reviewed the results of the survey regarding the Town of Groton as summarized as follows:

1. What is your age?
  - Over 85% of the respondents were over the age of 35.
2. How many years have you lived in Groton?
  - Mix of new and long-time residents.
3. How many people live in your household?
  - 36% had 4 people
4. How many children under the age of 18 live in your household?
  - 40% had no children
  - .5% had four children
5. How many adults age 60 or over live in your household?
  - 60% had no seniors
  - 40% had one or two seniors
6. According to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts "affordable housing" is defined as housing costs less than 30% of your household monthly income. Based on this definition is your current home affordable for your household?
  - 62% - Yes
  - 38% - No
7. How would you describe your ability to meet your monthly housing cost?
  - 46% - Able to meet their costs.
  - 15% - Somewhat or very difficult to meet their costs.

8. Please evaluate this statement: It is difficult to find affordable housing in Groton.
  - 50% - Strongly agree or agree
  - 28% - Neither agree nor disagree
  - 10% - Disagree
9. Please score the following housing types you think are needed in the Groton community.
  - Most people felt there was a high or small need for all types of housing but a few felt there was no need, noting the highest on feeling there was no need was with respect to low-income family rentals.
10. How open are you to the following types of housing in Groton.
  - Ms. Chapman replied the numbers were the same as in question 9.
11. Would you or someone you know benefit from any of the following types of housing?
  - Ms. Chapman replied every type of housing was checked.
12. Are there other housing needs in Groton that you would like to see addressed in Groton's new Housing Production Plan?
  - Reduction in property taxes
  - Reduce the burden on the taxpayer
  - Allow Commercial Development
  - Perhaps more condo units for senior citizens
  - Try to build rental complexes with full-time management staff to ensure only upstanding renters are able to move into our community.
  - Housing supported accommodations for individuals recovering from mental health and substance abuse challenges.
  - Permission to build in-law suites.
  - Support building homes for new families
13. Please provide additional comments:
  - No ugly "McMansion" developments.
  - Do not over-development Groton
  - Keep Groton green
  - Change the methodology of determining the tax rate for seniors
  - Affordable housing
  - Allow detachable apartments on a single-family lot

Mr. Burke pointed out that the Town of Groton currently had provisions for accessory apartments and also had provisions for the conversion of a single-family home into a two-family home by right.

Ms. Chapman suggested the multi-family by-law be evaluated as well as the dimensional requirements for infill or non-conforming lots.

Mr. Tada added hammerhead lots required a minimum of 40 feet of frontage and a minimum of five acres but were limited to a single-family house use or accessory uses to a single-family house.

Ms. Chapman said some other recommendations might include to identify town-owned properties for development through RFP, explore non-profit developers and developments and review, evaluate Chapter 61 parcels, and evaluate housing potential near newer sewer infrastructure.

Ms. Chapman said her next step would be to complete a draft plan which she would send to Mr. Tada and Ms. Stanley. She further said once there was a final plan the Planning Board and the Select Board had to sign off on it and it would become part of the appendix of the plan. Ms. Chapman stated the plan would then be submitted to DHCD (Department of Housing and Community Development) and they would either approve it or provide edits to it within 30 days. She added once approved, the plan would be valid for five years.

**Public Hearing (Continued) – Groton School Faculty Housing – Gardner Village  
282 Farmers Row**

Attorney Bob Collins was present to represent the applicant and stated he had already provided the Planning Board with a complete presentation regarding the project. He said the proposed project consisted of eight units of faculty housing to be done in two phases of four and four in two buildings. He said the access was from what used to be known as Shirley Road and had since been discontinued as a public way.

Attorney Collins indicated there was a benefit to the municipal water system by virtue of the project in that it would create another loop to the water mains in the main portion of the campus. He added a stormwater management permit had already been issued for the drainage system.

Mr. Bonnett asked how much fill would come in. Attorney Collins replied there would be none.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps stated, for the record, that she worked with one of the consultants on the project but had no business interest in the project.

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

Ms. Anna Eliot asked where the access road would be. Attorney Collins replied it would be off of the former Shirley Road.

There were no further questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0**

**MOTION CARRIED**

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve the site plan application for 282 Farmers Row and request Mr. Tada to draft a decision with the standard conditions. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0**

**MOTION CARRIED**

***Discussion – Major Site Plan Review***  
***240 Main Street (Kilbourn Place LLC)***

Mr. Burke commented the Board had approved the plan, pending the review of two items at the last meeting and had a copy of the site plan approval decision in their packets.

Attorney Collins stated the Planning Board had requested two items at the last meeting, a photovoltaic plan which showed that ambient light went off the borders of the site but that the lumens were quite low.

Mr. Wilson expressed concern with the spillover of light. Mr. Stan Dillis, Ducharme & Dillis, replied the light pole could be lowered to 8 feet in height.

Mr. Burke stated the original lighting condition would not change and the applicant would have to adhere to it.

Mr. Burke said Michael Luth, Chief of Police, had originally suggested the elimination of two parking spaces on Main Street, one at each of the adjacent entrances and exits of the parking lot, however he amended his recommendation to establish a 6-foot buffer delineated by permanent markings in the same location which would provide the necessary setback for line of sight issues and only eliminate the total area of one parking space. Attorney Collins replied he had no issue with that.

***ANR Plan – Oriole Drive***

Attorney Collins stated the plan which Mr. Dillis prepared dealt with a modification that the Planning Board approved in 2016.

Attorney Collins stated the sole reason for doing the ANR (Approval not Required) Plan was to show the utility easements to the municipal sewer to connect the sewer on Sandy Pond Road and to create a very small parcel which was a portion of lot #1. He said

ultimately the water storage facility would be built on a 3,306 square feet parcel of land and would be gifted to the Water Department.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to endorse the Plan of Land, Groton, MA, prepared by Ducharme & Dillis, dated September 10, 2019. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0**

**MOTION CARRIED**

***Public Hearing (Continued)***

***Flexible Development Subdivision – Definitive Plan and Special Permit  
372 Townsend Road (R.D. Kanniard Homes)***

Mr. Burke noted the item required a super-majority vote of the Planning Board in the affirmative. He further noted there were only four members present so the public hearing had to be continued to the October 24, 2019, meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to continue the public hearing for 372 Townsend Road to October 24, 2019, at 7:30 p.m. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0**

**MOTION CARRIED**

***Discussion – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant***

Mr. Burke stated three vendors submitted proposals and Mr. Tada had reviewed them. He said the three vendors were Weston & Sampson Engineers, Dodson & Flinker, and Green International Associates.

Mr. Bonnett stated, for the record, that he had previously worked with the Project Manager at Weston & Sampson.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps made a motion to select Weston & Sampson Engineering, Inc. for the MVP vendor and request that Mr. Tada work with the Town Manager to execute a contract. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0**

**MOTION CARRIED**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

- **October 21<sup>st</sup> – Fall Town Meeting**
- **October 24<sup>th</sup>**

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Wilson made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

**VOTE: 4 – 0**

**MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.