

TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD

December 5, 2019

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, December 5, 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 7:58 p.m.)
Mr. George Barringer, Board Member
Mr. Timothy M. Svarczkopf, Board Member
Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member
Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

Also Present:

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Public Hearing (Continued)

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

Mr. Burke stated the Planning Board received revised plans from the applicant which included the outstanding items listed below:

1. Additional plantings were added to the two proposed rain gardens.
2. The proposed road layout provides a safe location off of Townsend Road for a school bus to pull over.
3. Updated the list of waiver requests on the Title Sheet of the site plans.

Mr. Dillis pointed out that 68% of the property would remain open space with 10% of that amount being wetlands.

Mr. Burke asked if there was anyone from the public who had questions or comments. There were no questions or comments.

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

Ms. Black and Mr. Svarczkopf had questions about the rain gardens. Mr. Dillis said there were two proposed rain gardens; one on the west side of the cul-de-sac entrance off Townsend Road, and one in the island in the oval-shaped turnaround. The proposed shrub plantings in the rain gardens are all 3-gallon, and the proposed substrate is bark mulch.

Mr. Burke asked about the street trees, underground electric utility, and the detention basin area. Mr. Dillis pointed out the proposed street trees as shown on the plans (Sheet C6.0) and he confirmed that there would be underground electric service and the detention basin area in the southeast corner of the site would be loamed and seeded.

Mr. Svarczkopf commented he was a little bit surprised that there were no members of the public present. He further commented the viewshed was a very important issue for the abutters. He said he felt to waive a requirement that lessened the viewshed might be seen as a negative but it was hard to tell because there was no public representation. Mr. Burke replied he was not sure a viewshed was a criterion that the Planning Board had any control over but they did have discretion over waivers and special conditions.

Mr. Dillis commented he felt the viewshed the abutters were concerned about was the open field area in the southeast portion of the site. He said the proposed layout addressed this concern as much as possible by keeping the houses out of the field.

Mr. Barringer suggested a sidewalk be placed on the westerly side for public safety. Mr. Dillis agreed to look into it.

Ms. Black commented one of the abutters had stated the site had a lot of pollinators and suggested that the applicant consider using a seed mix that would incorporate pollinator plants when the disturbed areas are reseeded. Mr. Burke said they could make this a special condition of approval.

Mr. Bonnett asked if the borrow area and access road would be restored. Mr. Dillis said they would restore these areas, as required by NHESP.

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

VOTE: 6 – 0

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Barringer certified that he had examined the minutes of the meeting and all evidence received at the November 13, 2019, session of the Public Hearing relative to the application of R.D. Kanniard Homes, Inc. for property located at 372 Townsend Road, Groton, MA, for a special permit PB #2019-08.

Mr. Bonnett certified that he had examined the minutes of the meeting and all evidence received at the August 8, 2019, session of the Public Hearing relative to the application of R.D. Kanniard Homes, Inc. for property located at 372 Townsend Road, Groton, MA, for a special permit PB #2019-08.

Mr. Wilson certified that he had examined the minutes of the meeting and all evidence received at the September 12, 2019, session of the Public Hearing relative to the application of R.D. Kanniard Homes, Inc. for property located at 372 Townsend Road, Groton, MA, for a special permit PB #2019-08.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve waiver request #1 to allow Cape Cod berm along the cul-de-sac in lieu of vertical granite curbing, with the stipulation that granite shall be installed at the corner-roundings and drainage structures. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve waiver request #2 for the minimum road width to be 20 feet as opposed to 24 feet along the proposed cul-de-sac. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve waiver request # #3 to allow plastic drainage pipes in lieu of reinforced concrete. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Barringer made a motion to table waiver request #4 for elimination of the sidewalk requirement, pending a revised plan from the applicant.

Discussion:

Mr. Dillis suggested the sidewalk should be on the northwest side of the cul-de-sac from Townsend Road to the parking area in the island. Mr. Barringer commented that would be agreeable to him.

Mr. Burke stated waiver request #4 would be tabled.

Mr. Dillis said waiver request #5 was for the Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee to allow underground recharge from the roadway surfaces. He pointed out it was not within the Planning Board's purview and said the Stormwater Committee had already voted on it.

Mr. Burke stated waiver request #6 was a waiver to allow lot frontage of less than 40 feet for Lots 4, 5, and 6 which would result in reducing the length of the cul-de-sac and the impervious surface area.

Mr. Svarczkopf made a motion to approve waiver request #6, minimum lot frontage, for Lots 4, 5, & 6. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5 – 0 – 1 (Abstained – Burke)

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Burke said waiver request #7 would eliminate the requirement to have a 50-foot buffer of undisturbed vegetation at the perimeter of the property.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to approve waiver request #7. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion for discussion.

Discussion:

Mr. Svarczkopf commented he was concerned with how the waiver would affect the abutters. He pointed out other projects where the proximity to abutters had become an issue, namely Chamberlains Mill subdivision and the Shirdi Sai Temple.

Mr. Barringer asked if the house on Lot 1 could be pulled forward. Mr. Dillis replied they could move the house slightly but would still require some grading within 50 feet of the abutting property line. He noted the purpose of the grading is to smooth out the slope of the existing, irregular berm, which is not vegetated.

Ms. Black suggested planting some screening trees on the berm. Mr. Dillis said he would revise the landscaping plan to include vegetative screening on Lot 1.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to amend the approval of waiver request #7 to allow disturbance within the 50-foot buffer under §218-26.O, for Lots 1, 2, and 9 with the stipulation that the berm on Lot 1 be planted with evergreens. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6 – 1 – 0 (Nay – Svarczkopf)

MOTION CARRIED

Mr. Burke requested that Mr. Tada draft a decision to include the installation of a sidewalk but noted depending upon the plan provided to the Planning Board the condition could be stricken.

Mr. Svarczkopf noted that there were no streetlights proposed, and he asked if there would be any signage for the public access to the open space area. Mr. Dillis replied that NHESP requires signage and monumentation for the open space area. Mr. Burke also noted that the Planning Board subdivision regulations include signage requirements for open space.

Mr. Burke said as part of the decision it would be noted that the applicant had agreed to make the property available for archeological investigation.

Mr. Tada said he would provide the Planning Board with a draft decision at the January 9, 2020, meeting.

Approval Not Required (ANR) Plan
78 Gratuity Road (Hegeman)

Mr. Dillis addressed the Board and said the applicant, Gary Hegeman, wanted to separate the “rather odd shaped piece” of the property located to the north of the existing house. He said the plan would create a non-buildable lot, and the applicant had an agreement to sell the land to the abutting farmer, Gary Wilkins (Riverdale Farm & Garden).

Mr. Barringer made a motion to endorse the plan of land in Groton, MA, prepared for Gary Hegeman of 78 Gratuity Road, prepared by Ducharme & Dillis Civil Design Group, Inc., dated November 8, 2019. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

VOTE: 7 – 0 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

Discussion – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant

Mr. Tada shared the main update that they had a planning session with two of the consultants from Weston & Sampson. He added Mr. Burke and Mr. Haddad, the Town Manager, participated in the meeting. Mr. Tada said they mapped out a schedule and identified the core team including himself, Mr. Burke, the Conservation Administrator, the DPW Director, the Police and Fire Chiefs, the Groton Electric Light Department manager, and the Stormwater Inspector. He further said the core team would meet the following Wednesday to review the materials that would be presented to all of the stakeholders in a workshop setting which would be held sometime in January or February of 2020. He added

the workshop would be followed up by a public listening session and the Town would then be eligible to apply for the action grants in the spring of 2020.

Discussion – Potential Zoning Amendments for 2020 Spring Town Meeting

Mr. Burke stated one of the changes the Planning Board had discussed was clarifying the Site Plan Review thresholds to avoid confusion with respect to a change of use. The provision that a change of use over 1,000 square feet constitutes a major site plan review, should be more clearly stated.

Mr. Wilson also mentioned the possibility of flexible developments becoming “by-right” zoning. Mr. Burke requested the item be placed on the December 19th agenda for discussion.

Mr. Tada commented another amendment was with regard to expanding the zoning for accessory dwelling units, due to the need for rental housing in Groton. The Select Board and the Affordable Housing Trust are interested in such an amendment.

Discussion – Planning Board Budget Review

Mr. Tada stated they were in the middle of budget planning for FY2021. He said the department heads were asked to provide level services budgets. He said the Planning Board’s proposed operating budget is basically the same as this year with the increases being in his salary which were mandated by the Supervisors Union contract. He said the operating budget was reviewed and preliminarily approved but it would eventually be vetted by the Finance Committee. He further said the Planning Board normally did not have a capital budget but noted they were approaching the 10-year life span of the Master Plan in September of 2021. Mr. Tada noted that in 2011, the Master Plan update cost approximately \$100,000 and he submitted a capital budget request for \$150,000 in FY2021 to the Budget Review team. He reported the Budget Review team strongly encouraged that the Planning Board put it off for a year and even then, to perhaps break up the \$150,000 into \$50,000 increments over a period of three years. Mr. Tada explained there were approximately \$1 million worth of requests and about \$500,000 worth of money so it was a matter of competition.

The Planning Board members expressed a willingness to delay the start of the Master Plan update process for one year, beginning in FY2022. However, they would only be willing to split up the budget across two years, not three.

Mr. Burke commented that there wasn't any real harm if the update process was delayed by one year, other than a slightly lower rating on state grant applications during that time.

Ms. Judy Anderson asked if the Planning Board would follow up on some of the recommendations made by the Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) prior to updating the plan.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Burke suggested having a meeting with the MPIC in January.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps said it would be helpful to formulate a way to measure the effectiveness of the Master Plan.

Committee Updates

- Complete Streets Committee

Mr. Barringer commented they were in the process of obtaining new estimates from the Town Engineer for the second round of projects because the cost of construction had significantly increased.

- Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Svarczkopf said the Community Preservation Committee discussed housing and recommended Ms. Carolyn Perkins as a replacement member for the Committee.

Mr. Svarczkopf commented one of the big projects being done was at the library where there were copper gutters, moldings and roofing being installed.

General Business

- ZBA Updates

Mr. Tada stated the Zoning Board of Appeals renewed a special permit for an office trailer at the Hollingworth & Vose Facility in West Groton; renewed a special permit for the Nashoba Paddler business, and voted to approve a special permit for the reconstruction of a house located at 366 Lost Lake Drive. He also said a special permit was granted for the former Sacred Heart Church located at 297 Main Street with regard to modifications for one of the entrances.

- Approval of Meeting Minutes – November 13, 2019

Ms. Nilsson Ripps made a motion to accept the minutes from the November 13, 2019 meeting, as presented. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

VOTE: 6 – 0 – 1 (Abstained – Svarczkopf)
MOTION CARRIED

Planning Board Meeting Schedule

- December 19, 2019 (Tentative)
- January 9, 2020

Update

Mr. Tada pointed out the application for the Green Community Designation for the Town of Groton was submitted by Ms. Karen Chapman from the MRPC and it was in the pipeline for review.

Adjournment

Mr. Wilson made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: Trish Gedziun