

TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD
Virtual Meeting
Thursday, September 24, 2020
Meeting Minutes

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, September 24, 2020, at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was broadcasted via Zoom and was available to view on the Groton Channel pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order Concerning the Open Meeting Law.

Members Present:

Mr. Russell Burke, Chair
Mr. George Barringer, Board Member
Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Clerk
Mr. Timothy M. Svarczkopf, Board Member
Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member
Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

Members not Present:

Mr. Scott Wilson, Vice Chair

Also Present:

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

**Discussion - Preliminary Subdivision Plan – “Village at Shepley Hill”
Longley Road and Sand Hill Road (Assessor's Parcel 226-2)**

Mr. Larry Smith and Ms. Julia Dickinson were present via Zoom representing the applicant, Shepley Hill Capital Partners, LLC.

Mr. Smith introduced the proposed project to construct an age-restricted (55 and older) housing development that would generate approximately \$400,000 in tax revenue, connect to existing trails in the vicinity, and extend Town water up Longley Road. He also has made a commitment to donate \$150,000 to the Affordable Housing Trust.

Also present was Attorney Jill Mann who stated she understood the property was located in the RA District and it required 80,000 square foot lots.

Attorney Mann reviewed the preliminary plan with the Planning Board as summarized below.

- Conventional 55 and over subdivision plan (condominiums)
- 14 proposed lots with a total of 28 units (duplex)
- 2 egresses (one off of Longley Road and one off of Sand Hill Road)
- 2 wetland crossings (Not yet formally presented to the Conservation Commission)

Attorney Mann said the next step would be to proceed with the required major residential subdivision and definitive plan.

Mr. Charlie Wear, Site Engineer, stated the only way to get onto the site would be to cross the wetlands but the plan was to install a bridge to span the wetlands.

Mr. Barringer asked if the wetlands were wet all year or if they dried out. Mr. Wear replied the crossings were currently dry but pointed out they were in the middle of a drought.

Mr. Burke asked about the absence of affordable units in the proposal. Attorney Mann replied that the state (DHCD) has a policy prohibiting age-restricted units from consideration as affordable housing.

Mr. Barringer asked if there was any wildlife that crossed the wetlands. Mr. Wear replied he was pretty sure there was wildlife on the site but to his knowledge, there was nothing that was protected under the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP).

Ms. Nilsson Ripps commented that she would not want cars pulling out from the new road onto Longley Road. Attorney Mann said they would present a traffic study to the Board and could make specific mention of the concerns and have those addressed.

Mr. Svarczkopf commented he had a concern with having two entrances and the two homes that sat on the Longley Road side might be better served as having a driveway or a shared driveway. Mr. Wear said the subdivision regulations require two entrances.

Mr. Burke pointed out the Board would be open to considering requests for waivers.

Ms. Black asked about the proposed roadway width and the proposed well. Mr. Wear said the road width is 22 feet, and the proposed well is for irrigation.

Mr. Bonnett asked for clarification on the proposed trail connection. Mr. Smith said he hopes to connect the proposed trail in the development to the existing trail network on the Shepley Hill Conservation Area (Groton Conservation Trust). He has requested a meeting with the GCT to discuss.

Mr. Burke read aloud from comments received from residents via Zoom as summarized below:

Ms. Claire Wilson was concerned that the traffic study would take advantage of the COVID reduction in normal traffic and she noted that access to the Rail Trail consisted of bicycles and asked how those would be counted.

Mr. Michael Hamel commented that the residents of Sand Hill wanted the entrance completely removed and asked if the Planning Board would just rubber-stamp the project. He asked if someone could please explain what the steps were in the approval process.

Mr. Rick Stevens, 145 Sand Hill, stated he would very much like to see the entrance at Sand Hill moved closer to Longley Road.

Ms. Chilton said she felt adding parking for people who wanted to use the trail would invite more traffic and there was already parking at the rail trail.

Mr. Brad Bobzien stated his concern with moving the Sand Hill entrance further east was that there was a peak in the road and an elbow to deal with in the same spot which would make it a blind spot for egress.

Ms. Susan Perrin, 250 Longley Road, commented that she did not feel the traffic issues on Longley, Sand Hill, and Nashua Roads should be ignored.

Ms. Anna Eliot addressed the Board and stated she offered a trail easement through her property to the developer that would avoid them having to do a wetland crossing to get to the Groton Conservation Trust property.

Ms. Eliot commented that she felt the Town should hold the conservation restriction when it was implemented, there should be a reduction in the number of sidewalks, and wanted to be sure that the Town Traffic Engineer assessed the access points and compared the differences of traffic flow.

Mr. Doug Bover, 233 Longley Road, asked about the drop in elevation of the entrance on Longley Road. Mr. Wear confirmed that the elevation drops down from Longley Road, as you approach the wetlands.

Mr. Barringer made a motion to continue the preliminary plan application to get additional information with regard to affordable housing with a date certain of October 8, 2020, at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Svarczkopf seconded the motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Mr. Barringer, Mr. Svarczkopf, Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, and Mr. Burke	6
Nay:		0

VOTE: 6 – 0 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

Public Hearing
Scenic Roads Permit for Tree Removal
145 Hayden Road (K. Chilton)

Mr. Burke stated that under the Scenic Road Act the Planning Board, in concert with the Town's Tree Warden, had to have a joint public hearing concerning the removal of any trees in a public right-of-way. He said the applicant had requested the removal of a tree that was located in front of their property at 145 Hayden Road due to concerns regarding visual obstruction while entering and exiting their driveway.

Ms. Kasey Chilton, the applicant, addressed the Board and said it was very difficult to see other vehicles, and pedestrians while backing out of their driveway.

Mr. Tom Delaney, Director of the Department of Public Works and Tree Warden, stated he did visit the site and in his opinion, the tree was not a hazard to the traveling public or electrical wires. He said the problem was the residents could not see coming out of their driveway and it could be that the fence was too close to the driveway.

Mr. Burke asked who would be responsible for doing the work and paying for the tree removal. Mr. Delaney replied the homeowner was responsible for both the work and the cost of removal.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps suggested replacing the tree with a smaller one that would not grow quite as large.

Mr. Burke suggested that the applicant provide the Planning Board with a replanting proposal and a sketch of where it would be located at the next meeting.

Mr. Barringer made a motion to continue the public hearing to a date certain of October 8, 2020, at 7:45 p.m. Mr. Svarczkopf seconded the motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Svarczkopf, Mr. Bonnett, 7
Ms. Black, Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Delaney

Nay: 0

VOTE: 7 – 0 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

ANR (Approval Not Required) Plan
340 Longley Road (Trio Real Estate Group)

Mr. Kevin Mark of David E. Ross Associates was present on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Burke explained the plan was to partition the property in accordance with the special permit that the Planning Board had issued for the hammerhead lot and shared driveway. He added the lots that did not have the requisite amount of frontage would be permissible by virtue of the special permit that was granted.

Mr. Tada said the three lots would be accessed by a shared driveway as part of the special permit and lot #3 was a hammerhead configuration and was also subject to the special permit.

Mr. Barringer made a motion to endorse the plan of land prepared by David E. Ross Associates Inc. for the Trio Real Estate Group at 340 Longley Road, dated July 24, 2020. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Svarczkopf, Mr. Barringer, Ms. Black, and Mr. Burke	6
Nay:		0

VOTE: 6 – 0 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

Discussion - Olivia Way Drainage Mitigation Update
Red Pepper Lane Street Acceptance, and Bond Reduction
Reedy Meadow Estates

Mr. Burke commented that the applicant had been making progress on installing the stormwater mitigation, pointing out that the interceptor drain behind lot #10 had been completed, and drainage was installed to connect with the detention area at the end of Olivia Way.

Mr. Burke stated that the Select Board had voted (4 – 1 – 0) to deny the request for street acceptance for Red Pepper Lane. He continued by saying the Select Board wanted to wait one year to see if the stormwater improvements worked or not.

Mr. Burke said the developer would not continue to be the responsible entity for the homeowner’s association which would govern the Olivia Way homeowners. He pointed out if the street was not accepted the Town would not snowplow it and that responsibility would fall on the homeowners.

Mr. Svarczkopf made a motion to recommend to the Select Board that they approve the acceptance of Red Pepper Lane as a public way as all of the work had been completed and the applicant had demonstrated good faith. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

Mr. Svarczkopf said he hoped the developer would continue with his efforts to make the residents of Olivia Way whole and free of the flooding they had endured previously and he did not agree with the Select Board’s decision to not accept Red Pepper Lane.

A Roll Call Vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Svarczkopf, Mr. Bonnett, 6
Ms. Black, Ms. Nilsson Ripps, and Mr. Burke

Nay: 0

VOTE: 6 – 0 – 0

MOTION CARRIED

Planning Board Reports and Recommendations for Fall Town Meeting

Mr. Burke stated that Select Board member Becky Pine had drafted proposed amendments to the Accessory Attached/Detached Apartment articles relative to the limit of only allowing two people per unit.

Mr. Svarczkopf commented that he felt the conversation should be held at Town Meeting and the Planning Board's language in the article was quite clear.

Committee Updates

- **Complete Streets Committee**

Mr. Barringer said there was an article on the Warrant to request engineering funds for a project submission because the Town was responsible for paying for the engineering costs. He added that the engineering estimates came back quite high for all three projects and he did not expect the fee to go down enough to meet the limit that the Select Board had requested. He said given that they would probably limit the submission and engineering funds to one project, the West Main Street Sidewalk.

- **Community Preservation Committee**

Mr. Svarczkopf stated the primary item that was before the Community Preservation Committee was the out-of-cycle request from the Parks Commission to do a design study and engineering on a storage facility as well as a snack shack at the Cow Pond Brook playing fields. He said the sentiment of the committee was that the request to do it as an out-of-cycle article was not favorable but the committee would continue discussions and perhaps it would go to Spring Town Meeting.

General Business

- Approval of meeting minutes from July 23, 2020

Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2020, Planning Board meeting. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black Ms. Nilsson Ripps, and Mr. Burke	5
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Nay:		0
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Abstained:	Mr. Svarczkopf	1
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VOTE: 5 – 0 – 1

MOTION CARRIED

- Approval of meeting minutes from August 20, 2020

The following edit was made:

“Ms. Frost” was changed to “Ms. Fross” – Ms. Black

Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 20, 2020, Planning Board meeting as amended. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Svarczkopf, and Mr. Burke	6
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Nay:		0
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VOTE: 6 – 0 – 0

MOTION CARRIED

Planning Board Meeting Schedule

- October 3, 2020 – Fall Town Meeting
- October 8, 2020
- October 22, 2020

Adjournment

Ms. Nilsson Ripps made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

A Roll Call Vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Mr. Barringer, Mr. Svarczkopf, Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, Ms. Nilsson Ripps, and Mr. Burke	6
Nay:		0

VOTE: 6 – 0 – 0

MOTION CARRIED

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Trish Gedziun
Recording Secretary

Approved 11/5/2020