

TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD
Virtual Meeting
Thursday, November 19, 2020
Meeting Minutes

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, November 19, 2020, at 7:00 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. Scott Wilson, Vice Chair
Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Clerk
Mr. George Barringer, Board Member
Mr. Timothy M. Svarczkopf, Board Member
Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

Members not Present:

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

Also Present:

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Discussion – Mr. Tobias Wolf – Candidate for the Design Review Committee

Mr. Burke explained the Design Review Committee provided recommendations to the Planning Board when there were proposals that used the Town Center Overlay District Zoning.

Mr. Wolf, a Landscape Architect, introduced himself and said he lived and worked in Groton. He said he worked on parks, campuses, botanical gardens, museums, and residential properties. He added he had also worked with numerous historic landscapes and streetscapes.

Mr. Wolf said he was on the Board of the Ecological Landscape Alliance and was interested in serving on the Design Review Committee.

Mr. Barringer made a motion to appoint Mr. Tobias Wolf to serve on the Design Review Committee. Mr. Wilson seconded the motion.

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

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

***Discussion – Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment
Section 218-9.3A – Multifamily Dwelling Conversion, in Joint Session with the
Zoning Board of Appeals***

Zoning Board of Appeals Members Present

Mr. Bruce Easom, Chair
Mr. Dan McLaughlin, Board Member
Ms. Jen Spencer, Board Member
Mr. Jack Petropoulos, Board Member
Ms. Margot Hammer, ZBA Assistant

Attorney Bob Collins stated he had assisted the Zoning Board of Appeals with some suggested updates to the dwelling conversion portion of the bylaw. He reviewed the proposed changes as summarized below:

§218-9.3 – Multi-Family Use

Subsection #1 – Proposed change: the sentence “The dwelling involved must have been in existence as of the date of the adoption of this provision” remained the same, however, the provision that stated “it shall not have been expanded within the 24 months previous to the application” was deleted.

Subsection #2 – No changes were proposed.

Subsection #3 – Proposed change: “Each unit shall meet all standards for habitable residential units as set forth in the Code of Massachusetts Regulations.”

Subsection #4 – Proposed change: “All units shall have fire suppression systems which have been approved by the Fire Department. Any fire safety stairs that are visible from any street shall be designed so as not to detract from the esthetic appearance of the building.”

Subsection #5 – Proposed change: “There shall be at least two off-street parking spaces provided for each unit and the resulting impervious cover of the driveway, parking spaces, and building shall not exceed the maximum impervious coverage requirements set forth in section 218-6.2.”

Subsection #6 – Proposed change: “The lot shall have sufficient area and must be adequate to accommodate the requirements set forth in this section and shall not be reduced through division unless the resulting lot meets the requirements of §218-6.2.”

Subsection #7 – Proposed change: “The premises shall be served by either an onsite sewerage disposal system meeting Title V requirements for a multiple dwelling unit building or be connected to municipal sewer.

Mr. Barringer suggested a need to define the status of accessory structures in the context of dwelling conversions. For example, a stand-alone accessory structure such as a barn can't be converted to a multifamily.

Mr. Svarczkopf said the two boards needed to agree on their respective jurisdictions.

Ms. Spencer clarified that the current bylaw places the authority for multifamily conversions (up to three units) under the ZBA's jurisdiction.

Mr. Wilson emphasized that these provisions are for the conversion of existing dwellings only. New construction would not be eligible.

Building Commissioner Bob Garside pointed out that the multifamily dwelling conversion bylaw is important because it offers an alternative to the Accessory Apartments bylaw. Mr. Garside said the size limit of 800 square feet for Accessory Apartments is too restrictive for some people.

Ms. Hammer noted that there is a real difference in access to bank loans when comparing Dwelling Conversions versus Accessory Apartments.

Mr. Burke said it was unclear what effect these provisions would have on nonconforming lots.

Mr. Burke noted a public hearing would have to be conducted regarding the proposed changes and both the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals needed to put additional thought into the proposed changes and then have another discussion, before moving forward with a public hearing.

Mr. Barringer was excused from the meeting at approximately 8:25 p.m.

Board Member McLaughlin made a motion to adjourn the meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Board Member Spencer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Spencer, Mr. Petropoulos, 4
and Mr. Easom

Nay: 0

VOTE: 4 – 0 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

At approximately 8:30 p.m. the joint meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board was adjourned.

8:31 p.m. – The regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Board continued.

Discussion – Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment
Section 218-7.1 – Floodplain Overlay District Regulations

Mr. Burke stated that the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) had proposed model zoning requirements that communities should adopt as part of their floodplain zoning. He said the failure of municipalities to have zoning requirements that reflected the federal regulations could result in federal flood insurance being unavailable to property owners in that community. He added that the Building Commissioner was the official arbiter of floodplain zoning for the town.

Mr. Tada shared the proposed draft with the Board. Mr. Burke explained that Mr. Tada would share the draft with DCR and they would await their feedback prior to taking the next step.

Dan McLaughlin, ZBA member and Building Commissioner for Town of Dracut, said the existing floodplain overlay district bylaw doesn't provide a mechanism for variances. He said the new paradigm under the National Flood Insurance Program is based on performance standards.

Discussion – Olivia Way Drainage Mitigation Update – Reedy Meadow Estates

Mr. Burke stated that he had driven by the property recently and he noticed there was still a very large spool of wire that needed to be removed. Additionally, he said the circle at Olivia Way had been cleaned up and was in better shape than it had been. He said, however, the topcoat of pavement had still not been put on.

Mr. Tada commented that the developer, Mr. Peter Cricones, was trying to line up his paving contractor and he was aware that he needed to provide the town at least 48 hours' notice in order to line up one of the engineers from Nitsch Engineering to be present during the paving.

Committee Updates

- Complete Streets Committee

There were no updates.

- Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Svarczkopf commented there was a preliminary informal presentation and there were recommendations made to approve the applications that were submitted.

Discussion – Signature Authorization for Land Use Director/Town Planner (added 11/17/20)

Mr. Burke stated there were several things that the Planning Board needed to sign off on and given that the Town Hall was currently closed because of COVID, even by appointment, he suggested that the Board vote to authorize Mr. Tada to sign off on the 240 Main Street building permit (noting that they complied with the submission of the final site plan) as well as the modification to the Department of Public Works facility site plan to allow for the composting facility.

Mr. Svarczkopf made a motion that if the Town Planner received an okay from each Planning Board member via email or a roll call vote then the Town Planner would be authorized to sign on their behalf. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

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

Yea:	Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Svarczkopf, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Wilson	5
Nay:		0

VOTE: 5 – 0 – 0
MOTION CARRIED

General Business

- Review of Meeting Minutes

To be placed on the next meeting agenda.

- Village at Shepley Hill Site Walk - Tentatively scheduled for December 12, 2020

Planning Board Meeting Schedule

- December 3, 2020
- December 17, 2020
- January 14, 2021
- January 28, 2021

Adjournment

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

A roll call vote was taken and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trish Gedziun
Recording Secretary

Approved 1/14/2021