

## TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD

Thursday, December 17, 2020

### Meeting Minutes

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, December 17, 2020, at approximately 7:06 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  
Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member  
Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member  
Mr. Scott Wilson, Board Member

#### Members not Present:

Mr. Timothy M. Svarczkopf, Vice Chair

#### Also Present:

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

#### **Public Hearing – Definitive Plan & Special Permit – Major Residential Development Proposed “Village at Shepley Hill” Longley Road & Sand Hill Road Shepley Hill Capital Partners, LLC (Assessors’ Parcel 226-2)**

Mr. Burke opened the virtual public hearing via zoom and Mr. Tada read the Public Hearing Notice into the record as summarized below:

To consider the application submitted by Shepley Hill Capital Partners, LLC. for the approval of a definitive plan and a special permit under the provisions of Groton Zoning Bylaw §218-9.2 Major Residential Development. The project is located on Assessors' Parcel 226-2 and will result in the subdivision of the existing 45-acre property on the westerly side of Longley Road and the southerly side of Sand Hill Road into fourteen lots each with a two-unit townhouse (total of twenty-eight units) and two private roadways as shown on the plan entitled The Village at Shepley Hill Definitive Subdivision Plan, prepared by Meridian Associates, dated November 23, 2020.

Attorney Jill Mann, Legal Counsel for Shepley Hill Capital Partners, addressed the Board and summarized the project. She said the proposal was to create fourteen conventional lots with a two-family dwelling on each lot and the occupancy would be limited to people aged 55 plus. The project would have a condominium ownership structure with private roadways. She added the proposal included a shared septic system and municipal water service which they would extend up Longley Road for approximately one mile, as part of the project.

Attorney Mann noted the applicant was seeking relief from the Town of Groton's subdivision rules and regulations which mandated a 50-foot wide right-of-way and a 22-foot wide pavement width. She also said the applicant was requesting a waiver to cut in excess of 7-feet and/or fill in excess of 7-feet. She said they were investigating how to make the cuts without causing run-off that affected other portions of the property.

Attorney Mann did comment, however, that there was a hemlock grove in one area of the property that was important for habitat and said that area would be protected.

Attorney Mann pointed out that because the proposed subdivision was more than six lots the applicant was asking for a Special Permit under §218-9.2 Major Residential Development.

Mr. Larry Smith, Managing Director, also noted they redesigned the entranceway on Sand Hill Road to have the roadway come out on the opposite side of where the conservation land was.

Mr. Andrew Arsenault, Vanasse & Associates, addressed the Board and said he prepared the Transportation Impact Assessment for the project and provided an overview but noted the Town's consultants were in agreement with the methodology and findings.

Mr. Charlie Wear, the Design Engineer with Meridian Associates, shared a copy of the site plans and provided an overview for the Planning Board. Mr. Wear, in conclusion, stated they found no increase in the rate of stormwater run-off and they met the stormwater management requirements in every way.

Mr. Bryan Zimolka, Transportation Engineer, Nitsch Engineering, shared a copy of the Planning Board's transportation peer review and commented it was conducted with the current Massachusetts DOT (Department of Transportation) guidelines and the trips during the peak hours were very low. He pointed out, however, that they did not see a robust TDM (Transportation Demand Management) plan.

Mr. Jared Gentilucci, Civil Engineer, Nitsch Engineering, stated he submitted a comment letter on behalf of the Planning Board on December 16th with an updated letter issued on December 17<sup>th</sup>. He said the project generally met the requirements of the zoning bylaw and subdivision regulations. He said one of the comments that was included in the letter was the fact that there was a significant amount of cuts/fills on the project. Mr. Gentilucci added there were some areas of the steeper 1:1 rip-rap slopes that were adjacent to some of the rear and/or side yard units and he recommended that a safety barrier be provided. He also noted that the application materials did not include soil testing and groundwater elevation data. The applicant should provide the data for review.

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

Ms. Black commented she felt lots 5, 6, 10, 11, and 12 were very close to the top of the rip-rap slope and her concern was that of safety. She also said she would like to see the stormwater basins redesigned to fit in better with the existing topography and to look more natural. Further, she said she would like the plantings in the wetland restoration area to be maintained to keep the sight lines open.

Mr. Wear responded that the details regarding maintenance of the wetland restoration areas would be spelled out in the Order of Conditions issued by the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Bonnett commented he would like the applicant to provide a map (isopach) identifying the areas of proposed cut/fill on the site. He also would like to see a cut-sheet of the proposed culverts that span the wetlands.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps commented that she still had some traffic concerns regarding access and sight lines on Longley Road and Sand Hill Road. She also agreed with Ms. Black that the proposed

stormwater basins should be designed to look more natural. She said the proposed project should retain the look and feel of the existing woods as much as possible.

Mr. Smith agreed with the sentiment of retaining the wooded character of the site, and he pointed out the proposed meandering sidewalk and the walking trail as evidence of their attempt to do this.

Mr. Wilson said he likes the concept of a 55+ development with the proposed housing density. However, he commented that his main concern was with the existing topography of the site relative to the extreme cuts/fills proposed for the roadway, septic area, and some of the building lots.

Mr. Barringer echoed the concerns regarding the extent of the cuts/fills and asked if the applicant was working on trying to reduce the amount. He asked about water service in the alternative flexible development plan, and also about the use of the proposed irrigation well. He seconded Mr. Bonnett's request to see the culvert specifications and asked about wildlife passage through the culverts. He said he would like to see specimen trees identified and preserved. And he asked about the operations and maintenance (O&M) plan for the site infrastructure.

Attorney Mann replied they were working toward developing a revised plan in concert with the comments they received. Regarding the water service in a potential flexible development layout, she said they would need private wells. She stated the condo association would need to hire a third party to carry out the O&M plan.

Mr. Smith clarified that the irrigation well would be used for maintenance of street trees and other landscaping within the development. He anticipated a capacity of 35-40 gallons per minute.

Mr. Wear added that the open-bottom culverts will have naturalized substrates and a high openness ratio to accommodate wildlife passage.

Mr. Burke said the cuts/fills seemed to be the biggest concern of the Planning Board, and he suggested the applicant consider other waivers to the subdivision requirements that might result in less drastic grading on the site. He asked if the traffic counts in the Transportation Impact Assessment were adjusted for the COVID pandemic. He requested clarification on the definition and ownership of the subdivision lots. And he asked if the applicant would consider offering some form of surety to cover the construction of roadways and infrastructure.

Mr. Arseneault confirmed that the traffic counts were adjusted for COVID per MassDOT's guidelines.

Ms. Mann clarified that the condo association would own the entire site in fee, and there would be exclusive use areas associated with each of the units. She also said they were open to the idea of surety during the construction.

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

Ms. Claire Wilson, an abutter, asked where the retaining walls would be built and if her property would be affected. Mr. Wear replied the wall closest to Ms. Wilson was approximately 300 feet away from her property. He said the trail would be located on the opposite side of the wetlands from the Wilson's home.

Ms. Anna Eliot, an abutter, asked if the conservation restriction on the open space could be held by the Town of Groton. She said the proposed development would retain the character of the neighborhood and protect the abutting farms as much as possible.

Mr. George Moore, Chair of the Agricultural Commission, suggested that the Planning Board define and receive in writing how the abutter's properties would be protected. He referred to Groton's Right-to-Farm Bylaw. Ms. Julia Dickinson replied the Right-to-Farm information could be included in the Homeowner's Association documents.

Mr. Nick Stephenson, an abutter, asked how far the proposed sidewalks on Sand Hill Road would extend. It was clarified that there were no sidewalks proposed on either Sand Hill Road or Longley Road. The proposed sidewalks are associated with the interior roadways. He also asked what protections were in place for potentially lowering the age restrictions in the development. Attorney Mann replied the occupants' age had to be verified and there were specific restrictions surrounding a 55+ development.

Mr. Mike Reilly, an abutter, asked if there would be streetlights along the roads or any illuminating signs in the proposed development. Mr. Smith replied there were no current plans to illuminate any signs but an exterior lighting plan had been presented to the Planning Board regarding streetlights. He added that every light fixture would be Dark Sky compliant.

Mr. Richard Hewitt, Longley Road, expressed his concern regarding the traffic situation. He said Longley Road was a challenging road to travel. He added he felt the entrance should be put on the opposite side of the property or just not have the access point at all.

Mr. Dave Perrin, an abutter, said pedestrians also needed to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Doug Bover, an abutter, said he felt there were some sight line issues at the intersection of Sand Hill and Longley Roads that could be easily improved.

There were no more public comments.

Mr. Barringer made a motion to continue the public hearing to the January 14, 2021, Planning Board meeting at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

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

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

Nay:		0
------	--	---

**VOTE: 6 – 0 – 0**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

***Discussion – Olivia Way Drainage Mitigation Update***  
**Reedy Meadow Estates**

Mr. Barringer commented that the top coat of pavement had still not been finished and it would not be finished until the spring. He further commented, however, that there was a snow plowing service that was plowing the development.

Mr. Barringer said the drainage at the end of the loop had slightly improved because the residents had taken matters into their own hands and removed the fine-mesh screen that was causing a blockage at the inlet. He said there were no reports of basement flooding.

### **Project Updates**

- Music Center at Indian Hill, 122 Old Ayer Road

Mr. Tada said there was siltation into James Brook which came from the Indian Hill Music Center construction site. He said it appeared that the problem started when the binder course of pavement was put down. Mr. Tada explained that the Conservation Administrator was working with the site contractor to correct the problem.

- Village Meadows, 372 Townsend Road

Mr. Tada explained the site work had begun and the detention basin was graded on the southeast corner of the site. He also said that the developer, Mr. Kanniard, had requested that Nitsch Engineering perform inspections as required by the Planning Board's regulations.

Mr. Gentilucci added that the developer is not planning to use the approved "Borrow Area" during the initial phase of construction.

### **Committee Updates**

- Community Preservation Committee

There were no new updates.

- Complete Streets Committee

There were no new updates.

### **Planning Board Meeting Schedule**

- January 14, 2021
- January 28, 2021

### **Adjournment**

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

A roll call vote was taken and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Trish Gedziun  
Recording Secretary

*Approved 1/28/2021*