

## TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD

Thursday, March 11, 2021

### Meeting Minutes

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, March 11, 2021, at approximately 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  
Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member  
Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

#### Also Present:

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

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

Mr. Burke opened the public hearing and Mr. Tada read the public notice into the record as summarized below:

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, §9 and §11 of the Massachusetts General Law and the Code of the Town of Groton, Chapter 218, the Groton Planning Board will hold a virtual public hearing via Zoom to consider the application submitted by Shepley Hill Capital Partners LLC for the approval of a special permit under the provisions of the 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 thirteen lots, each lot with age-restricted two-unit townhouses (total of 26 units) on two private roadways as shown on the plan entitled the “Village at Shepley Hill, Sand Hill Road, and Longley Road. (Assessors' Parcel 226-2) Application for a Definitive Subdivision prepared by Meridian Associates, dated February 5, 2021.

Mr. Tada explained that all letters from the public would be made available at [www.grotonma.gov](http://www.grotonma.gov) (Planning Board's webpage)

Mr. Larry Smith, of Restoration Capital, on behalf of the applicant, addressed the Board and reported they had received a unanimous favorable decision from the Groton Conservation Commission as well as the Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee.

Attorney Jill Mann, on behalf of Shepley Capital Partners, addressed the Board and said pursuant to the Town of Groton a flexible development plan required 15% of affordable units which meant the proposed subdivision had to have three-bedroom units and could not be restricted by age. She said, however, a 55 plus development did not support having school-aged children living there. Attorney Mann added she felt the subdivision plan was the preferable option.

Attorney Mann requested the Planning Board to consider granting a special permit based on the issuance of the subdivision to allow the proposed development to be developed as a 13-lot subdivision with duplexes representing the improvements on each of those lots.

Mr. Burke stated the following communications regarding the proposed development had been received and would be posted on the Planning Board's website:

Mr. Bob Pine – Groton Conversation Trust – Expressed concern regarding the topography of the site and was not pleased with the amount required to fill it.

Ms. Anna Eliot – Abutter – Expressed support for the proposed development.

Attorney Mann – In response to Mr. Pine's letter stating she felt the topography of the site was very challenging and the requested waivers were to minimize the impact to the property.

Ms. Liz Alexander – Expressed concern regarding the sensitive wetlands and habitat.

Mr. Paul Funch – Expressed concerned regarding the environmental loss and did not think waivers were appropriate.

Ms. Darcy Donald, Groton Turtle Conservation, reported that turtles as little as a half of a mile away from the proposed site were noted and could have habitats on the site.

The Bobzien Family who were abutters on Sand Hill Road said they felt the development was a positive thing for the neighborhood.

Mr. Richard Hewitt – Inquired as to whether or not the Groton Police Department had provided an opinion regarding the proposed development.

Mr. Robert Lotz, a resident, asked the Planning Board to support the appeal filed against the Conservation Commission's order of conditions.

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

Mr. Josh Silvia, a resident, asked what the timeline would be from breaking ground until the residents moved in. Mr. Smith replied it would take eight to ten months to install the roadways and residents would move in approximately six to eight months later. (Approximately 2 ½ year total process.)

Mr. Harold Sanford, 15 High Oats Path, asked for clarification where Longley Road, Sand Hill Road, and Nashua Road would meet versus where the road cut for the development would be. He expressed safety concerns surrounding the intersection. Mr. Weare replied there was more than adequate sight distance at the intersection.

Mr. Paul Funch, a resident, commented while he was impressed with the work of the developer, he was not in favor of disturbing one of the three drumlins in Groton.

Ms. Anna Eliot, a resident, commented the land was going to be developed one way or another. She said she was impressed with how the developer listened to the concerns of the abutters.

Mr. Brad Bobzien, an abutter, expressed support for the proposed development.

Mr. David Perrin, an abutter, addressed the Board and said he was concerned about traffic safety. He said the development would change the long-term viability of nature.

Mr. Ed McNierney, a resident, recommended that there should be an explicit definition and delineation of the 82% of open space.

Mr. Bob Pine, a resident, asked if there were a working estimate of the number of people who lived in town who were likely to move into the proposed development as opposed to people who would come from a different community. Mr. Smith replied approximately 25% of the occupants would be people already living in the Town of Groton.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps commented that she was not convinced that an \$800,000 home had a tax rate that offered an alternative that was significantly higher than the median house. She said seniors who would move into the development were not going to get a tax break and the master plan’s goal included affordable opportunities for people to stay in town.

Mr. Svarczkopf commented that he felt the applicant’s comments regarding the development not having an effect on the town and “aging in place” were a bit hyperbolic.

Ms. Kim McGovern, a relative of the owner, commented that she loved drumlins and nature but her father et. al. had paid taxes on the property for over forty years and she was very much in favor of the proposed development. She suggested if the Town of Groton wanted to buy it then they should buy it.

Mr. Wilson made a motion to close the public hearing for the special permit. Mr. Svarczkopf seconded the motion.

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

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

**VOTE: 6 – 1 – 0**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

**Public Hearing (Continued) - Definitive Subdivision Plan – “Village at Shepley Hill”, Longley Road & Sand Hill Road – Shepley Hill Capital Partners, LLC (Assessors’ Parcel 226-2)**

Mr. Wilson made a motion to close the public hearing regarding the Definitive Subdivision Plan. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

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

**VOTE: 6 – 1 – 0**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

Mr. Bonnett said he would like to see a simple plan that showed the open space versus the private space. He also said he would be interested in knowing what volume of soil was anticipated to be used to build the site up.

Mr. Barringer typically the Board would ask Mr. Tada to write a draft approval as a working template to begin with. He said he had a hard time with a 40-plus piece of property on a laptop screen and he wanted a chance to review the paper of record at Town Hall.

Mr. Barringer made a motion to request Mr. Tada to write a draft approval for both the special permit application and the definitive subdivision plan. Mr. Svarczkopf seconded the motion.

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

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

Nay: 0

**VOTE: 7 – 0 – 0**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

**Zoning Amendments (Suggested) for Spring Town Meeting**

1. Flood Plain Discussion. (Withdrawn)
2. Attached Accessory Dwelling Units change to Accessory Dwelling Units.
3. All marijuana establishments were listed the same, whether medical or not. There was still a provision in the Schedule of Use Regulations that stated medical marijuana dispensaries were allowed by special permit in the Commercial/Industrial Districts.

**Committee Updates**

- Complete Streets Committee

Mr. Tada pointed out he had checked the Complete Streets portal and the application submitted in November was listed as still pending.

- Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Svarczkopf reported there was enough money in the budget to fund all of the projects with the assumption that the middle school track and stadium field would be bonded and the Community

Preservation Committee would then be encumbered to pay back the notes for a period of approximately five years.

Mr. Svarczkopf stated projects that were funded included:

- Restoration of the maintenance building at the cemetery.
- Pickleball court at the Groton Country Club.
- \$20,000 study to look at Cow Pond Brook playing fields, primarily for parking.
- Money for the extension of the Squannacook Rail Trail.
- Intend to fully fund a request for \$350,000 for the Conservation Fund.

### **General Business**

Mr. Tada stated the start time of the Spring Town Meeting was changed to 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

### **Planning Board Meeting Schedule**

- March 25, 2021
- April 8, 2021
- April 22, 2021
- May 1, 2021 – Spring Town Meeting

### **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 9:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun  
Recording Secretary

*Approved 3/25/2021*