**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, April 28, 2022**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, April 28, 2022, at approximately

7:00 p.m. All votes were to be taken by roll call because the meeting was virtual.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Vice-Chair

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Clerk

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

**Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Per the Massachusetts Attorney General’s guidance regarding the Massachusetts Wiretap Statute, Mr. Wilson stated the meeting was virtual and being recorded and all votes must be taken via roll call. Further, Mr. Wilson introduced the Planning Board members who were in attendance.

***Public Hearing – Citizens Petition – Zoning Bylaw Amendment to Change the Definition of Age-Restricted Housing (Submitted by Jeff Brem)***

**MOTION:** Mr. Wilson made a motion to waive the reading of the public notice into the record. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard, Mr. Bonnett, 7

Ms. Black, Mr. Barringer, Ms. Nilsson Ripps,

& Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**The motion carried 7 – 0 – 0.**

Mr. Jeffrey Brem presented his Citizens’ Petition to change the definition of Age-Restricted Housing in the Zoning Bylaw. He said he purchased the property located at 568 - 578 Main Street and wanted to develop it as an age-restricted project and put forth a proposed change to the zoning definition.

Mr. Brem said he submitted a revised petition at the Town Moderator’s recommendation, and it included a 20% affordable housing requirement.

Mr. Burke said the zoning amendment, as described by the petitioner, was to permit the development of a site with age-restricted housing by reducing the percentage of required affordable units from 50% to 20%. He said in his opinion, he did not think the Planning Board’s focus should not be on the merits of the developer, but he was concerned with the larger picture and the implications of the zoning bylaw, and the unintended town-wide implications associated if the amendment were to be adopted.

Mr. Burke said he would not vote in favor of the request. Mr. Barringer said he was in agreement with Mr. Burke’s comments and would also not vote in favor of the request. Ms. Nilsson Ripps said she would like the Board to have further discussions regarding the matter of density.

Mr. Brem said the Planning Board still would have to review every special permit application. The base density under the Age-Restricted Housing bylaw is eight (8) units per acre, and the Planning Board has the discretion to approve up to fourteen (14) units per acre. He said his petition would not preclude the Planning Board from making zoning amendments in the future.

Mr. Burke reiterated the point that the board needs to think about it in terms of the whole zoning context, not just in terms of Mr. Brem’s project. Mr. Wilson agreed.

Mr. Barringer said zoning changes should be done with a more calm and measured approach.

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

Ms. Becky Pine, Chair of the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT), addressed the Board and said she felt the proposed project was very valuable to the town and would provide smaller, less expensive housing for older persons. She said the Affordable Housing Trust had already voted that they would support the proposal at Town Meeting.

Mr. Burke said zoning reform requires robust public engagement, which typically involves paid consultants. He asked if the AHT would consider contributing funds for such a purpose.

Mr. Tada read aloud the following “chats” as follows:

John Sopka: “How do the owners enforce the age restriction?” Mr. Burke replied that DHCD’s policy would not discriminate against school-aged children, but they put limits on it.

J.P. Hegeman: “I am 100% against this for whatever that’s worth.”

Richard Harrington, a developer and owner of property on Gratuity Road, stated he was in favor of the petition.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard, Mr. Bonnett, 7

Ms. Black, Mr. Barringer, Ms. Nilsson Ripps,

& Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**The motion carried 7 – 0 – 0.**

**MOTION**: Mr. Burke made a motion that the Planning Board does not recommend approval of the Citizen’s Petition at Town Meeting. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Barringer, Ms. Black, 6

Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**The motion carried 6 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Mr. Bonnett)**

***Discussion – ANR Plan Revision – Hayes Woods Subdivision***

***Maple Avenue (Robert Kiley)***

Mr. Wilson said the Planning Board had received a revised plan from Dillis & Roy dated March 16, 2022. He said there were lot-line adjustments for Lots 2 through 7 (reduced lot areas) and a lot was created (Parcel A1) for protected open space (to be deeded to the Town).

Mr. Tada noted that the revised plan would create inconsistency with Special Permit Conditions 2 & 3.

Mr. Robert Collins, attorney for the developer, explained that they decided to eliminate the individual conservation restrictions on the four estate lots along Maple Avenue. Instead, the protected open space areas will be combined into a single larger parcel that will be donated in fee to the Conservation Commission. The entire 60 acres of open space associated with the Hayes Woods project will be deeded to the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Collins suggested the Planning Board could modify the Major Residential Development Special Permit for Hayes Woods as a field change, to account for the reduction in building setbacks on Lots 4 and 6. He noted that the reduced setbacks will result in less site disturbance. He also stated Lots 1 and 2 would have Declarations of Restriction on them due to proximity to a wetland resource area.

Ms. Black asked to see a plan showing the revised limits of disturbance and driveway locations. Mr. Collins said he would provide a copy of the revised grading plan.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the ANR Plan drawn by Dillis & Roy, dated March 16, 2022. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Barringer, Ms. Black, Mr. Bonnett, 7

Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**The motion carried 7 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Pre-Submission Review – Seven Hills Group Home***

***Hillside Avenue/West Street (Parcel 109-52)***

Mr. Dave Sorgman, architect from Group 7 Design, addressed the Board and said the proposed project was to construct a seven-bedroom group home on the Seven Hills property. He said the proposed project would replace an existing ranch-style home as well as another building.

Mr. Sorgman said the proposed plan included the demolition of the two existing structures at the corner of Hillside Avenue and West Street, and the construction of a new 5,200 square-foot, seven-bedroom group home, with a new driveway/parking area.

Mr. Ed Doucette, facilities manager for Seven Hills, said the proposed group home would be similar in appearance to the existing Seven Hills group home located on Sand Hill Road.

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

Mr. Tada said Ms. Liza Sargent, engineer from SVE Associates, asked if the Planning Board would entertain waivers for a traffic study, lighting plan, and a development impact report. Mr. Barringer said the applicant should apply for waivers if they felt it was necessary.

***Discussion – Pre-Submission Review – Groton Wellness & Main House Restaurant,***

***Mill Run Plaza, Main Street (Parcel 216-1)***

Dr. Jean Nordin of Groton Wellness addressed the Board and said she was looking into the possibility of relocating the Main House Restaurant from Unit 495C to 491G, in Mill Run Plaza. She said Groton Wellness were in the process of purchasing the space (Unit 491G) they had been leasing. She said if they were to acquire the space the café would be located in Unit 495C and additionally, it would allow the staff to have a pathway to go from space to space.

Dr. Nordin said one of the bigger issues would be the seating capacity at the Main House Restaurant because it would go from 1,000 square feet to 2,200 square feet. Mr. Burke replied that the existing restaurant was a “take-out” restaurant, and it would require a special permit to allow the restaurant to have food consumption indoors as well as to review how it would affect the parking requirements.

Dr. Nordin also mentioned she would like to ask the condominium association if she could make some landscaping improvements. The Planning Board members indicated general support for improved landscaping at Mill Run Plaza.

***Discussion – Destination Groton Committee***

Mr. Burke recused himself from the discussion.

Mr. Greg Sheldon, member of the Destination Groton Committee, addressed the Board and said that his committee would like the findings of the 2021 Destination Groton report to be incorporated in the Master Plan update. The 2021 Destination Groton report identified numerous assets that had been added to the Town since the last Master Plan update in 2011.

Mr. Sheldon said his committee had a meeting with Senator John Cronin to discuss what they wished to accomplish over the following eight to ten years. He said Senator Cronin provided them with some assistance regarding the earmark process in the state budget to identify some funds that could be used to help the committee advance its goals.

Mr. Jeff Gordon, member of the Destination Groton Committee, addressed the Board and said the committee would like to help fund the Master Plan by contributing monies to be applied to some type of consultant to help blend the existing Master Plan with the Destination Groton Committee’s vision. He emphasized that the goal would be to not change the look, character, or feel of the Town while maximizing the economic benefits that the Groton Hill Music Center could bring.

Mr. Barringer replied that the Master Plan encompassed a number of aspects of the community, which went well beyond tourism and economic development, such as natural resources, transportation, housing, and recreation. He questioned how the Planning Board could make sure the Master Plan was unbiased if they were to accept money from another committee with a specific interest.

Mr. Sheldon said one of the committee’s recommendations was to hire an Economic Development Director in the future.

Mr. Gordon explained that the Destination Groton Committee was scheduling three public informational forums: May 22nd at Groton Wood Camp from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.; June 12th at the Groton Center from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; and June 25th at the Prescott School from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. He said the public forums would be announced at Spring Town Meeting.

***Town Meeting Reports***

Mr. Burke said he was not sure he would be able to attend Town Meeting but said he would forward his comments on the zoning articles, including the Citizen’s Petition submitted by Jeff Brem, to the Planning Board.

Mr. Barringer offered to speak to all of the Articles presented on behalf of the Planning Board.

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* April 29, 2022 (Regular meeting via Zoom)
* April 30, 2022 (Spring Town Meeting at 9:00 a.m. – Middle School)

***Adjournment***

**MOTION:** At approximately 10:05 p.m. Mr. Barringer made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken, which resulted as follows:

Yea: Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard, Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, 7

Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Barringer, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**The motion carried 7 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 5/26/2022*