**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, October 13, 2022**

**Meeting Minutes**

A regular (virtual) meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, October 13, 2022, at approximately 7:00 p.m. The virtual meeting was conducted on Zoom.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Vice-Chair

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Clerk

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

**Members not Present:**

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

**Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Per the Massachusetts Attorney General’s guidance regarding the Massachusetts Wiretap and Open Meeting Laws, Mr. Wilson stated the meeting was virtual and being recorded, and all votes would be taken via roll call. Further, Mr. Wilson introduced the Planning Board members.

***Public Hearing – Citizen’s Petition Zoning Amendment***

***Rezone Property from Residential-Agricultural to Neighborhood Business***

***797 Boston Road (Assessors’ Parcel 133-49)***

Mr. Wilson opened the public hearing and stated the public hearing notice was available to view at the Land Use Office.

Mr. Donald Van Dyne, landowner and petitioner, presented his zoning amendment proposal. He said the parcel was approximately 3 acres, and his request was to rezone the parcel to Neighborhood Business (NB) for the development of an indoor state-of-the-art pickleball facility consisting of fifteen courts. Mr. Van Dyne said he is seeking a positive recommendation to Town Meeting from the Planning Board, with respect to his proposed zoning amendment.

Ms. Katie Enright, P.E., of Howard Stein Hudson, presented a conceptual site plan showing a potential structure large enough for 15 pickleball courts and a parking lot accommodating 75 spaces. The property is 2.6 acres, located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Routes 119 and 225 (Four Corners). Ms. Enright noted that a commercial indoor recreational facility in the NB district would require a Special Permit issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), pursuant to the Zoning Bylaw.

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

Ms. Black stated that she would like to see an exceptionally good landscape buffer between the proposed facility/parking area and the abutting residential neighborhood.

Mr. Barringer noted the positioning of the proposed facility entrance as it pertained to the intersection at Routes 119 and 225. Route 119 narrows down to two lanes heading toward Littleton. The entrance needs to be designed with traffic safety in mind. He also said the lighting should be kept to a reasonable level out of respect for the abutting residences.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps said she would hope the applicant would pay particular attention to the facades of the proposed building and that it stays in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood. She also suggested the plan should sidewalks, elevated crosswalks, or other pedestrian amenities.

Mr. Wilson commented that he thought the proposal was a good use of the property, but he shared the concern about traffic safety on Route 119. He suggested conducting a traffic study of that intersection.

Mr. Bonnett said he could envision the facility becoming a short cut between Routes 119 and 225. Mr. Van Dyne said they could consider adding speed bumps.

Mr. Barringer noted that he thought the proposed change in zoning was a low-impact, high-value opportunity and was in favor of it.

Mr. Van Dyne said there is a huge demand for such a facility. He has coached hundreds of pickleball players in the region, and there are no large indoor facilities north of Boston. His business model would consist of a membership-based clientele using the facility on a consistent schedule, and the facility would be exclusively for pickleball. He and Ms. Enright believed 75 spaces would provide sufficient parking.

Mr. Wilson asked what type of septic system there would be. Ms. Enright replied they had not yet discussed the matter, but they estimated a capacity of 3,500 gallons per day.

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

Ms. Alice Smith, 10 Laurel Lane, commented that they might be losing sight of what the applicant was actually asking for, which was rezoning the property. She said her concern was that while pickleball was currently very popular, it might not remain popular on a long-term basis. However, the zoning change would remain, if approved. The change would bring more traffic, noise and light pollution, and would detract from the rural character of Groton.

Ms. Sarah Campbell, 43 Laurel Lane, stated that she did not think the property merited a rezoning as the town was not doing a decent job at maintaining and filling the commercial space it already had at the Four Corners (760 Boston Road and 1 Forge Village Road).

Ms. Julie Rodwin, 39 Laurel Lane, also commented that she was not in favor of rezoning the property. She wanted to preserve Groton as a rural-agricultural destination.

Ms. Campbell asked if Mr. Van Dyne had conducted any outreach with abutters living in the Four Corners neighborhood. Mr. Van Dyne said he had not reached out to any neighbors.

Mr. Barringer suggested that the applicant should put his request on the Spring Town Meeting to ensure that he had time to thoroughly research the proposed plan and to inform the abutters.

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

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, Ms. Black, 6

Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Barringer, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Ms. Nilsson Ripps commented that she felt the proposed use would be a benefit to the town. She also commented that she was concerned that the applicant had not yet spoken to the abutters. Ms. Black said that she agreed with Ms. Nilsson Ripps’ comments.

**MOTION:** Mr. Bonnett made a motion to recommend changing the zoning of 797 Boston Road from Residential-Agricultural to Neighborhood Business with a suggestion that the petitioner

works closely with the abutters.

**The motion failed due to the lack of a second.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion that the Planning Board did not recommend the proposed zoning change in zoning to Town Meeting.

**The motion failed due to the lack of a second.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion that the Planning Board makes no recommendation on the proposed change in zoning. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

Mr. Barringer withdrew his motion.

***Public Hearing – Special Permit***

***Cooking School, Culinary Studio, Events Space, & Catering***

***491 Main Street, Unit E (Assessors’ Parcel 216-1.1E)***

Mr. Eric Brown, the applicant, presented his application for a special permit to operate a cooking school in Mill Run Plaza. The cooking school would be located in the space formerly occupied by the Blackbird Café.

Mr. Brown shared a rendering of the proposed interior design. He said the front half of the space would be an open-concept kitchen that could accommodate up to sixteen students. There would also be a working kitchen area in the back portion. Mr. Brown was not proposing any exterior changes at this time.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps commented that she liked the student-focused kitchen space, but she did not see any handicap-accessible areas. Mr. Brown replied he had been trying to figure out how to do that in an inclusive way. Ms. Nilsson Ripps suggested consulting with the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board.

Ms. Black, Ms. Bedard, and Mr. Wilson also expressed positive comments on the proposed interior design and school concept.

Mr. Wilson asked if there were members of the public who had questions or comments. There were none.

**MOTION:** Ms. Black 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: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, Ms. Black, 6

Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Barringer, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Mr. Wilson asked Mr. Tada to proceed with the draft special permit and site plan review to be discussed at the October 27, 2022, Planning Board meeting.

***Public Hearing (Continuation) – Special Permit***

***Adult-Use Recreational Marijuana Retail Establishment (UC Retail, LLC.)***

***489 Main Street, Unit A (Assessors’ Parcel 216-1.5)***

The Planning Board acknowledged receipt of updated site plan information provided by the applicant, Mike Spengler.

There was also a draft Special Permit available for the board to review.

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

Ms. Black stated that the plan indicated four Green Giant Arborvitae on the south side of the building, and she said there should be a comment included that these trees needed to be spaced apart more appropriately as they can grow to be quite large.

Mr. Wilson asked if there were members of the public who had questions or comments. There were none.

**MOTION:** Mr. Bonnett made a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, Ms. Black, 6

Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Barringer, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Fall Town Meeting Warrant Articles***

***Planning Board Recommendations***

* Citizen’s Petition for Zoning Amendment 787 Boston Road

(Previously Discussed)

* Funding Article for Master Plan Update

Mr. Tada explained there were nineteen Articles on the Warrant and the first eight would be taken as one vote called the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Tada said Article 8 was with regard to additional funding for the Master Plan. He said the Town Manager postponed the Planning Board’s initial funding request two years ago in favor of other capital projects. This year, $100,000 was approved in the 2022 Spring Town Meeting and the remaining $50,000 was originally going to be placed on the 2023 Spring Town Meeting Warrant. However, the Town Manager decided to bring it up at the Fall Town Spring Meeting Warrant to make up for some of the time delay.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to favorably recommend Article 8 to the Fall Town Meeting Warrant. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, Ms. Black, 6

Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Barringer, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Multi-Family Housing for MBTA Communities – Next Steps***

* Mr. Tada stated that Jeff Legros from MRPC (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission) would be joining the meeting on October 27, 2022.

***Discussion – Master Plan Update***

* Draft RFP Available for Review (assumes full funding)

Mr. Tada requested that the Board provide him with their comments by the next Planning Board meeting, October 27, 2022.

Ms. Black suggested that the RFP be put out but not due until the end of January.

***Planning Board Reorganization***

The Planning Board did not reorganize as a full complement of the Board was not present.

***Project Updates***

* Bank of America, 167 Main Street – Lighting

Mr. Barringer will provide an update at the next meeting.

* Groton Hill Music Center

Mr. Tada said the Groton Hill Music Center was confident that the unwanted noise was coming from the chiller unit. Sound-deadening blankets have been ordered.

Ms. Bedard suggested imposing a requirement that would prevent the Groton Hill Music Center from receiving a full Building Occupancy Permit unless the issue of the noise was resolved.

* Village at Shepley Hill

Mr. Tada said the developer completed the installation of the bridge off Sand Hill Road. The developer hopes to get the binder course of pavement down prior to the start of winter.

* Monarch Path

Mr. Tada said the developer, Ebi Masalehdan, will be providing a roadway as-built plan for review.

* Groton Farms 40B Project, 500 Main Street

Mr. Tada said the developer, John Amaral, would submit the application to the ZBA for the Comprehensive Permit sometime in November or early December.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

There were no new updates to share.

* Community Preservation Committee

There were no new updates to share.

***General Business***

* Meeting Minutes
  + September 8, 2022

**MOTION:** Ms. Bedard made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 8, 2022, meeting. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, Ms. Black, 6

Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Barringer, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* October 22, 2022 – Fall Town Meeting
* October 27, 2022
* November 10, 2022
* December 1, 2022
* December 15, 2022

***Adjournment***

At approximately 9:35 p.m. Ms. Black made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, Ms. Black, 6

Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Barringer, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 11/10/2022*