**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, October 27, 2022**

**Meeting Minutes**

A regular (virtual) meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, October 27, 2022, at approximately 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Vice-Chair

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Clerk

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member (Joined the meeting at approximately 8:10 p.m.)

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

**Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

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

***Discussion – MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Millstone Hill Facilities – Lincoln Lab, Haystack Observatory & Wallace Observatory***

Representing MIT’s Millstone Hill facilities were:

* Tim Brothers, MIT Wallace Astrophysical Observatory
* Jeff Dominick, MIT Lincoln Lab
* Colin Lonsdale, Haystack Radio Observatory

Mr. Jeff Dominick, Field Site Manager, MIT Lincoln Laboratory, addressed the Board and gave a PowerPoint presentation as summarized below:

* MIT’s Millstone Hill Campus encompassed three major entities:
  + The Haystack Radio Observatory (Scientific in Nature)
    - Not DOD funded.
    - Looking at intergalactic space and galactic black holes.
  + The Wallace Astrophysical Observatory (Scientific in Nature)
    - Not DOD funded.
    - Studying planetary space with optical telescopes – emphasis on education.
  + MIT Lincoln Lab – (Technology for National Security)
    - Work for the Department of Defense
    - Perform studies on the International Space Station and other satellites orbiting near the earth.
    - Perform studies on objects no further than 30,000 miles away from earth (geosynchronous orbit)
    - Provide launch support & spacecraft observation (of which there are thousands)

Mr. Dominick said MIT’s primary goal in speaking with the Groton Planning Board was to show them what they did and that they wanted to be good neighbors to come up with solutions to problems (such as light pollution) that would benefit both of them.

Mr. Colin Lonsdale, Ph.D., Director, Haystack Observatory, addressed the Board and said his department was responsible for performing research at radio wavelengths, not visible waves. He said a major part of what they did was to educate the public via Open House Nights, student projects, and eclipse viewing. He explained that everyday items, such as LED lightbulbs and garage door openers, could cause radio interference.

Mr. Tim Brothers, Ph.D., Observatory Manager & Technical Instructor, MIT Wallace Astrophysical Observatory, showed a picture of a map of light pollution taken from space via orbiting satellites. He said they use optical telescopes, and their primary mission is education. He explained that they try to shield every LED light they could find because the blue light from LEDs is the main contributor to light pollution. Dimmers and timers can be used to mitigate light pollution, in addition to shielding.

Light Pollution Definition: The inappropriate or excessive use of artificial light.

Mr. Brothers commented that in Pepperell they achieved the most environmentally friendly streetlights in the country. He said they were the most cost-effective option up front, and they saved far more energy than the consulting company had originally thought because they used Smart Controllers that dimmed the light to 50% from approximately 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. He said when the streetlights were dimmed, they could see more stars.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps said the Planning Board generally advocated for a lighting color temperature of 3,500 Kelvins (K) or less and asked if that was low enough. Mr. Brothers replied that 3,000K should be the hard upper limit, and 2,700K lights were readily available and a better choice.

The link containing this discussion as well as the entire Planning Board meeting can be viewed at:

<http://schedule.thegrotonchannel.org/CablecastPublicSite/show/9927?channel=5>

***Discussion: Multi-Family Housing for MBTA Communities***

***Next Steps for Compliance, with Jeff Legros, MRPC***

Mr. Jeff Legros, Principal Planner, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, addressed the Board and reviewed the following:

* Next Compliance Deadline: Submit Action Plan by 1/31/2023.
* Action Plan should Include an Estimated Schedule of Compliance.
* Deadline to submit for final compliance is 12/31/2025.
* A new category was created for adjacent small towns geared towards towns similar

to Groton. The minimum land area size was eliminated, and the unit capacity was substantially reduced to 208 units.

Mr. Burke suggested that Mr. Tada begin work on the online submission of the Technical Assistance Grant, noting there was a deadline of November 10, 2022.

Discussion to be continued at the November 10, 2022, Planning Board meeting.

*(Mr. Burke signed off at approximately 8:45 p.m.)*

***Discussion – 31 Adams Avenue (Halsey Platt and Rob Saunders)***

* Potential future use of Platt Builders site

Mr. Halsey Platt of Platt Builders commented that Platt Builders would be moving its operation to Ayer. He said he had met with Mr. Rob Saunders, a puppeteer who owned a puppet and costume manufacturing company and who was interested in renting the property at 31 Adams Avenue. Mr. Saunders uses the same manufacturing processes as Platt’s custom cabinetry shop. He further said that the property was zoned Residential-Agricultural and although there would not be a change in use, there would be a change of tenant. He asked the Board if he needed to submit an application for the change. Mr. Tada replied he did not think so, but it would be advisable to get an opinion from Bob Garside, the Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer, and/or seek legal counsel.

***Discussion – Request for Minor Modification of Site Plan***

***Composting Facility Greenhouse (Black Earth Compost)***

***600 Cow Pond Brook Road***

* Modification of Site Plan Review Permit, PB #2019-01
* Revised plan received from Andrew Brousseau, Black Earth Compost
* First greenhouse to be relocated with a smaller footprint

Mr. Bonnett commented that he toured the facility and felt they were managing the facility quite well and did not notice any issues with odor.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the request as a field change for the relocation of the first greenhouse and the new proposed size with the stipulation that the site lighting be no brighter than 2,700K. 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.**

***Discussion – Issue Special Permit for Marijuana Retail Establishment***

***489 Main Street, Unit A (UC Retail, LLC)***

* Draft Permit with Condition added for Submittal of Final Landscaping Plan

Mr. Tada explained the change was with regard to the spacing of the Arborvitaes and would require approval of a final landscaping prior to occupancy.

**MOTION:**  Ms. Nilsson Ripps made a motion to approve the Special Permit for a Marijuana Retail Establishment located at 489 Main Street, Unit A, as amended. 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 – Issue Special Permit for Cooking School***

***491 Main Street, Unit E (Eric Brown)***

* Draft Permit with standard conditions for a change of use (no exterior site alterations proposed)

Mr. Tada said he added the line “parking for the disabled and access to **and within** the cooking school shall comply with the requirements of the AAB (Architectural Access Board) and the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act).”

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the Special Permit for a cooking school located at 491 Main Street, Unite E. 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.**

***Discussion – Lighting Modifications Update***

***Bank of America ATM, 167 Main Street***

Mr. Barringer commented that they had reduced the light intensity somewhat, but parts of the property were still too bright. He also said one of the light fixtures was mislabeled on the most recent lighting plan from Bank of America (plan “v5”). He suggested that the Planning Board reject the proposed lighting plan and request that the bank send another one with the appropriate lighting specifications.

*(Mr. Barringer signed off at approximately 9:35 p.m.)*

***Discussion – Master Plan Update***

* Full Funding ($150,000) Approved by Town Meeting Votes
* Draft RFP for Review (Comments)

Ms. Bedard suggested that if there were going to be an increase in activity on the Nashua River Rail Trail there should be further discussion regarding its upkeep.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps suggested that the Rail Trail be plowed in the winter months.

Further discussion to take place at the next Planning Board meeting.

***Planning Board Reorganization***

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

***Project Updates***

* Village at Shepley Hill
  + Drainage Installation being installed along Legacy Lane
  + Building Permits issued for model units
* Groton Farms 40B Project, 500 Main Street
  + Technical assistance for ZBA to be provided by a consultant through the Massachusetts Housing Partnership
  + Anticipate the Comprehensive Permit application being submitted to the Zoning Board of Appeals in late November or December

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

Mr. Tada noted that they were waiting for the design plans from Nitsch Engineering.

* Community Preservation Committee

The initial application step (Project Summary) deadline was today so they would soon find out how many potential CPC projects were submitted for consideration.

***General Business***

* ZBA Update
  + Amanda Urmann has been hired as the new Administrative Assistant for the Building Department, ZBA, and Historic Districts Commission.

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* November 10, 2022
* December 1, 2022
* December 15, 2022
* January 12, 2023
* January 26, 2023

***Adjournment***

At approximately 9:50 p.m. Ms. Nilsson Ripps 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, 5

Mr. Bonnett, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 12/1/2022*