**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, February 9, 2023**

**Meeting Minutes**

A regular (virtual) meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, February 9, 2023, at approximately 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Vice-Chair

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Clerk

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

**Members not Present:**

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

**Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Per 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.

Mr. Wilson stated the public hearing notices would not be read into the record, but they were available at the Land/Use Office in the Town Hall.

***Public Hearings (Continued) – Definitive Plan and Special Permit***

***Hayes Woods Subdivision – Flexible Development***

***Pepperell Road, Assessors’ Parcel 104-30 (Kiley)***

Attorney Bob Collins, and Mr. Stan Dillis, P.E. of Dillis & Roy Civil Design Group, Inc., were present on behalf of the applications.

* Revised definitive plan from Dills & Roy Civil Design Group, received on February 6th.
* Cut & Fill Plan, received on February 1st.
* Stormwater review from Nitsch Engineering, received on February 6th.
* Emergency vehicle turning movement plan, received February 6th. (Turnaround added)
* Response to comments letter from Dillis & Roy, Received February 6th.
* Supplemental narrative letter from Bob Collins, received on February 6th.

Mr. Wilson asked if there were Board Members who had questions or comments. There were none.

Mr. Bonnett, referring to the groundwater issue, asked if the separation was difficult to get because it was high groundwater or because of the topography. Mr. Dillis replied they had the separation on all of the drainage areas, but they had to provide Nitsch Engineering with documentation confirming it.

Mr. Burke asked if any trees might be able to be saved. Attorney Collins replied there would be quite a bit of disruption for this flexible development, but he said it would only be 15% of the overall area of Hayes Woods.

Mr. Burke suggested that a site walk should be scheduled once the roads were staked out and identification of mature trees and how many of them might be saved.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to schedule a site walk for the morning of Saturday, March 4th with a contingency date of March 11th in the event of inclement weather. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Bonnett, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Ms. Black, referring to grading sheet C3, noted that the grading to be done on lots 4, 5, & 6 was quite a bit without a house or draining system. She suggested that the applicant might be able to adjust the grading and save some trees.

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

Ms. Diana Abbott, 314 Hill Road, asked how much of the remaining vegetated buffer not being developed would be on lot 5. Mr. Dillis replied that it would be 50 to 75 feet.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to continue the public hearing to March 16, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard 6

Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Multi-Family Housing for MBTA Communities - Technical Assistance Update***

Mr. Tada explained that he was told that the MRPC (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission) was in discussions with the Massachusetts Housing Partnership to finalize the scope of the Technical Assistance contract. He said he had not heard from them as of yet.

***Discussion – MIT Millstone Hill Facility – Trail Usage***

Mr. Wilson said it had come to the Planning Board’s attention that there had been trail usage on conservation land, as well as town-owned land, via the MIT Observatory.

Ms. Nilsson Ripps asked what the potential damage ATVs could cause on the conservation land. Mr. Muehlke, of the Groton Conservation Trust, replied that possible damage included erosion and a danger to wildlife as well as biodiversity.

***Discussion – Letter of support for Affordable Housing Trust’s Application for CPA Funds (Added on 2/9/2023)***

* Affordable Housing Authority requesting $200,000 of Community Preservation Act Funds for Community Housing

Ms. Becky Pine, Affordable Housing Trust, said the Affordable Housing Trust had submitted an application to the CPC for $200,000. She said the AHT was in the process of assessing town-owned land to build affordable housing on. She said the application to the CPC was the first step in adopting a future policy that would award the Affordable Housing Trust with a certain amount of money every year.

Ms. Fran Stanley, Affordable Housing Coordinator, commented that the only issue was the AHT wanted to be able to hold the funds and not have to spend them by a date certain.

**MOTION:** Ms. Bedard made a motion that the Planning Board was in favor of the letter of support. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard 6

Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Mr. Burke, the Planning Board’s representative on the CPC, clarified that he voted in favor of the providing a letter of support. He was not making a vote on the specific CPC application itself.

***Discussion – Potential Zoning Amendments for Spring Town Meeting***

* Draft Warrant Article for Accessory Apartment Zoning Clarifications

Mr. Tada stated that he had submitted a draft of the potential zoning amendments to the Town Manager as a placeholder for the Spring Town Meeting Warrant.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to schedule a public hearing regarding the proposed zoning amendment on Thursday, March 16, 2023. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard 6

Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

**Recorder’s Note: At approximately 8:38 p.m. Mr. Burke was excused from the meeting.**

***Discussion – MRPC (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission) Transportation Project Solicitation***

Mr. Tada explained that the MRPC had announced a call for transportation projects that would be included in one of their community assistance programs, the Unified Planning Work Program. He added that Mr. Burke had reached out to the MRPC about doing an updated Walkability Study, with a particular focus on expanding non-vehicular access to the many trails Groton.

Mr. Tada stated that the Select Board would be considering the proposed concept and could potentially agree to sign a letter of interest that would be sent to the MRPC.

John Sopka, 344 Boston Road, asked the board to consider the inclusion of personal electric mobility devices in the study.

Phil Francisco, member of the Sustainability Commission, echoed Mr. Sopka’s request.

**MOTION:** Ms. Black made a motion to authorize Mr. Russ Burke, on behalf of the Planning Board, to ask the Select Board to support the application to the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission for a walkability study focused on access to the trails network on foot, bicycle, personal mobility devices, etc. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Nilsson Ripps, Ms. Bedard, Mr. Bonnett, 5

Ms. Black, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

***Project Updates***

* Master Plan RFP
  + Final RFP and Procurement Schedule had been completed.

Mr. Tada explained the RFP would be issued on Wednesday, March 1st, a project briefing session would be held on March 8th, and the deadline for consultants to submit questions and comments would be March 22nd, and the deadline to submit proposals would be Monday, April 3.

* Village at Shepley Hill
  + Dillis & Roy looked at the slope in question and would provide the developer with a report with their findings.
* Groton Hill Music Center
  + Mr. Wilson noted that there was a lot of lighting and most of it appeared to be decorative.
* Bank of America ATM Site Lighting, 167 Main Street
  + Bohler Engineering was Hired to Review the Lighting.

Mr. Tada said the bank would appear at a future meeting with suggestions to mitigate the lighting situation.

**Recorder’s Note: At approximately 9:15 p.m. Ms. Bedard was excused from the meeting.**

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

Mr. Tada explained that Nitsch Engineering would be sending the engineered plans for the sidewalk projects very soon.

* Community Preservation Committee

There were no updates to share.

***General Business***

* ZBA Updates

Mr. Tada said the Groton Farms 40B application that was expected to arrive had not yet been submitted.

* Meeting Minutes from January 12, 2023

**MOTION:** Mr. Bonnett made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 12, 2023, meeting, as presented. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black Ms. Nilsson Ripps 3

& Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* March 2nd
* March 16th
* April 13th
* April 27th

***Adjournment***

At approximately 9:25 p.m. Ms. Black made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Nilsson Ripps seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, & Ms. Nilsson Ripps, 4

& Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 3/16/2023*