**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, March 2, 2023**

**Meeting Minutes**

A regular (virtual) meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, March 2, 2023, at approximately 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Clerk

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

**Members Participating via Telephone:**

Ms. Annika Nilsson Ripps, Vice-Chair

**Members not Present:**

Mr. Russell Burke, 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. Mr. Wilson introduced the Planning Board members.

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.

***Discussion – Request to MRPC for Walkability Study Update***

Mr. Tada said a letter had been submitted to the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission signed by Mr. Wilson on behalf of the Planning Board and by Mr. John Reilly, Select Board Chair, requesting a Walkability Study update. He said the proposal was to build upon the 2012 Walkability Study which focused primarily on the Main Street Corridor, and try to expand non-vehicular connectivity between some of the trails in town, as suggested by Mr. Burke.

***Additions to Agenda***

* ***Site walk at Hayes Woods, Pepperell Road March 4th, or March 11th (snow date)***
* ***Discuss zoning amendments for Spring Town Meeting***
  + *Accessory Apartment clarifications*
  + *Citizens’ Petition to rezone 797 Boston Road*

Mr. Tada explained the Citizens’ Petition was a second attempt by the owner of the property at 797 Boston Road (Four Corners) to rezone the property from Residential-Agricultural to Neighborhood Business, which would allow the owner to apply for a special permit to construct a pickleball facility. He added the owner was in the process of reaching out to the abutters within 500’ of the property.

The Planning Board stated that they felt it would be a good idea for the owner to hold an informational forum with abutters (community residents) whether in-person or via Zoom prior to Spring Town Meeting.

***Public Hearing – Special Permit for Adult-Use Recreational Marijuana Retail Establishment***

***1 Forge Village Road (Assessors’ Parcel 133-11) New England Craft Cultivators***

Mr. Wilson opened the public hearing.

Mr. Wes Ritchie and Mr. Ture Turnbull, New England Craft Cultivators, (Treehouse Craft Cannabis), and Mr. Matt Juros, Principal Architect, Ci Design, were present on behalf of the application.

Mr. Ritchie stated the following:

* There were no plans to change the exterior of the building or landscaping.
* Legal filings with the Secretary of State were included in the application.
* Received approval from the Sewer Commission for the proposed use at this location.
* 20 available (dedicated) parking spaces (2 handicapped spaces) by the entry/exit door and an additional 64 available parking spaces in the plaza.

Mr. Turnbull said the security plan included:

* Veteran and retired-law-enforcement-led security team.
* Must be 21+ and show ID to enter the premises.
* Security personnel during all operating hours.
* Locked doors between outside and sales and cannabis storage areas.
* 24-hour video surveillance of 100% of premises (about 20-30 cameras)
* Immediate report of diversion, or theft.
* No consumption on premise.
* Security plan reviewed and informed by Groton Police and Fire chiefs prior to full implementation.

Mr. Turnbull said the proposed hours were Monday through Sunday from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. He also pointed out that the proposed location at 1 Forge Village Road is not the first location they looked at. They initially had an agreement to purchase the Craven’s Liquor property at 777 Boston Road. However, after hearing from many residents and town officials who were concerned about traffic safety and parking issues associated with the Craven’s site, the applicants decided to look at alternatives. The site at 1 Forge Village Road has more parking and a safer access point.

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

Ms. Nilsson Ripps asked what type of signage there would be. Mr. Turnbull replied there was a free-standing marquee at the entrance to the property and the name of the company would be added to it. Additionally, he said they would be requesting that the town allow them to put additional signage on the actual building. Ms. Nilsson Ripps indicated that they would need to know where the additional sign would be and what the exact dimensions were.

Mr. Barringer asked what the process would be to receive product deliveries from the outside and how the product would be handled on the inside with respect to the proposed floor plan layout. Mr. Turnbull replied it was a very quick and secure process; noting that the product would come directly into the building and would be brought into the restricted access areas controlled by security fob. Mr. Ritchie added that the deliveries would consist of small packages and would come during the daytime in small trucks.

Mr. Juros pointed out that the floor plan drawing submitted with the application did not properly depict all of the doorways in the building. He will provide a corrected floor plan drawing.

Mr. Bonnett asked if there were any steps or other obstacles from the parking lot into the store. Mr. Turnbull replied that there were no steps leading into the store or within the store.

Mr. Bonnet then asked the applicant to explain the difference between the proposed site and the adjacent Craven’s Liquor site. Mr. Turnbull mentioned that the Craven’s site on Boston Road would have required expansion of the existing parking lot, and the neighborhood residents were concerned about traffic safety on the busy main road. There was also some discussion about having to create a new access point on Whiley Road which could cause disruption to the residential neighbors. The proposed site has safer access on Forge Village Road and ample parking.

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

Mr. Tada read aloud a comment received from “Beverly J” via the chat option on Zoom as summarized below:

“What will the building and signage look like from the front of the building that faces the street?”

Mr. Tada explained that the Sign Committee would have to approve the signage on the building after going before the Planning Board.

Mr. Tada said Beverly J also asked if the building was considered to be historic. Mr. Wilson replied it was not located in the Historic District and was not listed in state or federal historic registries.

Mr. Tada pointed out that the application included the Site Plan Review and the request for site plan waivers.

**MOTION:** Mr. Bonnett made a motion to close the public hearing with the stipulations that the applicant provide revised plans indicating the occupant load and correcting the doorways on the floor plan, and also the Planning Board has the discretion to require mitigation if the parking proves to be inadequate. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Nilsson Ripps, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Mr. Tada stated that he would draft a Decision of Approval for both the Special Permit and Site Plan Review to be presented to the Planning Board at the March 16, 2023, meeting.

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

* Mr. Tada reviewed the proposed scope of services for the MHP Grant
  + The Planning Board reviewed the scope of services and provided comments.
  + Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to provide the services.
  + Jeff Legros, Principal Planner at MRPC, will be the point of contact.

***Project Updates***

* Master Plan RFP
  + RFP was announced on March 1, 2023
  + The first briefing session is to be held on March 8, 2023, at the Groton Town Hall at 10:00 a.m.
* Village at Shepley Hill
  + Mr. Tada stated there had been a lot of vegetation clean-up on the hillside along Old Ayer Road.
* Groton Hill Music Center
  + Temporary Occupancy Permit expires in September
  + HVAC System – need to confirm that the noise has been mitigated
* Bank of America ATM Site Lighting, 167 Main Street
  + There were no updates to share.

***Committee Updates***

* *Complete Streets*
  + Received “draft final” sidewalk plans from Nitsch Engineering
* Community Preservation Committee
  + There were no updates to share.

***General Business***

* ZBA Updates
  + Received application for Groton Farms 40B project at 500 Main Street
  + Public hearing scheduled on March 22, 2023, at 6:30 p.m. for Groton Farms 40B
  + Project information available on the ZBA webpage
* Minutes – January 26, 2023

**MOTION:** Ms. Black made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2023, meeting, as presented. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Black, Mr. Barringer, 4

Ms. Nilsson Ripps, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 2. (Abstained – Mr. Bonnet & Ms. Bedard)**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* March 11th (Site Walk for Hayes Woods, Pepperell Road at 10:00 a.m.)
* March 16th (Tentative start time of 7:30 p.m.)
* April 13th
* April 27th
* April 29th Spring Town Meeting

***Adjournment***

At approximately 8:48 p.m. Ms. Black made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Nilsson Ripps, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 4/13/2023*