**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, June 8, 2023**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, June 8, 2023, at approximately

7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Clerk

Mr. Phil Francisco, Board Member

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

**Members Not Present:**

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

**Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law and the Wiretap Law, Mr. Wilson stated the meeting was virtual and recorded, and all votes must be taken via roll call. Further, the people who were participating in the meeting introduced themselves.

***Public Hearing (Continuation)***

***Preliminary Subdivision Plan***

***63 Gratuity Road, Assessor’s Parcel 216-47***

***Routhier & Roper Gratuity Road, LLC.***

Attorney Melissa Robbins, Farrell & Robbins, P.C. addressed the Board and requested that Nitsch Engineering review the Yield Plan.

* Received traffic impact study, revised plans, and comment response letters from the applicant. Mr. Matt Waterman, Engineer, LandTech Consultants, said the revisions were mostly technical and there was no shifting of lots or roads. He said they worked with the Water Department who suggested they should add a hydrant. (Valves to be shown in the future)
* The Conservation Commission had commented on the issue of the flood plain and bordering land subject to flooding. The applicant’s environmental consultant, Desheng Wang of Creative Land and Water Engineering (CLAWE), responded with a letter stating they did not believe there was any bordering land subject to flooding, but that it would be subject to future review by the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Daniel LaCivita, Transportation Engineer, Vanasse & Associates, Inc. addressed the Board and shared the Transportation Impact Assessment Summary as follows:

* The Traffic Study was prepared per Mass DOT guidelines and looked at vehicle traffic volumes, pedestrians, and bicycles.
* The information was collected in May 2019, while schools were in regular session, and also looked at current 2023 traffic volumes and assessed the validity of the 2019 counts. Generally, they were found to be consistent with each other.
* Overall, the project would not result in a significant impact or increase on motorist delays or vehicle cueing.
* Mill Street/Main Street intersection was found to have a Level of Service “E” or “F”.
* Findings revealed that the Jenkins Road/Hickory Lane intersection was found to have a motor vehicle crash rate in excess of Mass DOT average crash rates for unsignalized intersections. Recommendation to replace the stop sign and repaint the stop line. Also, trim and maintain vegetation on the corners and approaches to the intersection.
* Sight lines at the proposed driveways and roadways exceeded or could be made to exceed the recommended distances to function in a safe & efficient manner.

Mr. Francisco asked about shifting trends in traffic volume. Mr. LaCivita clarified that they used MassDOT crash data from the five-year period of 2016-2020.

Mr. Wilson asked for an explanation of the high crash rate at the intersection of Jenkins Road/Hickory Lane. Mr. LaCivita explained that this intersection has a low traffic volume and there was one crash reported at this intersection during the data period. This results in a crash rate that is higher than average due to the small sample size.

Mr. Bonnett asked if there were any fixes for the wait times at Mill Street/Main Street intersection. Mr. LaCivita said the intersection doesn’t meet MassDOT’s volume threshold for signalization.

Mr. Barringer asked Mr. LaCivita if there appears to be a new, post-COVID norm with respect to traffic volumes. Mr. LaCivita said the post-COVID traffic conditions seem to vary based on location and other factors.

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

Mr. Aaron Green, a resident, for the record, stated that there had been a very bad accident one year prior at the intersection of Arlington and Mill Streets.

Ms. Paula Martin, 88 Jenkins Road, stated that she was concerned that Jenkins Road was a narrow road with no sidewalks and a variety of users including equestrians and families with children, and it abutted a very large subdivision. She said school buses frequently passed through the neighborhood.

Mr. Adam Burnett, 155 Gratuity Road, addressed the Board and said he felt it was simple luck that there were not more accidents at the intersection of Arlington and Mill Streets. He said he felt sure that there would be a fatal accident if there was an increase in the usage of the roads.

Ms. Karen Burnett, Gratuity Road, addressed the Board and mentioned that the said intersection became much more dangerous in the winter and was concerned with the proposed increase in traffic.

Ms. Chantal Kerry, Gratuity Road, addressed the Board and said one of the reasons they recently bought their property was because it was a quiet, low-traffic area. She said she felt the proposed project completely changed the tenor of the existing neighborhood.

Mr. David Bruner, Riverbend Drive, addressed the Board and said he did not feel the proposed project was acceptable. He said he felt if the project were to move forward there needed to be 4-way stop signs and sidewalks installed.

Ms. Harris McWade, a representative of Hazel Grove Agricultural Association, stated that there had already been a fatality at the intersection. She also said that she suggested there should be a barrier between the development and Hazel Grove.

Ms. Nicole Talbot, Gratuity Road, addressed the Board and said she did not agree that there should be a 4-way stop sign at the intersection. She also said she did not think that duplexes fit in with the existing neighborhood.

Mr. Cormac Bordes, 135 Mill Street, addressed the Board and stated that he felt Jenkins Road was a cut-through road and he felt cars went too fast. He said he and his wife were very concerned with the project. He asked if widening Jenkins Road or adding a sidewalk was an option.

* Received comments from the Groton Water Department
* Received comments from Anna Eliot, Park Commissioner

Ms. Eliot’s comments advocated for the flexible development plan as it provided a greater buffer between Hazel Grove and the proposed development and was in support of the chain-linked fence.

* Peer review for a traffic study

**MOTION:** Ms. Bedard made a motion for Mr. Tada to engage Nitsch Engineering to perform a peer review of the traffic study provided for 63 Gratuity Road. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Francisco, Ms. Bedard, Mr. Barringer, 5

Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

* Basic maximum number of dwelling units in the flexible development plan, per §218-9.1G.

Ms. McWade stated that the Hazel Grove Agricultural Association would like to schedule a site walk on the property prior to the next Planning Board meeting to discuss the proposed physical barrier between Hazel Grove and the proposed development. Mr. Wilson replied that the Planning Board would have a site walk in the future.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to continue the public hearing, date specific, to June 22, 2023, meeting. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Francisco, Ms. Bedard, Mr. Barringer, 5

Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

***Master Plan Update – Project Kick-Off***

***Barrett Planning Group***

Ms. Judi Barrett, and Ms. Lauren Lind of the Barrett Planning Group were present to discuss the Master Plan update. Mr. Brian Creamer, Sr. Planner, Nitsch Engineering and Mr. Frank Mahady, FXM Associates, were also present.

Ms. Barrett asked if the Planning Board felt there should be Master Plan Committee formed. Mr. Wilson replied he felt that would be the right way to go.

Ms. Bedard commented that she would not want to see a committee preclude the opinions of individual citizens.

Mr. Francisco said he was concerned with implementation and action, after the Master Plan update is written. Ms. Barrett said she preferred to build the implementation component into the Town-wide goal setting process (through the Select Board). She also suggested that the Master Plan can be amended as needed.

Mr. Bonnett said he would like to see the issue of zoning reform addressed in the Master Plan. Ms. Barrett said they could address this at a high-level in the plan, but a detailed zoning review was beyond their scope for this project.

Mr. Tada mentioned that the Town received a grant from MRPC to conduct a study that would focus on walkability and non-vehicular access. The study will commence in October 2023.

Mr. Mahady said he was considering looking at village-style retail opportunities and possibly conducting market gap assessments as part of the economic development component.

Ms. Barrett indicated that she would draft an “Engagement Plan” to present to the Board prior to the next meeting. The Board continued to discuss ideas and suggestions regarding the development of a new Master Plan. Conversation to continue.

***Reorganization & Appointments***

To be addressed when there was a full complement of the Board in attendance.

***Discussion – Definitive Plan and Special Permit Draft Decisions***

***Hayes Woods Subdivision – Flexible Development & Shared Driveway***

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

The definitive plan was finalized.

To be addressed when there were five Planning Board members present.

***Project Updates***

* **Academy Hill**
  + In the process of doing paving and repairs.
* **Monarch Path**
  + Nitsch Engineering reviewing.
* **Village at Shepley Hill**
  + The Board had authorized the developer to continue finalizing the performance bond agreement. Town Counsel’s revisions to that agreement received and was forwarded to the developer.
  + The developer provided the $150,000 donation to the Affordable Housing Trust.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

Waiting for revised construction estimates from Nitsch Engineering.

* Community Preservation Committee

There were no updates to share.

* Design Review Committee (Town Center Overlay District)

Public Hearing is to be held on June 22nd regarding the site plan review and special permit within the Town Center Overlay District for 11 Lowell Road.

***General Business***

* ZBA Updates
  + Groton Farms 40B – Followed up on engineering comments made by Nitsch Engineering

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* June 22nd
* July 13th
* July 27th

***Adjournment***

At approximately 9:30 p.m. Ms. Bedard made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Bedard, Mr. Barringer, Mr. Francisco 5

Mr. Bonnett, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 7/27/2023*