**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, August 24, 2023**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, August 24, 2023, at approximately

7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Ms. Lorayne Black, Board Member

Mr. Phil Francisco, Board Member

**Not Present:**

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Clerk

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 Wiretap and Open Meeting Laws, Mr. Wilson stated that the meeting was virtual and recorded, and all votes must be taken via roll call. Further, the Planning Board members and meeting participants introduced themselves.

***Public Hearing (Continuation) – Preliminary Subdivision Plan***

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

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

Attorney Melissa Robbins, Farrelll & Robbins, P.C., and Mr. Matthew Waterman, Senior Project Engineer, Landtech Consultants, Inc. were present on behalf of the applicant.

Attorney Robbins noted that Mr. Tada received the updated plans on August 22, 2023. She said the Flexible Plan would create fewer units, but she believed that was the only benefit the plan provided. She also said the Conventional Plan provided more ways to benefit the community. Attorney Robbins said she proposed to seek permits for the Conventional Subdivision Plan with all 28 units being age- restricted (55 and older).

* Conventional Plan: 14 duplexes, 28 total units, Age-Restricted
* Flexible Plan: 17 total units, single-family

Attorney Robbins commented that using the Conventional Plan would reduce traffic by 54% overall and by 68% at peak times. She also said the Conventional Plan would not create affordable units, but her clients’ product was much more affordable than anything else in Groton, priced at approximately $600,000.

Attorney Robbins said her client would agree to donate to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to offset the lack of affordable housing units in the project. She added that 70% of the Conventional Plan would be protected open space (approximately 21 acres), which they would be willing to gift to the Town of Groton.

Regarding the abutting equestrian area, Attorney Robbins also said that they would put a no-cut zone along lots 1 through 4, and on the other side of the no-cut zone towards the residential side, they would agree to install a fence to keep people from entering the Hazel Grove property.

Ms. Black observed that the Preliminary Plans show grading along the proposed subdivision roads, but not on the individual lots. She said the Definitive Plans should show all the proposed grading required to construct the project. She also recommended varying the layout of the proposed homes and driveways.

Mr. Francisco asked if the concerns of the Conservation Commission had been addressed. Attorney Robbins replied that they had sent a detailed letter from their Wetland Scientist regarding the Conservation Commission's comments.

Mr. Burke asked if there would be a Master Condominium Association. Attorney Robbins replied in the affirmative. She added, however, that she was unsure if there would be a sub-association.

Mr. Burke said he would like the styles of the houses to have some diversity. He also advised the applicant that if the length of the cul-de-sac roads is over 1,000 feet, then a waiver of the subdivision regulations would be required.

Mr. Barringer asked if the roadways were standard in design. Mr. Waterman replied that the subdivision standard for roadways was 24’ wide. Mr. Waterman said they would look into reducing the width of the roadways.

Mr. Francisco, addressing the abovementioned reduction in traffic, asked if there had been a traffic study done and, if not, where Attorney Robbins received her information. Attorney Robbins replied that they had not redone the traffic analysis based on the age restriction, but she had consulted with the traffic engineer.

Mr. Barringer asked if there would be public access to the open space. Attorney Robbins replied that there was plenty of room for that to occur.

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

Mr. Adam Burnett, 155 Gratuity Road, (via Zoom) addressed the Board and said he was concerned about some dangerous intersections with the increase in traffic. He asked if there could be a four-way stop sign installed at the intersection of Gratuity Road, Arlington Street, and Mill Street; and a three-way stop sign installed at the intersection of Jenkins Road and Mill Street. He also said he disagreed with installing the chain-linked fence because it would not allow wildlife to pass freely.

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

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Francisco, Ms. Black, 5 Mr. Burke, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Master Plan Update***

***Barrett Planning Group***

Ms. Judi Barrett and Ms. Lauren Lind from the Barrett Planning Group were present to discuss the Master Plan update.

Ms. Lind reviewed the Master Plan basics. She said community engagement events would include:

* An interactive story map
* Two online surveys
* Three public community meetings

Ms. Lind explained the timeline included the first public workshop on September 26, 2023, at the Groton Center from 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m., and the first community survey would be available from September 26, 2023 – October 24, 2023.

Ms. Lind provided an Outreach Summary to date, including:

* Housing
* Land Use/Economic Development
* Transportation and Circulation
* Public Services/Infrastructure
* Miscellaneous Feedback
* Open Space, Historic Culture, & Natural Resources

Regarding communications to the community about the Master Plan, Ms. Lind suggested that it be available just by searching for “Groton, MA Master Plan.”

Mr. Francisco suggested that there should be some type of addendum that just reflected important dates, such as community engagement meetings and community surveys.

The Planning Board collectively discussed ways to communicate/advertise the Master Plan to the residents of the Town.

***Discussion – Approval Not Required (ANR) Plans***

* 601 Lowell Road, Assessor’s Parcel 125-15
  + Plan provided from Dillis & Roy to Reconfigure 2 lots (7/24/23)

Attorney Bob Collins was present on behalf of the applicant, Robert Kiley. He said Mr. Kiley proposed to divide his 15-acre lot into two lots, one of which would incorporate the abutting 24,000 square foot lot currently known as 599 Lowell Road. The existing house on 599 Lowell Road will be removed, and the existing garage serving 601 Lowell Road will be converted into a two-bedroom residence on the 8.5-acre lot shown as Lot 3 on the ANR Plan. The existing house on 601 Lowell Road will remain on a 7.1-acre lot, as shown on Lot 2 on the ANR Plan. He said both lots had a little more than 225 feet of frontage on Lowell Road; however, he said it was a reconfiguration of an existing lot of record per the regulations.

Attorney Collins noted, for the record, that the Conservation Commission had already approved the proposed plan. The removal of the house on 599 Lowell Road will eliminate a permanent structure within 50 feet of Baddacook Pond, and will include replanting of the area with native shrubs.

Mr. Burke said he would like further information regarding the lot shape calculations and the plantings.

Attorney Collins said he would email Mr. Tada a request for an extension.

* 220 Main Street, Assessor’s Parcel 112-93
  + Plan from Dillis & Roy was to carve out the existing parking area on Willowdale Road for the Union Congregational Church

Attorney Bob Collins was present on behalf of the applicant, the Union Congregational Church.

Attorney Collins stated that the church would sell the parsonage abutting the property. He explained that for a very long time, parishioners of the church had used the parsonage property to park their vehicles during services. He added that the person purchasing the property did not want to own it if people continued to be inclined to park on it. He said he had consulted with Bob Garside, the Building Commissioner, and it was determined that the proposed division could be accomplished that would draw a line around the parking area, and the church would continue to own that, known as parcel A, but it would be separated from lot 1A.

Mr. Burke asked if it was exempt from section 218-8.2 (Off-site/Off-street parking). Attorney Collins replied that it was for religious use, and the use predated the zoning.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to endorse the plan, with the condition to delete the note on Parcel A which reads “To be combined with and become part of 218 Main Street”. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Burke and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

* 500 Main Street, Assessor’s Map 216, Parcels 94 – 97 & 102

Mr. Stan Dillis of Dillis & Roy Civil Design Group addressed the Board and said the applicant was 500 MG LLC (Groton Farms), and the proposed plan was to reconfigure 5 lots into 3 lots, and they all met the frontage and acreage requirements.

**MOTION:**  Mr. Barringer made a motion to endorse the Approval Not Required Plan for 500 Main Street, Assessor’s Map 216, Parcels 94 – 97 & 102, dated July 31, 2023. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Burke and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

* 352 – 356 Nashua Road, Assessor’s Parcel 227-117.1

Mr. Dillis said the applicant, Nashoba Homes Development LLC (Casella), proposed dividing 1 existing lot into 2 lots.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to endorse the Approval Not Required Plan for 352 – 356 Nashua Road, Assessor’s Parcel 227.117.1, dated July 31, 2023. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Burke, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

* 59 Worthen Drive, Assessor’s Parcel 221-5

Mr. David Browchuck, GPR, was present on behalf of the applicant, NJLJ Properties, LLC, and explained the plan was to create a non-buildable lot for future conveyance to an abutter.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to endorse the Approval Not Required Plan for 59 Worthen Drive, Assessor’s Parcel 221-5, dated May 24, 2023. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Burke, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Multi-Family Zoning for MBTA Communities***

***Update on Technical Assistance Grant from MRPC***

Mr. Tada stated that the Planning Board received a draft compliance model memo from Mr. Jeff Legros of the Montachusetts Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), which contained comments on the draft zoning bylaw.

* + Feedback from the Planning Board is to be conveyed to Mr. Legros at the September 14th meeting.

***Planning Board Reorganization & Appointments***

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

***Project Updates***

* **Academy Hill**
  + Waiting for the final as-built plan and engineer’s report before issuing a Street Acceptance.
* **Monarch Path**
  + Need to resolve the issue of plan modification related to the landscaping around the cul-de-sac and the elimination of Detention Basin #5 and also requested a Street Acceptance.
* **Groton Hill Music Center**
  + Work on wetland replication area and sloped lawn/viewing area delayed by weather conditions.
  + Completed: Installed noise mitigation & replaced emergency gate.
  + Anticipated: Completion of site work by the end of August per Gary Shepherd
  + As-built plan required
    - Mr. Tada to follow up regarding the wheel stops & lighting.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

There were no updates to share.

* Community Preservation Committee

There were no updates to share.

* Conductorlab Oversight Committee

There were no updates to share.

***General Business***

* ZBA Updates
  + Groton Farms (40B) 500 Main Street – Next hearing to be held on September 6, 2023.
  + Heritage Landing (40B) Cow Pond Brook Road – Next hearing to be held on September 20, 2023.
  + 315 Lost Lake Drive – Confusion RE: Zoning Bylaw §218-6.3.H – Modification of Front Building Setback
* Meeting Minutes
  + June 13, 2023 – Special Meeting

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 13, 2023, Special Meeting, as presented. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Burke, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

* + June 22, 2023 – Regular Meeting

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 22, 2023, Regular Meeting, as presented. Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Burke, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 8, 2023, meeting, as presented. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Burke, Ms. Black 5

Mr. Francisco and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* September 14th & 28th
* October 12th & October 26th
* October 28th – Fall Town Meeting

***Adjournment***

At approximately 10:05 p.m. Mr. Barringer made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Burke, 5

Ms. Black, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary *Approved 10/26/2023*