**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**Thursday, October 12, 2023**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, October 12, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Lorayne Black, Vice Chair (Arrived at approximately 7:17 p.m.)

Mr. Phil Francisco, Clerk

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Board Member

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Mr. George Barringer, 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 Wiretap Statute and the Open Meeting Law, Mr. Wilson stated that 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 – Major Site Plan Review (Change of Use)***

***142 Main Street – Proposed Salon/Spa***

Mr. Michael McAndrew and Ms. Jessica Walkovich were present on behalf of the application. Mr. McAndrew said they were in the process of purchasing the property located at 142 Main Street, and they were requesting site plan approval for a Change of Use from a law office to a spa/salon that would also have a small boutique. It would be in Unit A, the main building at the front of the property. He added that they were not planning to make any exterior changes to the property, except for changing the name of the business on the outdoor sign. He also said they met with the Sewer Commission to understand the plumbing requirements for the proposed use.

Mr. Tada noted that the applicant would have to get approval from the Historic District Commission for anything having to do with the sign as it was in the Historic District. He also pointed out that the existing sign had an up-lit light fixture on it, and that would have to be removed and replaced with a downward facing, shielded lighting fixture.

Mr. McAndrew asked the Planning Board to waive any of the requirements that did not pertain to the particular requested Change of Use.

Mr. Francisco asked if the applicant had any plans to do anything with Unit B (carriage house at the rear of the property). Mr. McAndrew replied that he would eventually, but currently, he was only seeking approval for Unit A.

Mr. Barringer asked how many employees would be in Unit A. Mr. McAndrew replied there would be eight employees, including the owner, Ms. Walkovich. He added that there were nine available parking spaces, and employees would park on the street or in the public parking lot across the street, behind Prescott Community Center.

Regarding lighting, Ms. Walkovich said there were three existing lamp posts along the driveway. She added the proposed hours of operation were from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday but would likely be closed on Sundays.

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

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

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

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

Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to approve the Major Site Plan Review for the proposed change of use at 142 Main Street to a proposed Salon/Spa, with the notation that any change of use for unit B may require further review by the Planning Board, and that the materials submitted were adequate. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

***Discussion:***

Mr. Tada confirmed that he would create a draft of an approval decision with the standard conditions. Mr. Barringer agreed but noted that unit B would need to be potentially reviewed. Mr. Bonnett added that he felt the striping of parking lot should also be included in the approval decision.

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

**Recorder’s Note:** Ms. Black arrived at approximately 7:17 p.m.

***Discussion – Pre-Submission Review, Town Center Overlay District***

***25 Station Avenue (McElroy, former GELD Garages)***

Mr. Rob Saunders, owner of CJS Workshop, 31 Adams Avenue, was present to speak on behalf of the pre-submission review. He said his business was expanding rapidly. They were already filling the building at 31 Adams Avenue, and the number of employees had grown from 8 to 32. He said the Walt Disney Company had visited earlier that day, and they were very excited. He said most of their clients had some touring capabilities, and all of those touring shows had a lot of costumes that needed to be maintained and then sent back out to the next show location, referred to as “Ship & Store.” He added that he would need a secondary space to maintain the costumes and thought 25 Station Avenue might meet his needs and wanted to see what the Planning Board’s thoughts were.

Mr. Burke asked if the applicant was renting the space at 31 Adams Street or if he owned it. Mr. Saunders replied that he was currently leasing it but with the potential to own it.

Mr. Burke asked what the building at 25 Station Avenue would be used for. Mr. Saunders replied that it would become a space for the ship and store program, which would include a team of 4 to 10 people who would maintain the inventory of their clients, including anything from minor repairs to repackaging, prepping for shipment, and storing until the product went out to their following location. He said there are two existing offices in the front of the building, which they would use to manage the logistics. The back half of the building would be used for storage. They would make only minor embellishments to the exterior.

Mr. Burke pointed out that the Town Center Overlay District stated that “service establishments, business offices, or a combination of those would be allowed uses. He said they could view it as a mixed-use if offices/services were being used. Mr. Barringer commented that he agreed because it would be a managed property service company.

Ms. Bedard asked if they would be cleaning the costumes in the building. Mr. Saunders replied in the negative.

The Board collectively agreed that they felt the applicant could move forward with an application for a special permit pursuant to the Town Center Overlay District.

***Discussion – Firearm Sale Regulations Study Committee***

***Consider Appointment of Study Committee Members (Added 10/10/23)***

Mr. Wilson stated the following people were interested in serving on the Firearm Sale Regulations Study Committee:

* Mr. Russ Burke
* Mr. Phil Francisco
* Mr. Paul Hathaway
* Ms. Becky Pine
* Mr. John Smigelski
* Mr. Bob Garside, Advisory Role
* Mr. Takashi Tada, Advisory Role

**MOTION:** Board Member Barringer made a motion to nominate the above-listed people to the Firearm Sale Regulations Committee, subject to their acceptance, and with the charge of making recommendations on potential zoning amendments for the 2024 Town Meeting. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Black, Mr. Burke, 7

Ms. Bedard, Mr. Francisco, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 – 0 – 0.**

**Recorder’s Note:** Mr. Burke was excused from the meeting at approximately 8:03 p.m.

***Project Updates***

* Master Plan Update

Mr. Francisco commented that he did not feel the advertising for the Master Plan survey was adequate. Mr. Tada replied that the survey was posted on the town’s Facebook page earlier that day. He added that advertising was not free, and if they wanted to continue to advertise in such places as the Groton Herald, they would need to check with the Finance Department and possibly transfer some funds to cover it.

Mr. Francisco suggested perhaps writing a “Letter to the Editor” with a graphic attached.

Mr. Wilson suggested putting a notice in the bills that GELD sends out.

* Academy Hill

Mr. Tada explained that the Select Board opened the public hearing at its most recent meeting for the roadway acceptance for Academy Hill, and there were some concerns raised by one of the residents. One of the concerns was specifically related to the road, while the other concerns related to the overall condition of the subdivision. Mr. Tada explained that there was a piece of rebar sticking out of one of the retaining walls, some utility box covers that were not in very good shape, and there was an erosion issue with the newest portion of the sidewalk along Cherry Tree Lane. He said the Select Board continued the public hearing so that the developer could try to address the concerns.

Mr. Tada mentioned that Mr. Tom Delaney, DPW Director, had an issue with whether or not the detention basins had been mowed as per the operations and maintenance plan. The mowing was scheduled for the week of October 23rd, according to the developer.

Mr. Tada said the outstanding items are scheduled to be completed by the next Select Board meeting. He added that the Town Manager had asked that once the developer reports that the work was done, Nitsch Engineering and/or Tom Delaney would go out and confirm that all of the work had been completed satisfactorily.

* Monarch Path

There was no update to share.

* Groton Hill Music Center

Mr. Tada said the Prescott House, located at 170 Old Ayer Road, was currently subject to the Demolition Delay Bylaw. He added that the Historical Commission had asked that the Prescott House itself not be demolished pursuant to the Demolition Delay Bylaw, but the structures that were behind the Prescott House, including a large red barn and a newer ranch-style house had no historical significance, so the Groton Hill Music Center had requested a demolition permit for the red barn which is in poor condition.

Mr. Tada noted that he had received the as-built plan from Dillis & Roy Civil Design Group, Inc., and the permanent Certificate of Occupancy was issued by the Building Commissioner.

* Monarch Path

Mr. Tada explained the road acceptance for Monarch Path would have to wait until the following year.

* Village at Shepley Hill

There were no updates to share.

* 240 Main Street, Kilbourn Place

Mr. Tada explained that the Sign Permit application for 240 Main Street was on the Historic District Commission’s agenda for October 17th.

Mr. Wilson asked if the trees that were planted along Main Street were going to be replaced. Mr. Tada replied that he would prepare a draft letter addressed to Mr. Gus Widmayer regarding the landscaping, and Ms. Black said she would do a walk-through of the outside of the site and provide input for Mr. Tada to include in the letter.

* Hummingbird Lane, Rocky Hill

Mr. Tada stated that they were waiting for a report from Nitsch Engineering, and once they received the report, they could discuss the release of the bond.

* Bank of America

Mr. Barringer said he felt the lighting issue needed to be followed up on. Mr. Tada replied that he would follow up and report back to the Board.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

There were no updates to share.

* Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Tada said the preliminary proposals (project summary) for FY25 were due on October 26, 2023.

* Conductorlab Oversight Committee

There were no updates to share.

***General Business***

* ZBA Updates

Ms. Bedard shared that the ZBA closed the public hearing on the Groton Farms 40B application. She said the next meeting regarding Groton Farms would be held on November 1st. Further, Ms. Bedard noted the public hearing on the other 40B project, Heritage Landing, would be continued on November 8th.

* Meeting Minutes
* July 27, 2023

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringermade a motion to approve the minutes from the July 27, 2023, meeting, as presented. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Francisco, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Ms. Bedard)**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* October 26th
* October 28th – Fall Town Meeting

***Adjournment***

At approximately 8:45 p.m. Mr. Barringer made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

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

Ms. Bedard, Mr. Francisco, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 11/30/2023*