### **TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

### **Thursday, November 30, 2023 at 7:00 PM**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, November 30, 2023, at 7:00PM

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Mr. Phil Francisco, Clerk

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Board Member

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

**Members Not Present:**

Ms. Lorayne Black, Vice Chair

Mr. George Barringer, 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 meeting participants were introduced.

***Discussion – Request for release of Performance Bond Hummingbird Lane, Rocky Hill Subdivision***

Mr. Wilson informed the Board that the release of the performance bond is pending until the installation of the catch basins identified in Nitsch Engineering’s inspection report.

***Discussion- Request for release of Performance Bonds Academy Hill Subdivision***

Mr. Tada confirmed that the Town’s records for the four bonds are consistent with the developer’s records. Nitsch Engineering had reviewed all outstanding issues and ensured that they have been addressed. Tom Delaney, DPW Director, noted there were no objections to releasing the performance bonds.

**MOTION:** Mr. Francisco made a motion to authorize the Planning Board to release the four performance bonds as listed for the Academy Hill Subdivision. Mr. Bonnet seconded the motion.

**Discussion:** Mr. Burke asked if the streets associated with the subdivision had been accepted as public roadways. Mr. Tada confirmed that the roadways were accepted at the Fall Town Meeting and that the following condominium roads within the subdivision would remain private: Magnolia Lane, Lilac Circle, and Rose Crest Way.

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

Yea: Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Francisco, Ms. Bedard, 5 Mr. Burke, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED. 5-0-0**

***Discussion – Master Plan Update***

Mr. Tada informed the Board that Lauren Lind of the Barrett Planning Group provided a draft schedule of the Engagement Plan and tentatively set a date for the public workshop on Tuesday, January 30, 2024, with a snow date of February 6, 2024. Ms. Lind is scheduled to meet with the Planning Board on December 14, 2023.

Mr. Tada inquired about the possibility of the Planning Board meeting with Ms. Lind prior to the second workshop. Mr. Francisco expressed his support for meeting prior to the workshop, emphasizing the lack of updates or engagements since September. He also highlighted a technical issue with the PDFs provided by Ms. Lind. The other Board members agreed, suggesting that improved graphics be provided. Upon approval the materials should be promptly published on the website. Following a brief discussion, the decision was made for the Planning Board to invite Ms. Lind to attend the January 25th meeting. The board also suggested a follow-up meeting on February 8, 2024, specifically to receive feedback on the public forum.

***Project Updates***

* Academy Hill

There were no new updates to share.

* Groton Hill Music Center

There were no new updates to share.

* Village at Shepley Hill
  + Mr. Tada said that the latest inspection report by the developer’s environmental consultant showed the perimeter erosion controls to be in good condition. A building permit application was submitted for the proposed duplex closest to the top of the steep slope on Lot 2. Mr. Tada said he intends to conduct a site visit in the near future.
* 240 Main Street, Kilbourn Place
  + Mr. Tada said that he and Ms. Black are tasked with drafting correspondence to the property owner. He has observed the installation of new shrubs; however, there is still landscaping work to be completed. Mr. Burke raised a concern about the excessive number of handicap spots that are seemingly being underutilized. Mr. Tada explained that during the original planning, a decision was made to uphold a higher standard of handicap spots to align with the level of medical care being provided. An employee of Emerson Health had previously raised the same question about the handicap spaces. The special permit allows for adjustments to the parking configuration if deemed necessary. Mr. Tada said that the situation should be monitored, and he mentioned the ongoing discussion taking place with the abutters on Hollis Street regarding noise mitigation. Dialogue with Bob Garside and several residents has occurred over the past few months, and efforts are being made to involve Emerson Health in addressing these concerns. Ms. Bedard informed the Board that the ADA Coordinator had requested on February 10, 2023, that 20% of the parking spaces be designated as handicap accessible rather than the initial 10%. Mr. Tada said he would be in contact with Ms. Black in regards to the landscaping matters and addressing any shrubs that may not be thriving. He also said he would keep the Board informed with the ongoing efforts related to the noise mitigation.
* Bank of America ATM, 167 Main Street
  + Mr. Tada said that this is an ongoing issue and the last communication received conveyed that the supplies and lighting fixtures had been ordered. He said he asked the Building Inspector to notify him if any permits are requested.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

There were no updates to share.

* Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Burke reported that the CPC is currently in the transitional phase between filing the preliminary applications and submitting final applications. The State released their match for the communities; however, there has been a significant reduction. The revenues from the Registry of Deeds have also been impacted by a decline in real estate activity. In response to these challenges the CPC forecasts a conservative budgeting approach.

* Conductorlab Oversight Committee

Mr. Tada informed the Board that a check was received from Honeywell Corporation to help cover the expenses associated with a peer review of the Draft Permanent Solution Statement. The plan is to meet with the peer review consultants (Civil and Environmental Consultants, Inc.) in January at the approximate midpoint of their review.

* Firearm Sale Regulation Study Committee

Mr. Burke updated that the members are currently undergoing the swearing-in process, with two members still pending. The coordination of a suitable day and time for their initial meeting is underway. Resource materials for Committee members will be distributed either by the end of December or at the beginning of the upcoming year. Mr. Tada assured the Board he would reach out to the remaining members, ensuring that they would be sworn in prior to the first meeting.

General Business

* ZBA Updates
  + Heritage Landing 40B- Ms. Bedard updated that a revised plan has been submitted reducing the proposed plan from 40 units to 28. All units now are to be single family dwellings, with seven designated as affordable units. The revised layout relocated the units from the east end creating a broader buffer from the firing range. A site walk is scheduled for December 2, 2023 at 9am for the ZBA members. The traffic study is still pending completion and the hearing was continued until January.

Mr. Francisco said there was a submission from the applicant’s attorney indicating that there was a shift of the housing resulting with the structures closer to Cow Pond Brook Pond and expressed concern for encroachment to the protected pathway.

Ms. Bedard said by making these changes it has eliminated the need for a nitrogen loading offset, and the project would only need to meet the standard Title 5 requirements for the septic system. Ms. Bedard also noted that there were concerns about delivery vehicles. The engineer was asked to stake the area in the vicinity of parcels 12 and 13.

Mr. Burke inquired whether soil testing had been collected. Mr. Tada conveyed that no recent testing had been undertaken, and the applicant would be relying on data from 2005. Recognizing the importance of up-to-date information, Mr. Tada affirmed that updated soil testing would be imperative when seeking permits for the installation of the new septic system.

MIT has also submitted a letter requesting certain conditions for approval of the development. All correspondence will be updated on the website. The ZBA sought clarification on the lightning criteria within their jurisdiction and Mr. Tada confirmed that reasonable restrictions can be imposed by the ZBA.

* + Ms. Bedard said that the applicant for Station Avenue (former GELD garages) has continued the hearing to the next scheduled ZBA meeting on December 13, 2023.
* Meeting Minutes
  + October 12, 2023

**MOTION:** Ms. Bedard made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 12, 2023, meeting, as amended. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Ms. Bedard, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, and Mr. Wilson.

Nay:

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0-0**

* Mr. Tada informed the Board that the Town has acquired an electric vehicle designated for town personnel to conduct site visits. This initiative aims to reduce the Town’s greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce the amount of reimbursement expenses associated with gas mileage.

**BUDGET REVIEW:**

Mr. Tada informed the Board that he was directed to submit a “level services” budget for FY25. He briefly reviewed the various budget components including, salaries and expenses, (Travel, dues, memberships, conferences, printing, legal advertising, sign permitting, language interpreter, clothing allowance, and assessment for MRPC). He was notified that the finance team opted to maintain the existing budget. Mr. Francisco inquired if there would be a potential remaining balance from the previous year. Mr. Tada clarified that any surplus funds at the end of the fiscal year would revert to the General Fund rather than being carried over.

Ms. Bedard inquired if the Board should advertise for the Planning Board Workshop through the monthly GELD bill. The Board agreed that the inquiry can be further discussed and added to the next agenda. Mr. Tada said he would inform GELD that the Board is interested in advertising with them.

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* December 14, 2023
* January 11, 2024
* January 25, 2024

***Adjournment***

At approximately 8:25 p.m. Mr. Burke made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Bonnett, Ms. Bedard, 5

Mr. Francisco and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5-0-0**

Respectfully submitted:

Kristine Fox

Minute Taker

*Approved 1/11/2024*