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

### **Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 7:00 PM**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, December 14, 2023, at 7:00PM.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Lorayne Black, Vice Chair

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Board Member

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Mr. Phil Francisco, Clerk

**Members Not Present:**

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.

***Pre-submission Review – CJS workshop expansion***

***31 Adams Avenue & 32 Court Street (Rob Saunders, CJS Workshop)***

Mr. Rob Saunders, the owner of CJS workshop LLC, presented to the Board, detailing his potential lease-to-own agreement with Halsey Platt for the two lots situated on 31 Adams Avenue and 32 Court Street. He said that his business is thriving and has grown from 5 employees to 40, with plans for an additional 25 hires by the summer. He is proposing to expand the existing building while retaining a single-level structure.

Mr. Burke inquired about the withdrawn application for the rezoning of 25 Station Avenue.

Mr. Saunders clarified that the current owners of 25 Station Avenue withdrew their application and are leaving the permitting to the future owner. He disclosed his intention to purchase the site to establish a logistics facility for his business. Mr. Saunders said that he is in the process of conversing with Chief McCurdy along with other municipal departments and emphasized his commitment to engage with neighbors. He assured that he is aiming to preserve the site’s curb appeal for visiting clients and maintaining a farmhouse style.

Mr. Wilson raised concerns of potential light pollution; Mr. Saunders assured that there are plans for green screening to mitigate any impact on the neighbors and rail trail.

Mr. Francisco inquired about the connectivity of Adams Avenue and Court Street. Mr. Saunders said that they were uncertain if the roads were continuous for public accessibility. The Board clarified that the public access does not go all the way through. Mr. Francisco commented that with the potential business growth there would be an inadequate number of parking spaces in the proposed parking area. Mr. Saunders said that there is sufficient parking at the 25 Station Avenue location that they could use.

Ms. Black stressed the importance of ensuring pedestrian circulation.

Ms. Bedard stated that there would be a significant amount of impervious surface added, and she recommended capturing any roof runoff. She further suggested incorporating architectural design elements for aesthetic appeal and exploring greener options for the building.

Mr. Francisco proposed the installation of solar panels and sought clarification on the chimney’s height and purpose. Mr. Saunders explained that the chimney is part of the existing structure.

Mr. Burke recommended considering an additional route to the parking area while preserving the circulation of Adams Avenue and Court Street.

***Discussion – Master Plan Update (Lauren Lind, Barrett Planning Group)***

Ms. Lind provided an overview of the timeline, currently at the approximate halfway point. She said that they are preparing to provide the inventory and assessment, and also planning for the second community forum. The first community meeting was held on September 26, 2023 and the 1st Community Survey took place from September 26-October 31. The key themes from the survey along with the results included:

* Housing: Provide more options for older adults/single families.
* Land Use and Open Space: Increase protection of conservation land and balance new development.
* Transportation: Provide improvements for bicycles/pedestrians.
* Economic Development: Small business development and tax base expansion.
* Public Service: Transportation improvement for multimodal safety and access.
* Misc. Feedback: There is a high satisfaction with the quality of life, and the master plan outreach should be diversified.

Mr. Francisco said that there were questions about accountability of who would be responsible for carrying out which actions in the master plan. Ms. Lind explained it is part of the process when they work through the implementation plan and identify the responsible parties for implementing and partaking a role in those goals. She also intends on meeting with those individuals to ensure that the goals are attainable.

The second forum is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at 7:00 p.m., with a potential snow date of February 27th. Ms. Lind said she would be attending the following Planning Board Meetings:

* January 25, 2024 – Review the summary presentation
* February 8th – Accompanied by FXM Associate
* March 14th – Discuss visions and goals

Mr. Francisco proposed the idea of hosting dual forums, one during mid-day and another in the evening, with the aim of engaging a more diverse population in providing input for the master plan. Ms. Lind acknowledged that similar approaches had been conducted in other communities, and said she would explore additional opportunities to ensure a more extensive outreach. The Board collectively agreed on the need to reach various demographics.

Mr. Francisco then inquired about the identification process for individuals who contributed to the existing master plan. Mr. Burke clarified that a different format had been utilized; the Planning Board members were assigned specific functional elements, acting as facilitators to address various questions. Mr. Wilson affirmed that the Board is more reliant on the Barrett Group for these efforts.

Mr. Francisco informed Ms. Lind that the PDF files containing the survey results had been clipped or received in a truncated format. Ms. Lind noted that she had been in contact with Mr. Tada and was willing to make all the presentations available.

Draft Master Plan- Ms. Lind explained that the initiation of the master plan drafting involves establishing the Demographic Profile, followed by conducting the Inventory and Assessments. The Board can expect drafts of these twos steps in January. The focus then will shift to addressing key issues and formulating recommendations.

Review Process-There are three Key Players

* + Planning Board
  + Town Planning Staff
  + Consultant Team

Ms. Lind asked the Board if they would like to have a public comment period concurrent with their review or subsequently. The Board agreed that they would review the plan prior to releasing it to the public.

Upcoming Tasks & Next Steps as follows:

* Inventory and Assessment Review- Draft anticipated in January.
* 2nd Forum and Survey Preparation
  + Finalize Flyer- Any questions to be included on the flier need to be forwarded to Ms. Lind.
  + Forum date & Location-The Board determined that the Groton Center is the most ideal location to hold the next forum.
  + Publicize- Mr. Tada said that a quote was received from GELD and that the advertisement needs to be submitted by the 11th day of the month to be included in the next billing cycle. The Board explored avenues for publicizing, including local cafes, the library, and a Banner hung on Main Street.

Mr. Wilson requested to review the final draft of the flier prior to being printed.

Public Comments- John Sopka suggested utilizing the Performing Arts Center or the gym as venues for the forum. He then questioned if the second survey content would be reviewed by Town Employees or only the Planning Board. Ms. Lind said the questions in the second survey would only be reviewed by the Planning Board.

***Discussion – Support for Housing Coordinator CPC Application***

Mr. Tada presented the Board with the drafted letter of support intended for the Housing Coordinator CPC application.

***MOTION:***  Ms. Bedard made a motion to approve the drafted letter supporting the Housing Coordinator CPC application. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Bedard, Ms. Black, 4 Mr. Francisco, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

***MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.***

***Discussion- Support for Affordable Housing Trust CPC Application***

Mr. Tada presented the Board with the drafted letter of support intended for the Affordable Housing Trust CPC application. The Trust is seeking financial support to establish a balance of funds.

***MOTION:*** Ms. Black made a motion to approve the drafted letter of support for the Affordable Housing Trust CPC application. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Bedard, Ms. Black, 4 Mr. Francisco, and Mr. Wilson

Nay:

0

***MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.***

***Discussion – Hayes Woods Subdivision,***

***Pepperell Road Construction Monitoring Update***

Mr. Tada received notification that the developer paved approximately half of the roadway without providing notification to the Town for the required peer review inspections. This action contravenes the Towns regulations, and certain aspects of the work conducted on this particular site need to be inspected by Nitsch Engineering prior to being backfilled or paved. A waterline pipe installation also occurred; however, it received approval from Paul Curtin, Superintendent of the West Groton Water Supply District. The developer has informed the Town that a testing company has been hired and would be conducting tests per the recommendations from Nitsch Engineering. Mr. Tada assured the Board that Nitsch Engineering verified the credibility of the testing company. He also noted that there are no plans for additional paving until the springtime.

Ms. Black inquired whether similar incidents were common. Mr. Tada said no, typically there are established conditions, including pre-construction meetings which play a crucial role in mitigating and preventing such issues.

Mr. Wilson inquired about the status of the as-built plan. Mr. Tada responded that Dillis & Roy Civil Design Group had not yet submitted the plan, assuring that as soon as it is received, he would forward it.

***Discussion – Request for release of performance bond***

**Hummingbird Lane, Rocky Hill Subdivision**

Mr. Tada said the revised plan did not show the survey boundary monumentation as requested by Nitsch Engineering. He recommended that any action from the Board be postponed until there is confirmation that all issues have been addressed.

***Project Updates***

* Groton Hill Music Center

There are no new updates to share.

* Village at Shepley Hill

Mr. Tada informed the Board that the developer is mobilizing to conduct reconstruct the failed slope on Lot 2, to commence either today or tomorrow. Anticipating a thorough inspection of the remediation process, an engineer from Nitsch Engineering is scheduled to be on-site next week.

Ms. Black asked how the slope would be repaired. Mr. Tada displayed the slope repair plan and identified the installation of rip rap and the mid-slope drainage pipe. Ms. Black observed that the fence line had not been adjusted to accommodate the rip rap installation. She proposed planting vegetation as a buffer and an extension of the fence. Mr. Francisco mentioned a potential relocation of the fence, pending a plan review. Mr. Tada said he received assurances from the developer’s engineer that they would thoroughly document the repairs and address any necessary adjustments. He said he had engaged in discussions with Michelle Collette about implementing a regulation that would restrict developers from utilizing significant slopes in the future, in both the Planning Board and Stormwater Management regulations.

* 240 Main Street, Kilbourn Place

Mr. Francisco inquired if the letter of expectation in regards to the landscaping was sent to the owner. Ms. Black said she would commence drafting the letter.

* Bank of America ATM, 167 Main Street

Mr. Francisco informed the Board that someone had damaged the awning post and had observed it being repaired.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

There were no new updates to share.

* Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Tada said that the deadline for the Complete Draft Proposals is January 11th.

* Conductorlab Oversight Committee

Mr. Tada said that the Town received financial assistance from Honeywell Corporation to hire a peer review consultant and that there would be a meeting in January when the contract is at 50% scope.

* Firearm Sale Regulation Study Committee

Mr. Tada said that there is one member remaining to be sworn in.

***General Business***

* ZBA Updates
  + 25 Station Avenue – The application was withdrawn.
  + Heritage Landing 40B – The next Public Hearing would be held on January 3, 2024.
  + Groton Farms 40B – There were no appeals filed and the Comprehensive Permit is now in effect.
* Meeting Minutes
  + October 26, 2023

**MOTION:** Ms. Bedard made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2023, meeting. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Francisco, Ms. Bedard, 4 Ms. Black, and Mr. Wilson.

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4-0-0**

* + November 9, 2023

**MOTION:** Ms. Bedard made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2023, meeting. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Black, Ms. Bedard, 4 Mr. Francisco, and Mr. Wilson.

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4-0-0**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* January 11, 2024
* January 25, 2024
* February 6 – Master Plan Community Forum (Snow Date: 2/27)
* February 8, 2024
* February 22, 2024

***Adjournment***

At approximately 9:01 p.m. Mr. Francisco made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Black, Mr. Francisco 4 Ms. Bedard, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4-0-0**

Respectfully submitted:

Kristine Fox

Minute Taker

*Approved 1/26/2024*