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

### **Thursday, January 11, 2024 at 7:00 PM**

 **Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, January 11, 2024, at 7:00PM.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Lorayne Black, Vice Chair

Mr. Phil Francisco, Clerk

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Ms. Alyson Bedard, Board Member

Mr. Russell Burke, 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 – Special Permit, Town Center Overlay District 25 Station Avenue (Rob Saunders, CJS Workshop)***

Mr. Rob Saunders, owner of CJS workshop, provided a brief overview of his special permit application to utilize the existing structure at 25 Station Avenue to provide more space for his expanding business. CJS workshop needs more space to accommodate the logistics of processing costume inventory for their touring show clientele. Mr. Saunders used the phrase “ship and store” to describe the proposed use. This is a new type of service that aligns well with CJS workshop’s current operations; however, it requires additional space for offices, processing, and storage. The structure at 31 Adams Avenue, where CJS workshop currently operates, is insufficient for the “ship and store” service. The former Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) property at 25 Station Avenue seems to be ideally suited for this use.

The proposal involves an immediate use plan, focusing on cleaning up the property and utilizing the existing offices and storage space to handle the costume inventory for touring shows. Long-term plans include renovating the building in a tasteful manner that is consistent with the Town Center Design Guidelines and improving the overall appearance and functionality of the site in a way that enhances the Town Center.

Mr. Francisco sought clarification of the proposed use, expressing concerns about the facility being designated for a material warehouse. Mr. Saunders explained that the primary purpose of this facility is to be an efficient space for actively managing and maintaining their clients’ inventory. CJS workshop is currently recruiting a logistics director who will oversee a team of 3 to 6 employees in the facility. He assured that traffic would be significantly reduced compared to the former use by GELD.

Ms. Black asked for clarification about the costume cleaning process and the future building renovations. Mr. Saunders clarified that the company presently engages external cleaning services for major cleaning tasks. There are no plans to internalize these functions. The vision for the building revolves around enhancing the aesthetics by unifying the gable roof and adopting a barn-like appearance. A formal plan detailing these improvements would be submitted.

Ms. Black recommended exploring innovative stormwater management solutions, emphasizing the importance of capturing all roof runoff.

Mr. Barringer inquired about the external lighting. Mr. Saunders assured that the existing lighting seems to be sufficient for his needs, and no changes are planned. However, attention was drawn to the older, rear half of the building, which is not air conditioned and is in need of some updates, which could include modification of the existing fixtures on the building.

Mr. Wilson asked about the plans for the space in the middle of the building, where the two formerly separate structures were joined. Mr. Saunders responded that his intention is to fully enclose the space and install a garage door on the one side facing the parking lot.

Mr. Wilson opened it up to comments from the public. A question was submitted in regarding the roadway between the building and the rail trail. Mr. Saunders addressed this by explaining that the previous owners had planned to sell the roadway back to the Town, but abandoned this plan to focus on selling the entire property. Once the sale is finalized and the special permit is obtained, Mr. Saunder’s objective is to collaborate with the Town to negotiate boundaries and eliminate the concern of potential liability associated with individuals using the roadway on private property.

Becky Pine conveyed her support for the project and sought information on the next steps. Mr. Wilson clarified that the decision on accepting the roadway rests with the Select Board.

Mr. Tada provided clarification on the special permit application process under the Town Center Overlay District. As part of the process, recommendations from the Design Review Committee are required; however, two of the three committee members' terms have expired. Mr. Tada requested that the Board consider reappointing Maureen Giattino and Tobias Wolf. Once the Design Review Committee membership is reset, Mr. Saunders would be required to meet with the committee to proceed with the application.

Mr. Burke recommended that the public hearing be continued and that both of the former Design Review Committee members be reappointed.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to continue the public hearing to January 25, 2024 at 7:00PM. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Francisco 7 Mr. Burke, Ms. Black, Ms. Bedard, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7-0-0**

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to appoint Maureen Giattino and Tobias Wolf to the Design Review Committee. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Francisco, 7 Mr. Burke, Ms. Black, Ms. Bedard, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7-0-0**

**Discussion – Support for Squannacook Greenways CPC Application**

Mr. Tada presented the Board with the drafted letter of support intended for the Squannacook Greenways CPC application. The group is seeking financial support to complete the next phase of the rail trail from the Bertozzi Wildlife Management area to Cutler field.

Mr. Tada reminded the Board that the final drafts of the CPC applications are due today.

***MOTION:*** Mr. Burkemade a motion to approve the drafted letter of support for the Squannacook Greenways CPC Application. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Bedard, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Barringer, 6 Ms. Black, Mr. Bonnett, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6-1-0 (Mr. Burke-Abstain)**

**Discussion – Design Review Committee membership**

Mr. Tada recommended that if Tobias Wolf is uninterested in being reappointed to the Committee, then alternative members need to be identified.

***Discussion – Hayes Woods Subdivision. Pepperell Road Construction Monitoring Update***

Mr. Tada assured the Board that he would receive an update prior to the next meeting.

***Discussion – Request for release of performance bond Hummingbird Lane, Rocky Hill Subdivision***

Mr. Tada updated that Nitsch Engineering identified five items that required to be addressed. The developer had successfully addressed three out of the five items. The remaining two items included proof of the catch basin cleanup and documentation of the monumentation of the boundary lines on the plan. The related invoice from New England Stormwater Management LLC, totaling $1,000, and the revised plan validates the completion of these tasks.

Mr. Burke sought clarification on the cash bond amount, to which Mr. Tada presented the letter from Attorney Robert Collins indicating a cash bond of $103,864.75.

***MOTION:*** Mr. Burkemade a motion to release the performance surety in the amount of $103,864.75 as all required work has been completed. Ms. Bedard seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Ms. Bedard, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Barringer, 7 Ms. Black, Mr. Burke, Mr. Bonnett, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7-0-0**

***Project Updates***

* Master Plan Update

The upcoming community forum is set for February 6th with a snow date of February 27th. The venue is the Groton Center, offering two opportunities for participation. Mr. Tada updated the Board that the event flier had been submitted to GELD for distribution in the next billing cycle. He also noted that Planning Board members are recommended to help facilitate the forum. Ms. Lind would further explain this request at the next meeting. Mr. Wilson proposed the use of a signup sheet for the two separate forum times.

Public Comment: The Board was informed that the flier was missing the snow date.

* Groton Hill Music Center

Mr. Bonnett relayed that the organizers of the Groton Road Race had reached out to him regarding the possibility of utilizing the emergency entrance on Peabody Street. The adjustment was proposed to shorten the race route and address safety concerns. However, the Groton Hill Music Center was under the impression that the access is exclusively for emergency vehicles. Mr. Bonnett said that the police would be present to manage traffic during the race and to ensure unimpeded access for emergency vehicles at the main entrance.

Mr. Tada reminded the board that the Site Plan approval stipulates the emergency access route would only be for emergency vehicles and not any regular vehicular use; however, there should be no issues for pedestrians utilizing the area temporarily. It has been specified that only runners would be permitted through the gate. The Planning Board concurred, expressing no objections to the request. Ms. Black emphasized the need to restrict access solely to pedestrians, with vehicular entry strictly prohibited.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke moved to inform the Race Organizers that the Planning Board does not find the use inconsistent with the intent of the site plan approval for this annual event. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

Yea: Ms. Bedard, Mr. Barringer, Ms. Black, 6 Mr. Burke, Mr. Bonnett, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION: 6-1-0 (Mr. Francisco-Abstain)**

* Village at Shepley Hill

Mr. Tada reported that the repair work is in progress for the stabilization of the failed slope on lot 2. The field reports provided by Nitsch Engineering from December 21st and December 28th were displayed for review. A non-geotextile fabric was installed and covered with rip rap. Michelle Collette, Stormwater Inspector, also conducted an inspection and noted that the detention basins were full however, the site was stable and there were no new issues. Mr. Burke also visited the site, confirming that the slope was unaffected from the recent storm. Mr. Bonnett stated that the non-geotextile fabric requires to be anchored properly, as landscape staples would be insufficient. Mr. Tada assured that he would follow up with Dillis & Roy Civil Design Group.

Mr. Tada had engaged in a discussion with Ms. Collette who is proposing that the Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee revise their bylaw regulations to prohibit 1:1 slopes. This is also a consideration for the Planning Board. Mr. Bonnett commented if a slope is cut in half by installing benching the process would eliminate any erosion issues.

* 240 Main Street, Kilbourn Place

There were no new updates to share.

* Bank of America ATM, 167 Main Street

Mr. Tada reported receiving an email from the management company, notifying him of the confirmation regarding the shipment of the lighting fixtures. The light fixture in the parking lot has been both replaced and repositioned lower. He urged the Board to take notice of the newly installed lighting.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee

There were no new updates to share.

* Community Preservation Committee

The deadline for the draft applications is today, Thursday, January 11th. All 12 applications would be discussed and provided verbal feedback.

* Conductorlab Oversight Committee

Mr. Tada updated that a meeting is scheduled with the peer review consultants on Tuesday, January 16, 2024 at 10:00am via zoom.

* Firearm Sale Regulation Study Committee

Mr. Burke mentioned that the scheduling of the first meeting is currently underway, with a tentative consideration for a Tuesday morning.

***General Business***

* ZBA Updates
	+ Heritage Landing 40B- The next public hearing is scheduled for January 24th at 6:30pm. Ms. Bedard said that the traffic study is still pending.
* Meeting Minutes
	+ November 30, 2023

**MOTION:** Ms. Bedard made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 30, 2023, meeting. Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

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

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

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED. 5-2-0 (Ms. Black-Abstain, Mr. Barringer- Abstain)**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

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

***Adjournment***

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

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

Yea: Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Burke, Ms. Black, Mr. Barringer 7 Ms. Bedard, Mr. Francisco, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED. 7-0-0**

Respectfully submitted:

Kristine Fox

Minute Taker

*Approved 2/8/2024*