**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**August 22, 2024**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, August 22, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Lorayne Black, Vice-Chair

Mr. Phil Francisco, Clerk

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

Mr. Paul Hathaway, Board Member

**Members Not Present:**

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, 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. Mr. Wilson stated that the reading of the public hearing notices would not be read into the record, but they were available at the Land/Use Office in the Town Hall.

***Public Hearing – Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Definition of Age-Restricted Housing***

Mr. Wilson opened the public hearing. He noted the following:

* The proposed zoning amendment will make the definition of age-restricted housing more consistent with the state’s Affordable Housing Policy and the Federal Fair Housing Regulations
* Comment letter from the Affordable Housing Trust recommends lowering the affordable subsidy requirement to 25% of the units.

Planning Board Proposed Amendment:

"Housing in which 50% of the dwelling units are subsidized under any program or plan that will result in the development of low or moderate-income housing, such subsidized housing which qualifies for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory of the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and is in compliance with the provisions and regulations of the U.S. Fair Housing Act 42 USC 3601 and the Act's Housing for Older Persons exemption provisions for persons over 55 years of age or older."

“At its most recent meeting on August 15, 2024, the Affordable Housing Trust voted unanimously *to recommend that the Planning Board lower the subsidy requirement to 25%* because the Trust believes that this requirement will be more likely to result in developed projects.”

Mr. Francisco stated that he felt 25% was a more achievable goal.

Mr. Burke commented that he felt the bylaw should remain as it was and did not feel lowering the subsidy requirement to 25% would make a difference.

Mr. Hathaway said he felt the Planning Board should listen to the recommendation of the Affordable Housing Trust.

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

Ms. Becky Pine, Chair of the Town of Groton’s Affordable Housing Trust, addressed the Board and noted that the decision to lower the subsidy requirement to 25% was a unanimous decision of the entire committee.

Mr. Burke stated that he felt there should be an in-depth discussion and feasibility study regarding the plan.

Mr. Hathaway said perhaps they should just let the requirement stay as it was until the Board had a more coherent plan.

Mr. Wilson agreed that they should take the item off the table and develop a new, comprehensive plan. Mr. Francisco and Ms. Pine stated that they were both in agreement.

Ms. Nancy Muller, 965 Boston Road, stated that she was concerned about having an absolute percentage regarding what represented affordability without acknowledging the necessary amenities for older adults living in such a housing complex.

Mr. Bob Pine, a resident, addressed the Board and stated at every Master Plan meeting he had attended, the need for alternative forms of housing in Groton had been reiterated over and over again. He said he felt there needed to be a commitment to look at and make changes to the bylaw.

Mr. Bonnett commented that the Planning Board would require help rewriting the bylaw, which would cost money. He asked Mr. Tada to please check with his colleagues in the field to obtain additional information.

Mr. John Sopka, a resident, addressed the Board and said the bylaw was unfair to many people in the town.

**MOTION:** Mr. Francisco 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. Francisco, Mr. Burke, Mr. Bonnett, 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Francisco made a motion to withdraw the proposed modification from the Town Warrant. Mr. Hathaway seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: Mr. Burke 1

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 1 – 0. (Nay – Burke)**

***Public Hearing – Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Solar Parking Canopies***

* Proposed zoning amendment to allow for the installation of solar parking canopies in areas where off-street parking is provided.
* Would be allowed “by right” but would require a Site Plan Review in all

non-R – A districts.

* Solar parking canopies shall not exceed 17 feet but could be increased to 20 feet in height from grade based on site conditions at the Planning Board’s discretion.

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

Mr. John Sopka, a resident, asked if a site plan review was required for other solar panel installations in R – A districts. Mr. Burke replied there were none.

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

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6– 0 – 0.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to recommend the solar parking canopies’ proposed zoning amendment with the Planning Board’s amendments. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6– 0 – 0.**

***Public Hearing (Continuation)***

***Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Firearms Retail Sales Establishments***

Mr. Tada explained that the Planning Board was still waiting for informal comments to come from the Attorney General’s Office.

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

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6– 0 – 0.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to recommend approval of the proposed bylaw amendment for Firearms Retail Sales Establishments. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6– 0 – 0.**

***Public Hearing (Continuation)***

***Preliminary Subdivision Plan and Special Permit for Flexible Development, “Casella Acres,” Wyman Road, Assessors’ Parcel 229-58.***

* Received requests to withdraw the Special Permit application and to continue the Preliminary Plan hearing to 9/12/24.
* Vote to accept the withdrawal of the Special Permit and to continue the Preliminary Plan hearing to 9/12/24.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to allow the applicant to withdraw the request for a Special Permit application without prejudice and to continue the Preliminary Plan hearing, date specific, to the September 12, 2024, Planning Board meeting. Mr. Hathaway seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6– 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Pre-Submission Review, 9 West Main Street (added: 8/20/24)***

* Sachin Patel, a prospective buyer, would like to open a convenience/liquor store.

Mr. Patel addressed the Board and said he had met with the Park Commission about utilizing the parking lot at Carol Wheeler Memorial Park. He said the Park Commission was amenable to allowing the parking area to be used. Mr. Patel stated he was willing to help keep the Park parking lot clean and he would consider contributing to the cost of maintenance. He shared some draft layouts which showed potential parking spaces behind the store at 9 West Main St.

Mr. Burke asked if Mr. Patel had contacted the Board of Health and if he knew where the septic system was located. Mr. Patel replied that he had not spoken with the Board of Health but believed he knew where the septic system was located.

Mr. Burke commented that he was not sure which Board had the purview to allow parking at a park and questioned whether something of commercial use would be allowed.

Mr. Hathaway summarized the follow-up information that Mr. Patel should provide.

1. Board of Health information about parking restrictions related to the septic system.
2. Park Commission and/or Select Board agreement to utilize Carol Wheeler Park lot.
3. Overall parking plan (number and location of spaces).

Mr. Patel said he will gather the additional information and return to the Planning Board.

***Discussion – Master Plan Update***

* Barrett Planning Group provided a revised draft implementation plan and revised promotion flyer with a QR code for the StoryMap.
* Groton Fest planning – Barrett Planning Group provided some suggestions for public engagement activities.
* Further comments on the implementation plan and StoryMap.

Mr. Hathaway commented that there was no “call to action” on the site or the flyer. (Example: This is an opportunity for you to have direct input into the actions of the Master Plan.)

Mr. Wilson offered to provide an update of the draft implementation plan and promotion flyer.

Mr. Hathaway confirmed that a booth at Groton Fest had been secured. Board members committed to bringing the following items:

* Tent – Russ Burke
* Tables – David Bonnett
* Stickers – Phil Francisco
* Posters of Master Plan Timeline and StoryMap Flyer – Lorayne Black

***Discussion – Affordable Homes Act 2024 and new Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Requirements***

* New state law makes changes to the Zoning Act, effective 2/2/25.
  + Mr. Burke reviewed the changes to the zoning.
* ADUs must be allowed by right in single-family residential zoning districts.
* Planning Board submitted a placeholder warrant article for the 2024 Fall Town Meeting:
  + Will hold a public hearing on proposed zoning bylaw amendments on 9/12/24.

Mr. John Sopka, a resident, asked how many Accessory Dwelling Units would be allowed per lot. Mr. Burke replied that the answer to that question would ultimately be up to Town Meeting.

***Project Updates***

* Groton Hill Music Center
  + The demolition delay period for 170 Old Ayer Road (Prescott House) will expire at the end of October.
* Village at Shepley Hill – There were no updates.
* Kilbourn Place, 240 Main Street – There were no updates.
* Village Meadows (Bluebird Lane) – There were no updates.
* Groton Farms, 500 Main Street
  + Former Deluxe building had been demolished.
* Monarch Path Subdivision
  + Road acceptance article on 2024 FTM warrant.
  + The developer needs to provide revised as-built plans for town review.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee
  + Sidewalk construction underway (West Main Street)
* Community Preservation Committee – There were no updates.
* Conductorlab Oversight Committee – There were no new updates.
* ZBA Updates – There were no new updates.
* Sign Committee – There were no new updates.

***General Business***

* Meeting Minutes

* + 6/27/24
  + 7/11/24

To be reviewed at a future meeting.

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* September 12, 2024 (via Zoom)
* September 26, 2024 (via Zoom)
* Groton Fest – Saturday, September 28, 2024
* Fall Town Meeting – Saturday, October 5, 2024
* October 10, 2024
* October 24, 2024

***Adjournment***

At approximately 10:22 p.m. Mr. Hathaway made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Bonnett, 6

Ms. Black, Mr. Hathaway, and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6– 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 9/26/2024*