**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**December 19, 2024**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Lorayne Black, Vice-Chair

Mr. Phil Francisco, Clerk

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Mr. Russ Burke, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

Mr. Paul Hathaway, 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. Mr. Wilson introduced the Planning Board members who were present in the remote meeting.

***Discussion – Master Plan Update***

Ms. Judi Barrett, Ms. Jill Slankas, and Mr. Tony Duong of the Barrett Planning Group were present to speak on the Master Plan.

Ms. Slankas stated that the public comment period had closed on December 9th, and Mr. Tada had compiled the questions/comments that were submitted, including those expressed at the public presentation. She said Barrett Planning Group prepared an updated map of the vacant land parcels that were shown on the Land Use Map, in response to some of the public comments about the errors in the map. She noted that she would send the updated map to the Planning Board.

Ms. Slankas commented that some wording had been changed based on people’s knowledge of a particular area, and she said she would also share a sample chapter of what the plan could look like using the software program “InDesign.”

Ms. Slankas said that she was hopeful that the Planning Board could approve the final plan at the January 23, 2025, meeting.

Ms. Black suggested that the Planning Board have a special session to address the items on Mr. Francisco’s list of changes to the Master Plan. The Board collectively agreed.

***Public Hearing (Continuation) – Definitive Subdivision Plan and Special Permit for Major Residential Development, “Gratuity Brook Farm Estates,”63 Gratuity Road, Assessors’ Parcel 216-47 (Routhier & Roper Gratuity Road, LLC)***

Representing the applicant were Mr. Matthew Waterman, P.E. (Civil) of LandTech Consultants, Inc., and Mr. Jeffrey Dirk, P.E. (Transportation) of Vanasse & Associates, Inc. The Planning Board’s peer review engineers were also present: Mr. Jared Gentilucci, Deputy Director of Civil Engineering, Nitsch Engineering, and Mr. John Michalak, P.E. (Transportation) also from Nitsch Engineering. The proposed project is a conventional subdivision that would be restricted to persons 55-years-old and older. The units would be condominiums and the roads would be owned by the condo association.

Mr. Tada noted that the Planning Board had the revised Definitive Plan, the revised Stormwater materials, the first Traffic Review letter, and responses to both of those letters. He said he had received second review letters from Nitsch Engineering on both the Stormwater and Traffic Review.

Mr. Waterman reintroduced the plan, including the updated Stormwater Plan. They conducted additional soil testing and revised the stormwater detention basins. Nitsch Engineering had provided peer-review reports on both, and Mr. Waterman and Mr. Dirk had responded to those reports earlier that day.

Mr. Burke asked if the concerns about high groundwater and flooding had been addressed. Mr. Gentilucci said the revised plans show adequate separation from groundwater for the detention basins, and the basement elevations are above the assumed floodplain elevation.

Mr. Barringer and Mr. Burke commented on the importance of specifying the maintenance responsibility for the infrastructure and landscaping in the condominium agreements.

Mr. Bonnett asked if the stormwater basins had the capacity to provide flood storage. Mr. Waterman said the stormwater basins were designed to handle stormwater runoff according to the regulations, but they were not designed to provide additional storage during a flooding event.

Mr. Dirk reviewed the traffic study and provided the Board with Vanasse & Associates’ recommendations for improving traffic flow and safety. The traffic data included vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. The report includes recommendations for improving Gratuity Road, Jenkins Road, and their associated intersections, with measures such as resurfacing, marking, and signage.

Mr. Francisco asked Mr. Dirk to elaborate on Nitsch Engineering’s question #26 regarding the intersection of Mill Street and Jenkins Road.

**Question 26 from Nitsch Engineering**

*Based on our site visit at the intersection of Mill Street and Jenkins Road, sight distance is limited due to the crest vertical curve to the south on Mill Street, and the Jenkins Road eastbound approach contains a splitter island to separate turns to/from the north and the south. Jenkins Road contains no centerline markings or signage and creates a potential conflict point where two streams of traffic merge at the west end of the island.*

*Based on Figure 6 from the memorandum, Jenkins Road between Project Site Roadway (Therese Lane) and Mill Street is anticipated to service approximately 64% of Project-related traffic. We recommend that VAI address how to better serve project-related traffic along Jenkins Road, including investigating how to limit conflict points at the intersection of Mill Street and Jenkins Road and how to improve the south sight distance on Mill Street.*

**Response from Vanasse & Associates:**

*Discontinuing the southernmost channelized portion of Jenkins Road to create a T-intersection would serve to:*

* *reduce conflict points.*
* *improve sight lines by positioning the intersection further from the crest vertical curve along Mill Street to the south of Jenkins Road.*

Mr. Dirk said they would do whatever the Town felt was better/safer.

Mr. Barringer asked if current traffic analyses and the data that supported them accommodated the vast increase in delivery vehicles and rideshares. Mr. Dirk replied that the numbers reflected Amazon, FedEx, UPS, and delivery service providers.

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

Ms. Anna Eliot, a resident, addressed the Board and said the original plan included fencing surrounding the perimeter to protect any possible encroachment onto the racetrack at the Hazel Grove Fairgrounds. She said the current plan showed that there was a portion of land that did not have a fence, and she said the land would be donated. She asked if the land could be donated to the Park Commission, as the parcel abutted the racetrack. Mr. Waterman replied that his understanding was that the land would be conveyed to the Conservation Commission, but he was happy to work with the Planning Board.

Mr. Adam Burnett, a resident, addressed the Board and said he felt that a chain-linked fence would be a disaster for wildlife. He said a rustic-looking fence would be a better choice. He also said he felt the parcel of land to be donated should go to the Conservation Commission and not the Park Commission. Regarding the proposed granite curbing along the subdivision roads, Mr. Burnett said sloped curbing would be much better than vertical curbing for wildlife such as salamanders.

Mr. Waterman said he would address some of Mr. Burnett’s comments, and they could discuss them further at the next meeting they attended. He noted that Cape Cod berm could be another alternative to vertical granite curbing, but it would require a waiver from the Planning Board.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to continue the public hearing, date specific, to the January 9, 2025, Planning Board meeting. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Hathaway, Mr. Francisco, Ms. Black 7

Mr. Burke, Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett,

and Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 – 0 – 0.**

***Public Hearing (Continuation) – Preliminary Subdivision Plan, “Casella Acres,” Wyman Road, Assessors’ Parcel 229-58 (J. Casella)***

Attorney Bob Collins and Mr. Ryan Proctor of Dillis & Roy Civil Design Group were present on behalf of the applicant, Jim Casella.

Attorney Collins said at the last meeting there was a question about the viability of Lot 4 because of the driveway. He said he spoke with the Review Biologist at Natural Heritage, who said the driveway could be possible but said she could not technically talk about it because it was not the plan presented to her. He said he felt it would make better sense if they could reconfigure the Yield Plan so that the driveway for lot four could be on its frontage rather than an easement. He said they added approximately 35 feet to the second cul-de-sac, which was enough room to place a driveway.

Mr. Burke stated that, by definition, there was not enough frontage on lot three due to the existing Natural Heritage restriction. He also said the proposed frontage was not contiguous. Therefore, the frontage is illusory.

Mr. Burke said that it was the applicant’s third attempt to try to submit a Yield Plan that would get six lots on the parcel of land. He said it was his opinion that the Planning Board should vote to deny the preliminary plan approval because the Yield Plan did not show sufficient frontage required for six lots.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to deny the preliminary plan because the Yield Plan for six lots did not conform with the requirements for frontage. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

***Discussion:***

Mr. Barringer asked if lot three could move its frontage to the second cul-de-sac. Mr. Burke replied that the applicant had not presented such a plan, so he was not sure and felt that if it were a viable option, the applicant would have shown it.

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

Yea: Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Burke 2

Nay: Mr. Francisco, Ms. Black, & Mr. Wilson 3

**MOTION FAILED: 2 – 3 – 2. (Abstained: Mr. Barringer & Mr. Hathaway)**

**MOTION:** Ms. Black made a motion to continue the public hearing for a Preliminary Subdivision Plan, “Casella Acres,” to the January 9, 2025, Planning Board meeting. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

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

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

Nay: Mr. Burke 1

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 1 – 0.**

***Discussion – Draft Approval Decision for Site Plan Review, Gray Building Renovations, Lawrence Academy, Assessors’ Parcel 116-10***

* Draft approval decision for Site Plan Review with a special condition for the provision of a revised landscaping plan.

Attorney Collins stated that he felt the draft Approval Decision was acceptable and would bring a revised landscaping plan to a future meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the Site Plan for the Gray Building renovations at Lawrence Academy. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black 7

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

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Potential Zoning Amendments for 2025 Spring Town Meeting***

* MBTA Communities Multi-Family Development

Mr. Tada commented that Mr. Burke had submitted a clean copy of the draft Overlay District Zoning Amendments, and he had forwarded that to Town Counsel. He said he would keep the Board posted when he received feedback. He also said he felt a copy should be sent to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for review.

* Floodplain Overlay District

Mr. Tada stated that he would forward the State’s Model Floodplain Bylaw to the Planning Board the following day, along with a link to the existing Floodplain section from the Zoning Bylaw.

***Project Updates***

* Groton Hill Music Center
* A black chain link fence had been installed.
* Village at Shepley Hill – There were no new updates.
* Kilbourn Place, 240 Main Street – There were no new updates.
* Village Meadows (Bluebird Lane)
* Waiting for paving inspection report from Nitsch Engineering.
* Groton Farms, 500 Main Street – There were no new updates.
* Monarch Path Subdivision – There were no new updates.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee
* The sidewalk projects were nearly complete.
* Community Preservation Committee
* The deadline for complete draft proposals – 1/17/2025
* Request for the Planning Board to provide a letter of support for the West Groton Rail Trail.

**MOTION:** Mr. Francisco made a motion that the Planning Board submit a letter of support regarding the West Groton Rail Trail’s request for funds from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC). Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black 7

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

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 – 0 – 0.**

* 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 – October 24, 2024

**MOTION:** Mr. Hathaway made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2024, meeting, as amended. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black 7

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

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 – 0 – 0.**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* January 9, 2025 (Via Zoom)
* January 23, 2025 (In-person)
* February 13, 2025
* February 27, 2025

***Adjournment***

At approximately 9:58 p.m., Mr. Bonnet made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Hathaway seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black 7

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

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 7 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 3/27/2025*