**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**February 13, 2025**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Scott Wilson, Chair

Ms. Lorayne Black, Vice-Chair

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

Mr. Paul Hathaway, Board Member

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

**Members Not Present:**

Mr. Phil Francisco, Clerk

**Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Per the Massachusetts Attorney General’s guidance regarding the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law and Wiretap Law, Mr. Wilson stated that the meeting was virtual and being recorded, and all votes must be taken via roll call.

Mr. Wilson introduced the Planning Board members who were present in the remote meeting. Mr. Wilson stated that the public hearing notices would not be read into the record, but they were available at the Land Use Office in the Town Hall.

***Interview Candidates for Planning Board Vacancy (Revised 2/13/25)***

**Recorder’s Note:** The interviews, in their entirety, can be accessed on the Town of Groton website ([www.grotonma.gov](http://www.grotonma.gov)) under “Where do I” and then click “Watch past meetings.”

* Mr. Matthew Killam

Mr. Killam said that he wanted to become more involved after moving to Groton six years ago. Previously he lived in Chelmsford. He said he liked Massachusetts in general, and that Groton in particular seemed like a good place to raise his two children. He felt he would be a good fit as a member of the Planning Board and would bring a different perspective because of his professional experience in architectural design. He worked on projects both nationally and internationally, and was familiar with both the permitting side and the review side. He said he had not read the draft Master Plan thoroughly but was eager to do so.

* Ms. Anna Eliot

Ms. Eliot stated that she had taken part in the implementation of the previous Master Plan and was keenly interested in the new draft update of the Master Plan. She asked how the Planning Board would plan to offset land in light of the MBTA designation. She said her primary goal in serving the town was to save land. She added that she was in favor of the MBTA designation but would be very interested in working with the Planning Board on how to offset the saving of land. Ms. Eliot stated that she felt it would be best to defer her candidacy due to the level of knowledge and experience that the other two candidates had.

* Mr. Russell Burke

Mr. Burke stated that by trade, he was an Urban Planner and had previously served on the Groton Planning Board. While he originally felt he should retire from the Planning Board, he realized that he had some unfinished projects that he would like to work on.

Mr. Barringer reminded the Board that the Select Board had input on who was chosen to fill the vacant seat. He also said that all three candidates met the requirements of the Planning Board, given that they all had values and their own merits. He further noted that, in the current situation, he would like to nominate Mr. Burke’s to fill the vacant seat.

**MOTION:** Mr. Barringer made a motion to forward Mr. Russell Burke’s name to the Select Board as the candidate to fill the vacant seat on the Planning Board. Mr. Hathaway seconded the motion. (Appointment effective until the next local elections on May 20, 2025.)

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black, 5

 Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

***Public Hearing – Special Permit for Wellness Studio Use, 134 Main Street, Basement Unit, Assessors’ Parcel 113-9.9 (Yogesh Kumar)***

Mr. Wilson opened the public hearing and stated that Mr. David Valletta, KMPD Capital LLC, was the owner of the unit, and Mr. Yogesh Kumar was the applicant, noting that they were both present via Zoom.

Mr. Kumar addressed the Board and said he wanted to open a Wellness Studio at the above-listed address, in the basement unit which is currently vacant. He said daily activities would include the use of hyperbaric chambers, cold plunges, saunas, etc., with an emphasis on the rehabilitation and recovery associated with physical injuries.

Mr. Barringer asked if the ventilation was adequate in the basement. Mr. Kumar replied that it was. Mr. Valletta added that there are windows in the basement, along with a complete HVAC system providing air exchange.

Mr. Kumar noted that he expected eight to ten customers to use the facility per day, by appointment. He added there would be only one or two employees present. With respect to noise concerns, Mr. Kumar said only the hyperbaric chambers would generate noise of any significance, but it would not be disruptive to anyone.

Ms. Black and Mr. Barringer asked if there was any possibility to add a changing room in addition to the men’s and women’s bathrooms. Mr. Kumar replied he would look into it, but it was not needed in other facilities. Mr. Valletta stated that he would provide schematics for changing rooms.

Mr. Tada said he had received a question from an abutter regarding one of the utility rooms shown on the floor plan. Mr. Valletta explained that there was a grease trap in the utility room that was used by a former bakery on the first floor, and the existing tenants had all agreed to leave it as it was.

Mr. Barringer asked if the facility was ADA-compliant. Mr. Valletta replied that the Building Inspector would confirm that via the approval of a building permit.

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

Ms. Anna Eliot, a resident, addressed the Board and asked if the applicant would require the employees to park behind the Prescott Building. She added that she was in favor of the additional commercial use.

Mr. Kumar replied that is was part of the lease agreement to utilize the Prescott parking lot.

**MOTION:**  Mr. Barringer made a motion to approve the request for a Special Permit subject to the applicant providing men’s and women’s changing rooms as part of the floor plan. Mr. Hathaway seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Barringer, Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black, 5

 Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 0.**

**Recorder’s Note:** Mr. Barringer was excused from the meeting at approximately 8:15 p.m.

***Discussion – Master Plan Update, Final Revisions***

Mr. Wilson asked if the “dark sky” requirement was included in the Master Plan. Mr. Tada replied that the “dark sky” requirement was included in the public comment section of the Master Plan as well as on page 29 in the section under “Light Pollution.” The Board collectively agreed that the subject was adequately addressed.

Mr. Bonnett commented that he felt it was important to keep a record of possible updates to the Master Plan.

Mr. Hathaway commented that he felt the addition to the Master Plan regarding affordability issues was slightly underwhelming. He suggested perhaps one sentence be added that stated: “and beyond housing values and residents being able to pay their bills and property taxes.”

Mr. Tada said he would relay the requests to the Barrett Planning Group. He also said he had a draft of a Warrant Article ready for Spring Town Meeting to endorse the 2025 Master Plan.

***Public Hearing – Proposed Zoning By-law Amendment, MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District***

Mr. Wilson opened the public hearing.

* Draft zoning bylaw amendment to create as-of-right multi-family zoning provisions, as required by the MBTA Communities law and regulations.
* The draft bylaw was prepared by Russ Burke and was reviewed by Town Counsel.
* The requirement for Groton is to adopt zoning that would allow for the creation of at least 208 units of multi-family housing, with a minimum density of 15 units per acre.
* The proposed multi-family development Overlay District would retain the existing, underlying zoning of the selected parcels (all are zoned General Business).
* The draft zoning bylaw parameters and Overlay District map are currently being validated in the Compliance Model spreadsheet with assistance from the MRPC (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission).
* Will need to submit the proposed zoning bylaw, Overlay District map, and Compliance Model spreadsheet to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) for review prior to the Spring Town Meeting.

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

Mr. Jeff Brem, owner of the properties at 468 and 478 Main Street, addressed the Board and said that he felt the residential property he owned on Taylor Street, consisting of 1.5 acres, should be included in the Overlay District.

John Sopka, resident on Boston Road, said the Overlay District map is a crucial piece of the zoning amendment.

**MOTION:** Mr. Hathawaymade a motion to continue the public hearing to February 27, 2025, to allow feedback from the MRPC. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black, 4

 Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

***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)***

* The applicant submitted a request to continue the public hearing until the February 27, 2025, Planning Board meeting.

**MOTION:** Ms. Black made a motion to approve the request for the continuation of the public hearing to February 27, 2025. Mr. Hathaway seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black, 4

 Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Climate Resolution, Sustainability Commission***

Mr. Wilson said the Planning Board would invite the Sustainability Commission to present at the meeting on February 27, 2025. Mr. Ken Horton, a member of the Sustainability Commission, stated that he would provide the Planning Board and Mr. Tada with a draft letter of support for consideration.

***Discussion – Issue Special Permits for Hammerhead Lot and Shared Driveway, 101 Longley Road, Assessors’ Parcel 225-28 (Christopher Curtis)***

Mr. Tada shared a copy of a draft Decision regarding the Special Permit and Shared Driveway for the Planning Board’s review.

Mr. Tada highlighted condition #6 as follows:

1. “Prior to the issuance of an occupancy permit for the new house, a stamped As-Built Plan and a Professional Engineer’s certification that the infiltration trench is functioning properly shall be provided to the Planning Board.”

**MOTION:** Mr. Hathaway made a motion to approve the requests for Special Permits for a Hammerhead Lot and the Shared Driveway located at 101 Longley Road. Mr. Bonnett seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black, 4

 Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

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

* Flood Plain Overlay District
	+ Received Feedback from the MA Flood Hazard Mitigation Program.
	+ The Public Hearing is scheduled on 2/27/2025.
* Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Change
* Need to identify the public hearing date in March.
* Request for a letter of support for the Affordable Housing Trust (CPC) application (Project Summary provided by Ms. Fran Stanley, Housing Coordinator.)
	+ Request for $400,000 to establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to look at privately owned, buildable land for the purpose of developing more affordable housing.

**MOTION:** Mr. Hathaway made a motion to authorize Mr. Tada to draft a letter in support of the application for CPP funding for the purpose of building Affordable Housing in Groton. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black, 4

 Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

***Project Updates***

* Groton Hill Music Center – There were no new updates to report.
* Village at Shepley Hill – There were no new updates to report.
* Kilbourn Place, 240 Main Street – There were no new updates to report.
* Village Meadows (Bluebird Lane) – There were no new updates to report.
* Groton Farms, 500 Main Street – There were no new updates to report.
* Monarch Path Subdivision – There were no new updates to report.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee – Ongoing
* Community Preservation Committee – There were no new updates to report.
* Conductorlab Oversight Committee – A meeting was held, but there was nothing new to report.
* ZBA Updates – There were no new updates to report.
* Sign Committee – There were no new updates to report.

***General Business***

* Meeting Minutes

There were no meeting minutes to review.

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* February 13, 2025 (Zoom)
* February 24, 2025 (In Joint Session with the Select Board (In-Person)
* March 13, 2025 (Zoom)
* March 27, 2025 (In-Person)
* April 26, 2025 - Spring Town Meeting

***Adjournment***

**MOTION:** At approximately 9:40 p.m., Mr. Hathaway made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Black seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Hathaway, Ms. Black, 4

 Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Wilson

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 5/22/2025*