**TOWN OF GROTON PLANNING BOARD**

**July 17, 2025**

**Meeting Minutes**

A virtual meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 7:02 p.m.

**Members Present:**

Mr. Paul Hathaway, Vice-Chair

Mr. Matthew Killam, Board Member

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member

Mr. Russell Burke, Board Member

Mr. Phil Francisco, Board Member

Mr. David Bonnett, Board Member

**Members Not Present:**

Ms. Lorayne Black, Chair

**Also Present:**

Mr. Takashi Tada, Land Use Director/Town Planner

Mr. Hathaway opened the meeting and explained that the meeting was virtual and being recorded, and all votes must be taken via roll call. Furthermore, the participants in the meeting introduced themselves.

***Public Hearings – Special Permit & Site Plan Review for a Satellite Emergency Facility (SEF), 490 Main Street, Assessors Map 216, Parcels 96, 98, & 99. (UMass Memorial Health Care) – In joint session with the Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee***

* Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee (ERSWAC) – Call to Order (7:05 p.m.)

**ERSWAC Members Present:**

Mr. Steven Savage, Chair

Mr. Bob Hanninen, Board Member

Mr. Bruce Easom, Board Member

Mr. George Barringer, Board Member (Planning Board representative)

Ms. Michelle Collette, Stormwater Inspector

* Applicant: UMass Memorial Healthcare, Inc. (UMMH)
  + Ms. Brittany Gesner, Project Manager, VHB – Present
  + Patricia Pistone, UMass Memorial Healthcare, Inc., Associate Vice President of External Affairs – Present
  + Chris Anderson – UMass Memorial Healthcare, Inc. – Present
  + Ellie Hart – Architect, SLAM – Present
    - Reviewed the proposed interior and exterior of the building.
  + Michael Santos – Transportation Consultant, VHB – Present
    - Reviewed the Traffic Study
  + Rob Anctil – Attorney for UMass Memorial Healthcare, Inc. – Present
  + Landowners: 492 MG LLC and Quality Green Homes LLC

Ms. Pistone addressed the Board and stated that UMMH was the largest non-profit healthcare system in central Massachusetts and had the region's only academic medical center. She said the closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center left a void in the community, and the proposed new emergency medical center would help fill that void.

Ms. Gesner discussed how the proposed project meets the Special Permit criteria and presented an overview of the proposed site plan.

* + The site contains 6.9 acres and there is a small wetland in the middle.
  + There is approximately 25 feet of elevation change across the site.
  + The proposed helipad will be located in the rear of the site where the existing elevation is higher.
  + The main parking area will be in front of the building along Main Street, which makes the most sense for the proposed emergency medical facility.
  + The medical facility will require a waiver of the front yard setback requirement in the General Business District (maximum 20 feet from the front property line). The proposed building is 99.3 feet from the front property line.
  + The proposed stormwater management system includes an infiltration basin in the north end of the site.
  + Proposed landscaping plan includes enhancement of the wetland resource area and buffer zone (remove invasives and plant native species). The helicopter flight path must be kept free of taller vegetation, and the overall planting schedule is designed to minimize the potential for birds in the flight path.
  + Proposed lighting plan incorporates lighting standards for emergency medical facilities and helipad facilities.

Mr. Santos of VHB presented a summary of the Traffic Impact and Access Study.

* + Main Street is a state highway under MassDOT control.
  + The proposal includes two new curb cuts and the removal of four existing curb cuts on the east side of Main Street.
  + 145 parking spaces are proposed (74 for the SEF and 71 for the future medical office).
  + 7 parking spaces will be provided (10% of the total) per state code.
  + The SEF and medical office building are expected to have up to 120 employees across three shifts per day. Parking spaces are proposed at a ratio of 4 per 1,000 square feet.
  + Trip generation will have minimal impact to existing traffic operations.

Ms. Hart of SLAM Architects presented the proposed floor plan and architectural elevations of the SEF.

* + The main entrance will be on the west side facing Main Street and the emergency entrance will be on the south side.

Mr. Killam asked about the lighting, fencing, and anticipated number of flights associated with the helipad, which will be in proximity to residential abutters on Taylor Street.

Ms. Gesner said the former Nashoba Valley Medical Center averaged 50 flights per year.

Mr. Killam also asked if the proposed site plan includes EV chargers in the parking lot and a crosswalk on Main Street.

Ms. Gesner replied that the parking plan includes 20% EV chargers as required by the Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code. The proposed sidewalk on Main Street will tie into the MassDOT-approved crosswalk for the residential development at 500 Main Street (not constructed yet).

Mr. Burke asked if the application included a Cut & Fill Plan. Ms. Gesner said they would include a Cut & Fill Plan with the next set of revisions. VHB’s preliminary analysis indicates a balance of cut and fill on the site.

Mr. Burke also expressed concern about the interior lighting in the reception area surrounded by tall windows. He encouraged the applicants to take measures to prevent light pollution on Main Street.

Mr. Hathaway echoed Mr. Burke’s concern about lighting impacts from the building. He also asked about the impacts of noise from emergency vehicles and the rooftop HVAC units.

Ms. Gesner said the HVAC units will include noise-attenuation and screening. Ambulance noise will be mitigated by a retaining wall and solid fence, plus landscape plantings, on that side of the building.

Mr. Bonnett asked if the existing soils are suitable to be used as fill for the site grading. Ms. Gesner said their soil testing indicates the soils are suitable for reuse as fill.

Mr. Savage, Chair of the ERSWAC, asked Ms. Gesner how long it would take her team to respond to the stormwater peer review comments from Nitsch Engineering.

Ms. Gesner said they could respond to most of the peer review comments within 2 weeks, but they don’t have soil test pit data from within the proposed stormwater infiltration basin. They would prefer to conduct the soil tests at the start of sitework, to minimize mobilization costs. They understand that there is risk involved in delaying the soil testing.

Ms. Collette reminded the applicants that the soil tests must be witnessed by the Town (Nitsch Engineering in this case) and that the Board of Health requires the testing of imported fill material.

The ERSWAC members were in agreement that the soil testing in the proposed infiltration area should be done right away, in order to validate the design of the proposed stormwater management system prior to approving the permit.

* Peer Reviewers: Nitsch Engineering
  + Jared Gentilucci (Site Plan and Stormwater Reviewer) – Present

Mr. Jared Gentilucci from Nitsch Engineering addressed the Board and stated that Nitsch provided peer review comments on the Site Plan Review application, the Traffic Study, and the Stormwater Permit application for the proposed project. He highlighted the following comments:

* The applicant is required to provide a Cut & Fill Plan.
* The lighting in the roadway and parking areas should the zoning bylaw’s requirements for Dark Sky compliance.
* The applicant should specify the lighting hours of operation.
* The application should clarify the proposed asphalt thickness in the driveway and parking areas.
* Retaining walls greater than 4 feet in height require a waiver.
* The Stormwater Bylaw requires the use of Low Impact Development techniques (i.e., a decentralized system) to manage stormwater runoff. The proposed stormwater management system is a centralized system with a large infiltration basin on the north side.
  + Jason Sobel and David Perloff (Traffic Impact Assessment) – Present

Mr. Jason Sobel from Nitsch Engineering highlighted two recommendations related to the review of the Traffic Study.

* The applicant should look more closely at the proposed curb cuts in the context of the existing and potential future condition of the Mill Street intersection on the opposite side of Main Street.
* The applicant should monitor the traffic volumes for six months to one year after the project is constructed.

Ms. Gesner said they would provide formal responses to the peer review comments from Nitsch Engineering and to the comments submitted by Lorayne Black via email on 7/14/25.

Public Comments:

* Mr. Tada stated that he had received 20 letters of support for the project, copies of which are posted on the Town website.
* Mr. John Sopka, 344 Boston Road, wondered about the anticipated number of patients being transferred from the proposed SEF to another medical facility.
* Ms. Collette stated that she felt it would be important to test any fill for contaminants, especially for PFAS, prior to moving it around.

**MOTION:** Mr. Hanninen made a motion to continue the ERSWAC public hearing to August 12, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Barringer seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Easom, Mr. Hanninen, Mr. Barringer, 4

& Mr. Savage

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

**MOTION:** At approximately 8:35 p.m., Mr. Barringer made a motion to adjourn the Earth Removal Stormwater Advisory Committee’s meeting. Mr. Easom seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Easom, Mr. Hanninen, Mr. Barringer, 4

& Mr. Savage

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 4 – 0 – 0.**

**MOTION:** Mr. Francisco made a motion to continue the Planning Board’s public hearing to August 14, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Bonnett, Mr. Barringer, & Mr. Hathaway

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

***Public Hearing (Continuation) – Special Permit Application for Shared Driveway, 10 Worthen Drive, Assessors Map 221, Parcels 14, 14.2, & 14.3 (J. Gilson)***

Mr. Tada explained that the applicant had submitted a request to continue the public hearing to the August 28, 2025, meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Burke made a motion to continue the public hearing to August 28, 2025. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Hathaway

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

***Discussion – Master Plan Implementation***

Mr. Francisco presented a summary of the Master Plan Implementation discussion from the previous Planning Board meeting. He is scheduled to discuss this topic with the Select Board on July 28th.

Mr. Sopka encouraged the board to include other modes of non-vehicular mobility in the scope of the Bicycle Network Expansion goal.

***Project Updates***

* Gratuity Brook Farm Estate – There were no new updates.
* Groton Farms – There were no new updates.
* Groton Hill Music Center – There were no new updates.
* Hayes Woods Lane – There were no new updates.
* Kilbourn Place, 240 Main Street – There were no new updates.
* Monarch Path – There were no new updates.
* Village at Shepley Hill – There were no new updates.
* Village Meadows (Bluebird Lane)
  + Developer submitted Road As-Built Plan and Street Acceptance Plan – 7/16/25.
  + Nitsch Engineering will review the plans and report to the Planning Board.
  + Placeholder Warrant Article for Road Acceptance at the Fall Town Meeting on 10/18/25.

***Committee Updates***

* Complete Streets Committee – Work ongoing.
* Community Preservation Committee – There were no updates.
* Conductorlab Oversight Committee – There were no new updates.
* ZBA Updates
  + 409 Martins Pond Road – ZBA voted to overturn the determinations made by the current and former Building Commissioners related to the use of the property for a landscaping business.
* Sign Committee – There were no new updates.

***General Business***

* Meeting Minutes
  + Minutes from the May 8, 2025, meeting.

**MOTION:** Mr. Francisco made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 8, 2025, meeting, as presented. Mr. Burke seconded the motion.

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

Yea: Mr. Burke, Mr. Francisco, Mr. Barringer 5

Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Hathaway

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 5 – 0 – 1. (Abstained – Mr. Killam)**

***Planning Board Meeting Schedule***

* August 28, 2025
* September 11, 2025
* September 25, 2025
* October 9, 2025
* October 18, 2025 – Fall Town Meeting
* October 23, 2025

***Adjournment***

**MOTION:** At approximately 9:15 p.m., Mr. Burke made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Francisco seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Barringer, Mr. Bonnett, & Mr. Hathaway

Nay: 0

**MOTION CARRIED: 6 – 0 – 0.**

Respectfully submitted:

Trish Gedziun

Recording Secretary

*Approved 10/9/2025*