

March 11, 2021

Planning Board
173 Main St.
Groton, MA 01450

RE: Special Permit application for Proposed "Village at Shepley Hill"

Dear Planning Board,

As a near neighbor, a regular visitor to Shepley Hill, and as one who has come to appreciate deeply the incredibly unique topography and biodiversity that defines Groton, I want to express my opinion on the proposed subdivision for parcel 226-2. I believe that the quintessential qualities that have established Groton as a unique ecological treasure within Massachusetts may be too lightly "waived away" by the actions of our Conservation Commission and Planning Board. The developers have no "right" to build a subdivision on this parcel. Without waivers, this subdivision could not be built due to the protections afforded our wetlands. It is a serious matter to relinquish those protections that were developed by many who served on our Town boards and then approved at our Town Meetings. Waivers cannot be undone. In addition, they set precedents for future developments that will, in turn, further degrade the ecological communities that sustain Groton's biodiversity.

The protections for our wetlands are based on science and were adopted to protect fragile ecosystems. In practice, for some marginal properties, waivers can provide a balance between a property owner's equity thorough analyses of alternative, less impactful plans. With its extensive wetlands and uplands, this parcel provides prime habitat for a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial animal and plant species. It forms a large contiguous land area with farmland and with land conserved by the Groton Conservation Trust. It also provides a corridor, used by many animals that I have seen, across Sand Hill Rd. to the Longley II Conservation Land that connects, in turn, to the Rich State Forest. It includes one of a trio of drumlins that constitute the Shepley Hills. We have already lost many of Groton's drumlins to development. "Little by little, inch by inch," is an apt expression to describe this loss.

Groton's Planning Board and Conservation Commission have been leaders in protecting Groton's landscape for over 50 years while also accommodating reasonable, low impact development. But this subdivision of more than a dozen expensive duplexes for older people with no children is not a low impact development and it serves no obvious needs in our community. Please do not set precedents that will make conservation efforts more difficult in the future. Please do not forget that Groton's biodiversity is protected by regulations that ought not be relinquished lightly. Another expression that may be overused but applies here is "Once it's gone, it's gone forever." Please continue to protect Groton's landscape from inappropriate development.



Paul G. Funch
92 Reedy Meadow Rd.