



TOWN OF GROTON

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Office of the:
Council on Aging
Kathy Shelp, Director

COA Building Committee August 2, 2017 8am Town Hall

Members Present: Michelle Collette, Peter Cunningham, George Faircloth, John Amaral, Gary Green

Members absent: Mihran Keoseian, Annika Nillson Ripps

Advisors present: Kathy Shelp, Mark Haddad

Guest: Dan Wolf

The Chair called the meeting to order 8:02am.

Groton resident and civil engineer Dan Wolfe of David Ross Associates met with the Committee to provide general information regarding the site of the current senior center being suitable for a new senior center and housing. The possibility of combining the site with the abutting GEMS site was also discussed.

Mr. Wolfe said he did not do an engineering study of the site, but relied on existing information and GIS mapping. He said constructing a new senior center or renovating and adding onto the existing building would not be a problem with the previously disturbed site. However, constructing housing on the site would be a concern. The senior center site and GEMS site are both subject to the Wetlands Protection Act and local Wetlands Protection By-law. Wrangling Brook, which flows through the middle of both sites, has a 200-ft buffer under the Rivers Protection Act. Additionally, the site contains endangered species habitat and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). The entire area, including the wooded area, would have a higher level of protection and any disturbance may be considered a "taking" of natural habitat. A housing project may not be feasible.

Chairman Cunningham asked if there is enough upland area. Mr. Wolfe said there are some allowances for construction in the upland area, but only 10% of the land in the 100-200 ft riverfront area can be disturbed with no disturbance allowed within 100 ft of Wrangling Brook. The Town can redevelop the existing disturbed area, but the wooded area would be an issue. Mr. Wolfe said Title Five would govern any on-site sewage disposal system within a limited area. Groundwater elevation and soil testing would be required.

Chairman Cunningham asked about forestry management in the wooded area. Mr. Wolfe said it would probably be allowed, but clear cutting would be prohibited.

Chairman Cunningham said there is a Conservation Restriction on the GEMS land. The Committee received an opinion from Town Counsel that the restriction is subject to Article 97 of the State Constitution. A 2/3 vote of Town Meeting and a 2/3 vote of the State Legislature are required to extinguish the retraction.

Michelle Collette asked if a conservation permit from NHESP is required, does that trigger a Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review. Mr. Wolfe said, "yes." Ms. Collette said MEPA review could add considerable cost and time to the project.

The Committee thanked Mr. Wolfe for sharing his professional expertise.

The motion was made by Collette, seconded by Faircloth, that construction of housing at the existing site at 163 West Main Street is not a viable option. The motion passed unanimously.

Michelle Collette made a motion: The committee explored housing options, engineering reviews have determined that housing is not an option with the Senior Center at 163 W Main Street. The motion was seconded by John Amaral, there was no discussion. There was unanimous approval.

The Fall Town Meeting Warrant is opened and will close August 31.

Peter Cunningham recommended a place mark on the Warrant:

To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow a sum or sums of money, to be expended by the Town manager in FY18, for the purpose of hiring an architect and/or engineer in pursuant to the Designer Selection Guidelines adopted by the Board of Selectman in December 2010, for design, or design and construction bidding, of a new senior center, and all costs associated and related thereto.

The committee discussed renovation and add on vs new build. The RFP will contain verbiage to direct the engineer/architect to address both options, making a determination of the most fiscally responsible direction for the town.

Michelle Collette made a motion to accept Peter's recommendation for a placeholder on the Fall Town Meeting Warrant. This was seconded by George Faircloth, unanimous approval by the committee.

The minutes of the 7.12.17 meeting were presented. Michelle Collette made a motion to accept, second by John Amaral, 4 votes in favor, 1 abstain(Gary Green).

A motion was made by George Faircloth and second by John Amaral to close the meeting at 9:10am Unanimous approval.

Attached email re: Conservation Restriction on GEMS Property

Next meeting: August 16, 7:30am Town Hall

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Shelp, COA Director