

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
APRIL 22, 2014 – 7:00 P.M.
TOWN HALL ANNEX – COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Chairman Sherrard called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Due to the public hearing advertised to begin at 7:30 pm, it was decided that other agenda items would be addressed prior to the continuation of the public hearing.

I. ROLL CALL

Regular members present: Sherrard, Pritchard, Kane, Steinfeld
Alternate members present: Fitzgerald, Zod (7:03 pm)
Absent: Munn
Staff present: Glemboski, Cullen, Silsby

Chairman Sherrard appointed Fitzgerald to sit for Munn.

II. SITE PLANS

1. Long Meadow Landing, 45 South Road (SIT09-04) – Request for extension for one year start of construction

Joseph Boucher presented plans and requested a one-year extension until June 9, 2015. Staff reviewed the location and noted that the original site plan was approved on June 14, 2011.

MOTION: To approve an extension for start of construction until June 9, 2015.

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously

III. APPROVAL OF THE FOLLOWING MINUTES April 8, 2014

MOTION: To approve the minutes of April 8, 2014, as amended.

Motion made by Steinfeld, seconded by Kane, so voted unanimously in favor.

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

It was noted that the Council of Governments Annual Regional Planning meeting will be held on April 28th at 7:30 p.m.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. Subdivision Regulation Amendments – No update.
2. Plan of Conservation and Development Update

Sherrard noted that the next POCD meeting is scheduled for April 24th at 6 pm. He also noted that a community meeting has been scheduled for May in Room 1 and encouraged members to attend. He explained the Planning Commission's involvement with finalizing the Steering Committee's report before being sent to the Town Council for approval.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. Report of Commission

In reference to an inquiry about the status of a trailer at the Rolling Tomato Restaurant on Fort Hill Road, Staff explained that an Administrative Site Plan was approved for the temporary use of the trailer prior to the business occupying the building. Staff will get an update on the status from the Building Official.

Other inquiries were made about an outside “smoker” at Chester’s Barbeque and the building signs at Dunkin Donuts on Route 12.

Sherrard inquired about the potential of having a business caravan in Groton in the near future. Staff will report back.

2. New Applications

Staff noted the following new applications:

- a. Randall’s Wharf, 17 & 31 Water Street (SIT14-05) (CAM)
- b. Woody’s Service Center, 901 Route 12 (SIT14-06)

VII. REPORT OF CHAIRMAN - Sherrard stated that he will not be at the next meeting.

VIII. REPORT OF STAFF

Staff stated that the Planning Director’s position has been posted.

Due to the continuation of the public hearing set to begin at 7:30 p.m., a recess was taken at 7:21 p.m.

IX. PUBLIC HEARING - Continued

The public hearing reconvened at 7:30 p.m. Chairman Sherrard read the public hearing procedures.

Roger Watrous and Mark Sullivan were present for the public hearing.

Sherrard gave a brief recap of what was previously discussed during the last meeting. He summarized the discussion about the sidewalk waiver request and open space options.

Staff noted that the owner has filed a waiver request to allow the issuance of one of the last two building permits, prior to completion of all public improvements.

Mark Sullivan reviewed maps, presented pictures, and spoke about the reasons for requesting a sidewalk waiver. Discussion ensued about the height of the culvert and extending the sidewalk. Watrous explained that the costs involved to install a sidewalk would not be feasible as only 3 houses are being proposed. Specifics were given about the proposed drainage system.

Staff summarized the Town’s perspective as she reviewed what documentation was included in the agenda packets. Information was given about a qualitative report of the open space parcel being offered, access to the site, a right-of-way and utility drainage. She

summarized the sidewalk waiver request and noted that Groton Utilities supports the proposed overhead utilities. Background information was given about the 2002 POCD and the Town of Groton Trails Master Plan.

In regards to a suggestion about the potential for putting in a sidewalk, Staff stated that the area along Route 12 is very steep and wetlands and ledge exist on site. Other items brought up included traffic, open space trails, and donating the off-site open space parcel in lieu of a fee. Staff added that the open space off-site parcel is important from a habitat and resource standpoint and also provides protection to the 990 feet of Fort Hill Brook that is the Western boundary of this parcel.

Discussion continued about sidewalk options, bonding for public improvements, and the request to donate land in lieu of the 10% fee. Members were inclined to go along with the off-site open space donation request. The importance of putting in a sidewalk along Route 12 in the future was discussed. Sullivan stated that the current state right-of-way is sufficiently wide to allow for a possibility of a sidewalk or multi-use path in the future.

MOTION: To close the public hearing at 8:09 p.m.

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Steinford, so voted unanimously.

X. SUBDIVISIONS

1. Watrous Subdivision, 0 Pleasant Valley Road North

The draft motion was distributed and discussed.

MOTION: To approve the waiver of Section 4.8 (1) to allow overhead utilities.

1. The granting of the waiver will not be detrimental to the public safety, health or welfare or have a significant adverse effect on other adjacent property;
2. The conditions upon which the request for a waiver is based are unique to the property for which the waiver is sought and are not applicable generally to other property;
3. Because of the particular physical surroundings, shape, and topographical conditions of the specific property involved, a particular hardship to the owner would result, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, if these regulations are carried out.
4. The waiver is not in conflict with the provisions of the Zoning Regulations, or the Plan of Conservation and Development, and conforms to the criteria specified in Section 1.10 of the Subdivision Regulations.

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Steinford, so voted unanimously.

MOTION: To approve a waiver of Section 5.4 (1) of the Subdivision Regulations to allow the issuance of one of the last two building permits before the public improvements associated with the Watrous Subdivision have been completed and offered for acceptance by the Town for the following reasons:

1. The public improvement bond shall remain in effect.
2. The granting of the waiver will not be detrimental to public safety, health or welfare.

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Steinford, so voted unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the Watrous Subdivision, 0 Pleasant Valley Road North, with the following modifications. The final plan including as appropriate, all plan notes and details, shall be revised as follows:

1. To satisfy the requirement under Section 4.9 (1) (to address subdivision open space dedication), a 5.55 acre parcel of land adjacent to Fort Hill Brook (a portion of PIN#260805085754) will be transferred to the Town of Groton via Warranty Deed with an accompanying Certificate of Title.
2. Shade Trees of sufficient caliper and height shall be protected and/or planted at 75 foot intervals along both frontages (Route 12 and Pleasant Valley Road North).
3. Technical Items shall be addressed.

The Planning Commission notes that it is not requiring a frontage sidewalk on Pleasant Valley Road North. The Plan of Conservation and Development and the Town's Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan do not propose any sidewalks for this area. The nature and character of this section of Groton, with narrow, winding tree lined streets, allows for much reduced traffic speeds and construction of sidewalks would necessitate the removal of significant trees and other vegetation on the site.

The Planning Commission further notes that it is not requiring a frontage sidewalk on Route 12 although the Plan of Conservation and Development and the Town's Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan do show sidewalks and trails in this area. The Commission notes that significant physical features of the site, such as wetlands and ledge, impose hardships upon the applicant. This decision is unique to this subdivision and does not set a precedent for other subdivision developments.

Motion made by Sherrard, seconded by Pritchard, so voted unanimously.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn at 8:28.m. was made by Sherrard, seconded by Steinford, so voted unanimously.

Jeffrey Pritchard, Secretary
Planning Commission

Prepared by Robin Silsby
Office Assistant II