

17 January 2022
Groton Planning Board
Public Hearing

Meeting Open: 6:58 PM

Members Present: Deb Johnson, John Rescigno, Kristina Madden, David Madden, Ray Blake, Russ Carruth

Members Absent: Dave LaBar

Residents/Other Attendees: Doug and Ruth Millet, John Beliveau, Jeremy Haney, Heath Matthews, David and Stacey Darlington, Robert "Bubba" Ellis, Anne Joyce, Casey Kuplin

The Planning Board wishes to thank all of the attendees who joined the public hearing. We strongly encourage future attendance of public hearings to help us answer any questions and receive feedback from residents.

The Planning Board received one email inquiry from Chrissy Weeks before the hearing, which read the following: "Whats the purpose in english as to why a small town like groton needs to be divided like plymouth nh? We dont need a noise ordinance again its a small town". Deb answered this inquiry and shared her response with the attendees:

"Hi Chrissy,

First, thank you for taking the time to read and question the proposed Ordinance.
I'll try to answer your questions below -

1) In the proposed ordinance there isn't a noise clause. If you read the definitions, you will see defined terms from the already passed (2015) Large Wind Energy Systems (LWES) Ordinance which the PB would like to integrate into this proposal without making any changes. You can read the LWES Ordinance on the town website under the PB tab. That Ordinance relates to Grotons wind Farm only!

2) Districts - We propose 3 Districts for several reasons, which are to allow Lot size differences between Residential and Rural Residential Districts, to continue to encourage Forestry, Agriculture and preserve the large headwater area of the Cockermonth River and to maintain the areas in Groton that residents have long enjoyed for snowmobiling, hiking, hunting and other recreational activities. The additional reason we propose a Residential (where most of us live) and Rural Residential Districts is due to the increased inquiry by developers who want to build large multi-unit tiny-house, yurts and other facilities for part year living - some have applied to put up 100 units. This would be a nightmare for septic and water, for policing and plowing, not to mention the fact that it would bring very little tax dollars to offset the increase in public costs. Finally, we propose the 3rd District to encourage continued Wind, bring in Solar and other suitable businesses, that add dollars to our tax base.

I hope the above answers your questions. The PB only wishes to maintain the current character of Groton and its economic stability. If I have not answered your questions please let me know.

Deborah Johnson
PB Chair”

The Planning Board opened the public hearing at 7:01 PM, and received the following questions and comments from attendees:

Why has the PB been discussing bringing up zoning since their March 31st 2021 meeting, but the public has not heard about it until January 5 2022?

- We did not officially decide on proposing zoning and to create a draft ordinance until December 2021. Our Chair was out sick for months which delayed this process greatly. Deb created the ordinance draft in late December, and we notified the public as soon as a draft was prepared. We had not even had a chance to discuss this draft as a board before we met for the public hearing. The draft before us has not been approved yet, we will vote on the January 26th hearing. The board has met all of the requirements to have a public hearing. We encourage the public to give any future questions or concerns they may have to the PB via email, by letter, or by attending a meeting.

Has there been any interest in large businesses coming into town? We do not want to see large manufacturing plants, etc. taking up the views in Groton.

- As of now, we have not had those types of inquiries. The reason we are proposing District C (Renewable Energy/Other Businesses/Forestry/Agricultural, Conservation Cluster and Recreation) is for those types of scenarios. As of now, we are not able to deny a proposal like this, we are only able to use the discretion of a board which could easily be challenged.

According to Article 8D. (Page 8), we are changing the length of a building permit, why?

- We will continue to honor the 2 year building permit, that was a mistake in the draft.

There may be a way we could challenge a potential builder looking to come in and build something like “40 houses, etc.” as that would overburden our town. There also may be a way that the PB or ZBA could challenge any proposal like this. The resident will look further into this.

- The resident provided us with the Scattered and Premature Development, RSA 674:36, II (A) which is not currently applicable to our town due to no capital improvement plan and our current one page zoning that will not stand in court.

Will there be definitions on what businesses will be accepted under the new ordinance?

- You would need to go through site plan review as it is a “case by case” process. We can define many of the types of businesses, but it would be nearly impossible to list them all. But with zoning, these businesses can be placed in the appropriate part of town.

What does “outbuilding” mean? It is not defined.

- We will define this term, or it will possibly be defined as an "Accessory Structure".

Neighboring towns are having issues with solar, will we add a definition with a solar requirement that keeps it non intrusive to residents?

- Yes, we will include solar requirements with guidance from the state laws and resident input. These will be placed in the Site Plan Regulations.

Is there a limit to the number of accessory structures we can have?

- As of now, no, but we will consider how to define it.

750 SQ FT is too big for an ADU minimum.

- RSA 674:71-73 says minimum and maximum sizes are permitted, but you can build smaller than 750 SQ FT.

Why does an ADU have to be on a permanent foundation? No manufactured housing?

- There is no tax benefit with non permanent homes. It needs to be attached or within. The manufactured housing only refers to HUD manufactured homes and in the flood zone by FEMA.

Is anything already existing "grandfathered"?

- Yes.

Define "tiny house" in the definitions.

Can you review the home business definitions? Does the 4 employee maximum include off site workers?

- No, we can define further that off site employees are allowed.

Is frontage still "grandfathered" if I sell my property?

- Yes, if someone else buys your property it will remain "non-conforming".

Anything prohibiting multi family units?

- No, but as a business it would go in District C. Also, site plan review process will regulate.

On Page 7, under #4a. Can we reword this? It sounds like you are requiring one light or sign.

- Yes, we can reword this.

Can we build a church?

- Yes, now you would need to go through site plan review, and receive a special exception from the ZBA. Under the proposed zoning, it may be considered a home business.

Shipping Container homes are the newest trend, they can be nice homes but are not on a foundation and aren't always "aesthetically pleasing" to towns. You may want to include something restricting those in the zoning.

The PB once again thanks everyone for their questions, input, and comments. We look forward to creating a Zoning Ordinance that all residents feel protects them while not restricting their needs. We ask that any more suggestions are sent to us before the January 26th hearing so we can include them in the draft.

Deb makes a motion to close the hearing at 8:41 PM, Kristina seconds this motion with all in favor.