

Town of Groton – Zoning Board

September 14, 2020

Public Hearing commenced at 2:15 PM regarding Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT Outing Club located at 1238 North Groton Road, Map 2, Lot 2-10 for a new approximately 1200 square foot bunkhouse with sleeping accommodation for 50 people and three composting toilets.

Members Present: Pete Smith, Ann Joyce, Gary Easson & Barrie Sawyer. Absent: Glen Hansen

Audience Present: Kevin Dennis, Maclay Architects; Alan Molin, MIT; James Douberley, Outing Club Member; Neil Titchenle, MIT Advisory Board; Dave Demers, Judy Demers, Ruth Hansen & Ruth Millett.

The article as it appeared in the Plymouth Record Enterprise on August 27, 2020.

Zoning Board of Adjustment

Groton New Hampshire

Hearing Notice

Notice is hereby given that the Zoning Board

Of Adjustment will hold a Public Hearing on

Monday September 14, 2020 at 2:00 PM on the

Application submitted by Massachusetts Institute

Of Technology, MIT Outing Club. The Public

Hearing will be held at the Groton Town House

754 N. Groton Rd, Groton, NH. The applicant

Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT Outing

Club has requested a public hearing in accordance with

RSA 676:7 & Section 4 of the Zoning Ordinance for a

proposed new 1200 square foot bunkhouse with sleeping

accommodations for 50 people. The property is located at

1238 North Groton Road, Map 2, Lot 2-10.

Certified mail was sent to the five abutters of the property on 8/21/2020. Certified returned receipts received from four of the abutters.

Description of proposed use which requires a special exception as specified in the Town of Groton Zoning Ordinance. Answer combined with question 1.

Question 1. Explain how the proposed use which requires a special exception as specified in the Town of Groton Zoning Ordinance.

The MIT Outing Club utilizes their existing property as a year-round camping facility for up to (65) students, staff, faculty, and alumni at a time. Currently existing structures on the site include a cooking/lounge building with a composting toilet, an outhouse, a lean-to, a tool shed and a woodshed. A +/-70' long parking area off North Groton Road provides spaces for up to 12 cars. There is no potable water on-site, and visitors carry all their supplies in and out.

A new, approximately 1,200 square foot bunkhouse is proposed on the existing property, with sleeping accommodations for 50 and 3 composting toilets. The building is classified as **Residential R-1** per International Building Code and **Hotel** per NFPA. Per the February 26th meeting with the Town of Groton Planning Board, the proposed does not comply with the intended definition of Residential per the Town of Groton Zoning Ordinance.

COMMENTS: MIT Outing Club is looking for direction regarding parking but also want to maintain the character of the site as well as balancing cost prohibitive factors of improving site. Concerns were raised regarding parking in the road. On street parking is not allowed. Typically, when 50 people gatherings occur, there are approximately 15 cars. The 50-person event happens 4-5 times a year. Once entering the site there is an approximate 6-foot drop into the site then it levels off. Additional parking could be accommodated in this area for cars to be off the road. A resident was concerned that adding off street parking would change the aesthetics of the property.

Question 2. Explain how the proposal meets the special exception criteria as set forth in the ordinance.

There is no change proposed to the frequency of use or number of users at the facility, which has been in use since the 1960's. The property is typically used 5-8 times per month by 5-15 people, with a typical limit of 50 total occupants on site. The largest special events which occur approximately once year are limited to 65 occupants. Usage of the property is managed by "Cabin Keyholders." There has only been one instance of unauthorized use in the last 10 years and those involved were disciplined by MIT.

Club members visit the property, "in order to enjoy the peace of the outdoors and get away from the intensity of MIT and Boston". The Outing Club Code of Conduct requires visitors to adhere to principles of low impact land use and Leave No Trace. We believe this to be consistent with the

rural, residential character of the town and neighborhood. The existing structures are located over 300 feet from the road in dense woods and are only slightly visible during winter months. The proposed structure would be located more than 500 feet away. The cabin will be constructed with materials and massing consistent with local vernacular style.

COMMENTS: NONE.

Question 3. The use will not be injurious, noxious, or offensive to the neighborhood and no nuisance or unreasonable hazard will result.

The Outing Club is governed by a strict Code of Conduct. The Planning Board noted several areas of potential nuisance and/or hazard concerns, which are addressed below:

Fireworks: There have been no instances of fireworks being discharged on the property to our knowledge and doing so would violate Outing Club policies and be subject to disciplinary action.

Firearms: Firearms are not permitted on the property. MITOC has no intention of installing a rifle range or allowing any other firearm-based activities. There have been no instances of firearms being discharged on the property to our knowledge and in doing so would violate Outing Club policies and be subject to disciplinary action.

Hunting: Hunting is not permitted on the property and there have been no instances of hunting reported to our knowledge.

Fires: There is a permanent campfire ring on the property and local burn permits are acquired as applicable. No other fires are permitted on the property.

Alcohol: MIT has strict policies regulating alcohol consumption which are enforced. We are not aware of any alcohol related issues having occurred in the past.

COMMENTS: Any concerns raised would be directed to the Chief of Police as discussed in the walk-through visit.

Question 4. The use will not be contrary to the public health, safety, or welfare of the Town by reason of undue or adverse traffic impacts, undue risk to life or property or unsanitary or unhealthful and will not create other adverse conditions.

The Planning Board noted several areas of potential health, safety, and welfare concerns which are addressed below.

Trash: The Outing Club requires visitors to carry out their trash when leaving the facility. The Outing Club holds a pass to the town transfer Station and disposes of any material in compliance with town regulations.

Building and Life Safety: The proposed structure will be constructed in compliance with all applicable building codes, subject to all required inspections, and all required permits will be

obtained. Life safety features include smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, emergency signage and lighting, rating partitions where applicable and a fire suppression sprinkler system.

Fire and emergency access: The topography and remote nature of the site precludes direct access by emergency vehicles, but efforts will be made to improve access by foot. As noted previously, the building will have a fire suppression system which will drastically reduce the risk of any fire which may occur from spreading to the surrounding woods or buildings.

COMMENTS: The fire suppression system would be water based with a tank on site & located in the basement along with the three composting toilets. Temperature controlled heat by electricity, smoke & carbon monoxide detectors as well as fire detectors would be monitored off site. Removal of the slurry -solid waste would follow all DES regulations. This will be manually removed following DES & WHO composting guidelines for human waste. A dry well will be installed on site as proposed by MIT.

Question 5. The specific site is appropriate for the use and the location and size of the use and the nature and intensity of the operation involved will be in harmony with the orderly development of the neighborhood. There exists adequate water, sewer, or septic service and adequate access to the site and parking.

Water: A well is not present on the property currently and potable water is not available. Visitors carry in potable water or boil water from the adjacent stream. No change is proposed and sinks, showers, flush toilets and drinking fountains are not proposed in the building. There would therefore be no increase in demand on an existing well or need for a new well.

Septic: No septic system or connection to a municipal system exists currently on the site. The proposed composting toilets do not require a septic system and water brought into the site can be disposed of through dry wells in compliance with New Hampshire state DES regulations. The existing outhouse on site is proposed to be removed and the composting toilet in the existing building will be inspected and modified as required to meet current code. The proposed system will better treat sewage and wastewater and improve sanitation.

Access to the site and parking: The current parking is accessed directly by North Groton Road and access to the site is by foot. A new parking lot is proposed which increases capacity to accommodate the maximum number of expected vehicles and improve safety by creating an off-street aisle.

COMMENTS: No well on site. There is a sump pump on site that has not operational for 6-7 years. There is not adequate water, sewer, or septic service on site. A decision needs to be made whether this will be rated as Residential R-1 & Hotel per NFPA or as a cabin. A suggestion was made regarding the use of a backup generator in case of power failure. A statement was made we lose power in the spring, summer & fall more often than winter but if power goes out in the winter your system will freeze. Questions were raised regarding testing the water in the stream where it

enters & exits the site. Where is potable water going that is carrying into the site? This needs to be discharged to an approved grey water system. A dry well has been proposed & will be installed on site. When building the site, an access passageway to accommodate a mini excavator onto the site approximately six foot wide will be made. This passageway could be used as access for Fire/EMT access in the case of an emergency.

Public Hearing Meeting ended at 3:26 PM.

Pete Smith voted to approve the special exception for Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT Outing Club, Gary Easson seconded, so voted. Motion to approve MIT application with stipulations & to forward to the planning board.

The stipulation for approval of the special exemption are:

- 1. No on street parking. Off street parking as discussed. The site has an area that levels off & additional parking could be accommodated in this area for cars to be off the road.**
- 2. The use will not be injurious, noxious, or offensive to the neighborhood and no nuisance or unreasonable hazard will result. Any issues will be brought to the attention of the Groton Police Chief.**
- 3. Removal of the slurry - solid waste would follow all DES regulations. This will be manually done adhering to DES regulations & WHO composting guidelines for human waste. A dry well will be installed.**
- 4. The fire suppression system will be installed. Temperature, heat by electricity, smoke & carbon monoxide detectors as well as fire detectors would be monitored off site.**
- 5. The building would be classified as a Cabin.**
- 6. When building the site, an access to the site to accommodate a mini excavator will be built approximately six foot wide. This access onto the site could be used as emergency access for Fire/EMT access.**

Meeting Minutes from August 10, 2020 were reviewed, motion to accept by Barrie Sawyer, seconded Pete Smith so voted.

Meeting Adjourned 3:45 PM.