



**THE CITY OF GROTON  
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

**MEETING MINUTES OF**

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

**Zoom Meeting - Pursuant to State of Connecticut Executive Order No. 7B**

**FINAL**

**I. ROLL CALL & ESTABLISH QUORUM**

Call to Order: 6:35

Present: P. Kunkemoeller,  
A. Bumgardner,  
S. Bergeron,  
I. Streeter  
J. Streeter  
G. Keeler  
D. Rose

Absent: M. Carmenati,

Staff: Leslie Creane, AICP, City Planner

**II. APPROVAL OF February 17, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Motion: Motion to approve the meeting minutes of:

February 17, 2021;

Motion by: A. Bumgardner

Second: I. Streeter

Friendly Amendment: Offered by P. Kunkemoeller, accepted by A. Bumgardner and I. Streeter  
regarding the spelling of Precila Bejo.

Decision: 5-0-2 Approved

**III. RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS**

**A. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED with EFFECTIVE Date of Receipt March 16, 2021**

Item 1:

New Construction: Multi-Family Residences

Applicant: MMR III Development, LLC / Birgit Stevenson-Loureiro

Site Plan #482

Special Permit #465

RM Zone

Mr. Clinton Brown introduced the project. Mr. Kunkemoeller and Ms. Creane explained that there the time limit for the last Special Permit and Site Plan has expired, and the applicant is returning to receive approval of the same construction of additional units.

Item 2:

New Construction: Building #605  
Applicant: Electric Boat / James Waldron, agent  
I/T Zone

Site Plan #481  
Special Permit #464  
CAM #325

Attorney John Casey began a brief explanation of the application for Building #605. Hugh Schweitzer, architect, introduced Todd Ritchie, engineer, who gave a brief overview of the project location and exterior layout. Mr. Schweitzer then described parking, view of the proposed building from Eastern Point Road, a pedestrian bridge, a covered outdoor area at the edge of the parking, the use of varied materials to break up the massing of the structure. Smaller metal panels are used to give the appearance of windows. Toward the rear of the building, the building steps down at the assembly section of the structure. Entry into the building from the street occurs at level four with the lower three levels above grade, but below street grade.

Attorney Casey stated that they were available to attend a special meeting of the Commission if the Commission desired. Mr. Strotman stated that the height of the building from the street to the parapet is approximately 35 feet.

Mr. Kunkemoeller stated that the Commission would determine how heavy the April agenda is likely to be at the end of this March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. The Commission would then determine whether a special meeting would be necessary. EB representatives Mr. Strotmen and Mr. Casey made clear that they and their team are available for a special meeting. Mr. Casey made clear their preference is for an earlier special meeting.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Public Hearing**

**Item 1: CONTINUATION OF PUBLIC HEARING FOR:**

**Text Amendment TA-20-01 GC Zone**

**Applicant: Eribart Gjonaj / Timothy Bleasdale, Esq.**

**Addition of NEW text allowing "Automotive Paint Protection Establishments"**

P. Kunkemoeller, Chairperson, called the continuation of the public hearing to order and read the rules that govern a Special Permit.

G. Keeler and D. Rose stated that they will not be able to vote on this application due to their absence from the last meeting and had not listened to the audio recording.

Attorney Bleasdale stated that, on behalf of his client, he submitted an amended version of their text proposal that add the requirement that all work be done inside a building. Mr. Kunkemoeller asked if Commissioners or staff had any comments or questions. J. Streeter asked for clarification of the first sentence. Mr. Streeter asked for a verbal clarification for the record that this sentence does not allow any cleaning outside. Ms. Bergeron expressed concern about the clarity of the last sentence for the same reason.

Mr. Bleasdale explained the process, including that there will be no power washing. Presila Bejo explained the cleaning and application process.

Mr. Bumgardner asked what the difference is between this Application and a previous application for auto detailing. Ms. Creane explained that surface preparation is different from detailing and that the record has, in her opinion, been made clear.

Ms. Bergeron restated her concern about the last sentence, and the use of the word “unconnected”. Ms. Creane stated that she believes that the added language from the applicant makes clear that all prep work shall be done inside a building, as is the commission’s intent.

Mr. Kunkemoeller opened comments up to the public.

Mr. Wayne Richard spoke in favor of the application.

Mark Oefinger stated that he wants all activity, related or not, should be done inside. He prefers that the intent be put into the regulation, and not left for a condition of approval. Mr. Oefinger acknowledged that the ownership is not relevant, but stated that he thought that the applicants attorney might have address the matter. Mr. Bleasdale read the following into the record:

*Automotive Paint Protection Establishment means a business engaged in the aftermarket application of paint protection products to the exterior of automobiles and any work necessary to prepare an automobile to receive such applications. Such paint protection products include items such as urethane paint protection films and/or liquid polymer ceramic coatings. Such establishments customarily include the aftermarket installation of automotive window treatments producing a tinting or darkening effect on the windows and the sale of car care products for home use. The above-described uses may only be conducted inside of a building. Such establishments may not offer mechanical repair or alteration services, or general vehicle cleaning services unconnected to the installation of paint protection products and/or window treatments.*

With regard to the ownership of a potential business that may bring forth a Special Permit application under this Text Amendment, should it be approved, Mr. Bleasdale stated that he did look into the question. This is an unrelated issue and is not a proper issue for this hearing. In light of its having been raised at last month’s meeting, he wishes to clarify a few things. Mr. Bleasdale stated that his client, Mr. Gjonaj, did recently purchase the Alpha Detailing business from someone who happens to have the same first name as he does. Mr. Bleasdale asked Ms. Bejo to comment on the commonness of this first name in the Armenian culture. Ms. Bejo

stated that she appreciated constructive comments by the public. She stated that comments about names is not constructive, but it came off as discriminatory.

Ms. Bergeron suggested a relocation of the sentence added into the Text Amendment to the end. After much discussion, it was determined that the sentence would remain where it was placed by Mr. Bleasdale.

Mr. Bumgardner asked that the text of the amendment be posted in the chat box of the zoom meeting so that members of the public can see exactly what is being voted on. Ms. Creane shared her screen with the proposed text amendment in clear view. The text was added to the chat box for the public in attendance.

Barbara Nagy stated that she and Mr. Oefinger noticed that the applicant and the previous owner of Alpha Automotive have the same first and last name and that they were not trying to be discriminatory.

Motion to close the Public Hearing for Text Amendment TA-20-01 GC Zone

Motion by: J. Streeter

Second: S. Bergeron

Decision: 5-0-0 Approved D. Rose and G. Keeler did not vote

Motion to approve Text Amendment TA-20-01 GC Zone as amended.

Motion by: S. Bergeron

Second: A. Bumgardner

Decision: 5-0-0 Approved D. Rose and G. Keeler did not vote

**Item 2: Five Corners MUDD Master Plan Applications**

- |                                       |         |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| 1. 2 Benham Road / 91 Poquonnock Road | MD-002  |
| 2. 8 Benham Road                      | MD-003  |
| 3. 22 Benham Road                     | MD-004  |
| 4. 46 Benham Road                     | MD -001 |
| 5. 1 Mariani Court                    | MD-005  |

**Applicant: Loureiro Engineering Associates, Agent for GBU Capital, LLC**

P. Kunkemoeller, Chairperson, opened the public hearing for the **Five Corners MUDD Master Plan Applications** and read the rules that govern a Special Permit. These applications will be heard together, but voted on separately.

Ms. Creane introduced the application. This application is the first submitted under a recently adopted amendment (September 2020). She explained that this application is the first of a two-step process. The first step is for Master Plan approval. The Master Plan gives the “big picture” view of the entire project. The second step is a site plan that focus’ on the specifics of the site work, the building, utilities, and other aspects of the development that require fully engineered drawings.

Attorney Harry Heller introduced the team that will be presenting the MUDD Master Plan for these applications. Mr. Heller clarified the difference between a floating zone and an overlay zone. A floating zone is a legislative zone that allows a zone with its own set of regulations. A floating zone can be applied to single or multiple parcels. The Master Plan consists of a zone change and a text amendment. The Zone Change establishes the location of the floating zone, identifying which parcels are covered by the Master Plan. The Text Change includes the supporting regulatory language for development within the floating zone. Mr. Heller noted that all of the contiguous parcels will be merged into a single parcel. There is one non-contiguous parcel included in the Master Plan Application, 46 Benham Road. This parcel will remain non-contiguous.

Mr. Heller spoke to the need for the applicant to demonstrate the consistency of the project with the City's Plan of Conservation and Development. Mr. Heller read a letter from Seamus Moran, PE, and Project Manager at Loureiro Engineering that addressed the consistency of these applications with the POCD. A portion of the letter, dated January 29, 2021, was read into the record.

*...The City of Groton Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) was most recently updated in 2019. Section 2 – Enhance “Sense of Place” specifically targets the Five Corners area as being the highest priority for the future of the City. Sense of Place characterizes the relationship between people and spatial settings. Places that have a “sense of place” have a strong, unique identity which serve to foster a feeling of attachment between the residents and the area. The unique architecture, including the roof-top plaza will draw people to this development and foster a community environment intrinsic to developing a sense of place. By promoting pedestrian and bike access, this building will become the cornerstone of the Five Corners District. With the retail/commercial space on the ground floor, along with other neighborhood attractions, such as Washington and Fort Griswold Park, numerous restaurants and Electric Boat just minutes away, this new development will serve to greatly enhance this neighborhood and help create a sense of space for the Five Corners.*

The building envisioned as part of this master plan is a 77,000+ square foot structure with a mix of studio, 1- and 2-BR dwelling units. The will be commercial space and parking on the first floor. The property is ½ mile of Electric Boat, resulting in easy walking distance. Pfizer is located beyond ½ mile.

Mr. Heller stated that the team is prepared to make a complete presentation this evening, however, they are not prepared to respond to all of the comments made by the City Planner, and therefore request that at the end of their presentation tonight the hearing be continued to the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting. At that time, they will be able to respond to the Planners comments comprehensively. Mr. Heller did respond to Comment 7 regarding making accommodations for children. Mr. Heller stated that there is no provision for open space in the MUDD regulation, and that is why this application does not provide for it. The application is for an urban level development, and reviewed conclusions from the traffic report. Mr. Heller then turned the presentation over to Seamus Moran, PE.

Mr. Seamus Moran reviewed the site plan. The existing buildings on the parcels included in the Master Plan area will be demolished; there will be a bike storage area, on grade parking, stormwater management below grade detention and infiltrator system. The building is a 77,000+ square feet with 119 parking spaces. Mr. Seamus introduced Harry Withers, Landscape Architect, and Dave Goslin, Architect.

Mr. Withers reviewed the landscape drawings and mentioned the desire to have the landscape architecture design be adapted and adopted to some of the other sites in the area to project a sense of continuity to a new look for the neighborhood's economic hub. The planters and plantings will continue around the entire street perimeter of the proposed building, up to and including in front of 46 Benham Road.

Mr. Goslin, architect, reviewed the architectural plans. The ground floor commercial / retail space can be for a single tenant, or multiple tenants. A management leasing office is located just inside the Benham Road entrance as well as an elevator. Bike storage and a pet washing station are located in the parking area under the building in the south-west corner. A second elevator is located in the garage area. The building has a mix of studio, 1 BR and 2 BR units. A rooftop terrace is available to all tenants. Mr. Goslin showed several images of the elevations of the building.

Mr. Heller stated that they will address the questions and concerns raised in the staff report prior to April's meeting. He expects that they will be able to complete the hearing at April's meeting.

Ms. Creane reviewed her staff comments.

Mr. Goslin stated that there is a package room/mail room located in the lobby.

Mr. Bumgardner requested clarification on the question before the commission up for a vote. Ms. Creane stated that this hearing is for the Master Plan only.

Mr. Heller stated that the approval of the Master Plan is an approval of the use, the mix of units, vehicular access to and from the property, pedestrian access, and the availability of necessary utilities. It also includes the massing and general style of the building, the way that it lays out on the site. The engineering of the list above is not what is being approved because the site has not been fully engineered. The approval is for the concept of the development of the project.

Mr. Streeter asked when the traffic authority will become involved. Mr. Heller stated that comments regarding traffic are anticipated for this phase of application and the site plan approval phase. Mr. Streeter added that upon reading the traffic report he thinks that the traffic counts may be low. He is also expressed concerned that the peak hour traffic turning left from the garage onto Benham Road and site restrictions when turning south off of Mitchel street onto Benham.

Mr. Bumgardner asked about coordination with Groton Utilities to put adjacent utility lines underground. Mr. Bumgardner emphasized the importance of burying these lines, noting that they enhance pedestrian access. He also noted that utility poles obstruct sidewalk access, particularly for those in wheelchairs.

Mr. Moran stated that their goal is to have the wires buried and that they have met with GU to look into this matter. Mr. Heller stated that relocating these public utilities is beyond the economic scope of this project. He noted that the benefit of redevelopment of this area is in the

the long-term benefit of the City, and that any assistance with getting GU to relocate the wires in this area would be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Bumgardner inquired about bus stops. He asked if there were any plans to locate a bus stop at this development. Ms. Creane stated that it is beyond the scope of the Commission to require it. The Commission could, if so inclined, write a letter of support for a bus stop near this project.

Mr. Bumgardner asked if any consideration was given to accommodating more commercial square footage along the street frontage. Mr. Goslin replied that parking is a key requirement for marketing purposes. Mr. Heller stated that the need for parking was such that the owner purchased the additional property at 46 Benham Road to meet the parking need. Mr. Bumgardner reminded the applicant the MUDD regulations state:

*The Planning and Zoning Commission shall, where possible, seek to minimize the construction of parking spaces, and encourage the use of shared parking facilities, mass transit and pedestrian connections.*

Mr. Kunkemoeller stated that it seems that it is a balance between marketability and desire to minimize underutilized parking spaces. Mr. Kunkemoeller asked about the massing of the façade on the south side – is it possible to step the building back so that it is not as dominating against the adjacent site.

Mr. Goslin noted that the required emergency egress stairwell at the south end of the building would have to be relocated if the building were stepped back which creates a difficult geometric puzzle. He stated that they would look into it. Mr. Kunkemoeller stated that the building is very modern looking and not typical of the surrounding buildings. Mr. Goslin stated that the style of the building was governed by the client. They looked to relate to the industrial context of Electric Boat.

Mr. Bumgardner asked including who will be responsible for snow removal from sidewalks at this site. Mr. Heller stated that most cities have ordinances that require property owners to clear the sidewalks along their frontage.

Mr. Kunkemoeller asked for comments from the public who would

Dennis Billias is a nearby property owner. He stated that he thinks this project would “be great for Five Corners.” He likes the façade, but questions the ease with which deliveries into the commercial spaces can be made. He asked what type of heat the building will have. Mr. Goslin stated that they have not yet determined what type of heating system they will use – that decision is a few steps down the road. Based upon his experience with similar type buildings Mr. Goslin thinks that electric heat pump or water source heat pump with mechanical equipment on the roof. Mr. Billias would like to see more commercial space.

Mayor Hedrick stated that work on this concept and with the applicant has been going on for the past year. The Mayor stated that this is good for economic development, will bring in new businesses, and help with the expansion of Electric Boat. The proximity of this project to Electric Boat encourages pedestrian and bicycle access, and will not generate significant changes in the traffic counts during peak hours. The Mayor stated that the police would look at the traffic patterns. He also stated that this project will replace the blighted properties currently on the project site and associated police activity. This is good for the City. Mayor Hedrick also stated that he has been working with GU to relocate the utilities underground. This afternoon a quote was received on what it would cost to do this work. Mayor Hedrick close by encouraging the

approval of the Mixed Use Development District floating zone and the Mixed Use Design Master Plan.

With no further comments in favor, Mr. Kunkemoeller asked for public comments against the application. Mr. Gary Paul asked if there was anything that could be done to protect 40 Benham Road from “becoming a tunnel between two giant buildings. Can any concessions be made?”

Mr. Heller stated that they will take a look at the building design. There may be some small building design. Mr. Goslin stated that the non-contiguous parcel will have surface parking on it, but no building of parking garage.

Mr. Dave Costello agreed with the Mayor about the removal of the blighted properties; however he expressed that the size of the building is not consistent with the one- and two-story buildings in the area. Many area residents have invested a lot of money in their properties and he feels that this large building is “a slap in the face” to these residents. This site requires a smaller scale development. Mr. Costello further stated that he walks to work at Electric Boat every morning and he faces the danger of being hit by a vehicle on a regular basis. It is a dangerous route. He questioned visibility issues when exiting the proposed garage. He questioned whether there are enough parking spaces.

Mr. Stephen Nye stated that it is out of scale for the neighborhood. He is also concerned that there is a conflict regarding the shared property line between his parcel at 129 Poquonnuck and 1 Mariani Court.

Ms. Tristen Taylor is concerned that there is not enough parking provided. She is also concerned about noise coming from rooftop entertaining. How much extra lighting will be required for the parking area? Ms. Taylor agrees that there could be left hand turn issues raised earlier. She believes the building is too massive.

Mr. Frank Jennette stated that adding more traffic is not a good thing, particularly when there is shift change at Electric Boat. He raise the question about a remediation plan for the removal of materials like asbestos tile and lead painted wood and other demolition issues. Will the street be shut down when the buildings are curtained off for removal of hazardous materials? How will adjacent residences be protected?

Mr. Heller responded. Demolition requires a permit for removal and disposition. Only licensed remediation companies can do such work. This is a Master Plan application. The testing and remediation plan addressed after approvals as part of the construction planning. This project is at the planning stage now.

Mr. Jennette asked how traffic would be handled, particularly during peak traffic during shift changes at Electric Boat. Mr. Kunkemoeller stated that the police will be reviewing the traffic issues.

Ms. Tristen Taylor asked if it is possible to have a second egress onto Poquonnuck Road. Mr. Moran stated that the slope involved that prohibits egress to Poquonnuck.

Motion to continue the public hearing until April 20, 2021 at 6:30pm via zoom:

Motion by: D. Rose  
Second: A. Bumgardner  
Decision: 7-0-0 Approved by voice vote

## **B. Regular Meeting**

### **Item 1: CONTINUATION OF HEARING FOR:**

**47 Beach Pond Road**

**Site Plan #478 / CSP #320**

Applicant: Igor Boris, Agent: John Paul Mereen and Joe Wren

Mr. John Paul Mereen confirmed that the proposed garage structure will need a building permit and be FEMA compliant. He addressed the comments that came back from DEEP. He also reminded the commission that the house at 47 Beach Pond Road pre-dates the 1995 and is therefore exempt from current CCMA policy. Mr. Mereen stated that in his several visits to the site that severe erosion is taking place near the rear porch. The boulder wall is therefore permitted. Plantings will not be enough to mitigate the erosion. Mr. Mereen stated that the boulders would be most helpful. There is the possibility of the steps being narrowed. Mr. Mereen stated that they will not be doing anything water-ward to the house, they will only be continuing the boulder wall to the house to stop some of the erosion at that spot, stabilize the site, and using the artificial turf to allow water to percolate directly into the sand below. Mr. Mereen also mentioned that the artificial turf proposed by the applicant does not require watering, pesticides or fertilizer.

Mr. Kunkemoeller asked about the height of the boulder wall and whether any filter fabric is needed. Mr. Mereen stated that behind the boulders there will be filter fabric and it will be backfilled. The height of the wall will taper to the height of the building at the porch area.

Mr. Joe Wren, PE, also agent for the applicant, shared a photograph of the back of the house showing the relationship between the water, sand, boulders and the house. Stones and boulders will offer more protection for the house than leaving it sand.

The proposed wall will close the gap between the existing wall and the house, and will be between two and three feet in height.

Motion to approve Site Plan #478

Motion by: S. Bergeron

Second: I. Streeter

Decision: 4-0-0 Approved, G. Keeler, J. Streeter, D. Rose not voting

Motion to approve Coastal Area Site Plan #320

Motion by: S. Bergeron

Second: I. Streeter

Decision: 4-0-0 Approved, G. Keeler, J. Streeter, D. Rose not voting

Mr. Kunkemoeller reminded the commission that there is a JLUS Parking meeting on Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Kunkemoeller also addressed the request by Electric Boat to expand their work hours from 6am to 11pm. The question before the commission whether to hold a public hearing on this amendment to the Special Permit. The recommendation is to have an EB representative explain the issue(s) resulting in the request for expanded hours and then determine whether the concerns rise to the level of requiring a public hearing.

Is the Commission amenable to considering a map amendment that would expand the WBR zone (which would include the ability for a MUDD floating zone to be adopted) from the northern most border of the zone at Thames and Broad up to Bridge Street and Thames?

Discussion about whether to have a special meeting for Building #605 at Electric Boat, or a longer regularly scheduled meeting. Mr. Bumgardner stated that he would prefer two meetings. Mr. Streeter stated that he is fine with a longer single meeting. Ms. Streeter and Mr. Keeler voiced preference for a single night. Consensus is not to schedule a special meeting at this time.

Motion to Adjourn

Motion: J. Streeter  
Second: A. Bumgardner  
Decision: 7-0-0 Approved

Respectfully submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Leslie Creane, AICP  
City Planner