

Joint Meeting between
PLANNING COMMISSION
and AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE

MINUTES
August 18th, 2004
7:30 PM
Jamestown Library
26 North Main Rd.

The meeting was called to order at 7:37 p.m. and the following members were present:

Gary Girard	Victor Calabretta
Betty Hubbard	Jean Macgregor Brown
William Kelly	

Not present:

Barry Holland
Andrew Kallfelz – arrived at 7:38 p.m.

Also present:

Nick Robertson – AHC
Carol Buglio – AHC
William Murphy – AHC
Cathy Goode DeVellis – AHC
Lisa Bryer, AICP – Town Planner
Cynthia Reppe – Recording Clerk
Barbara Sokoloff – Sokoloff and Associates
Melanie Jewett - Sokoloff and Associates
Bruce Bartlett – Church Community Housing
Brigid Ryan – Church Community Housing

I. Approval of Minutes from August 4,2004

A motion was made by Commissioner Hubbard and seconded by Commissioner Girard to accept the minutes as written. So unanimously voted. Calabretta and Brown abstain.

II. Correspondence

1. FYI – nothing at this time

III. Citizen's Non Agenda Item-nothing at this time

IV. Reports

1. Town Planner's Report

Town Planner Lisa Bryer introduced Barbara Sokoloff and her associate Melanie Jewett that will be making a presentation tonight.

2. Town Committees

a. Harbor

Commissioner Kallfelz reported that at the last meeting they discussed perhaps changing the types of uses at East Ferry of the wood pile pier and how it is allocated now. The discussion of recreational and commercial fishermen use and boaters use and how to allocate this.

b. Fort Getty

Town Planner Lisa Bryer stated the Fort Getty Committee will be meeting tomorrow and discussing recommendations at 2:00 p.m. at the Library.

c. Buildings and Facilities

d. Others

3. Sub Committees

V. Old Business

1. Jamestown Housing Plan – Presentation by Barbara Sokoloff and Associates - Review, Discussion and Recommendation by the Planning Commission and Affordable Housing Committee

Barbara Sokoloff stated that Church Community Housing received a grant from Rhode Island Foundation to look into achieving the 10% affordable housing stock that the state is requiring of all towns. She is a subcontractor of Church Community Housing. Ms. Sokoloff introduced Bruce Bartlett and Brigid Ryan from Church Community Housing. Ms Sokoloff made a presentation and then asked for comments from the Planning Commission and Affordable Housing Committee.

Commissioner Girard asked if we are paying attention to the fact that in the shores area the lots are already 7200 sq ft which are small now and if we just zero in on the zone that these lots are in, those lots are already too small and should not be considered. Town Planner Lisa Bryer addressed that issue and stated that there are more appropriate sites than in the shores area.

Brigid Ryan – importance of the 10% goal is that if the Town has an approved plan and they are working towards their 10% goal and if the town can show this and if a permit were denied and the developer were to appeal it at the state level, the state housing appeals board would look favorably upon the town. The real risk according to Brigid is if you don't have a plan in place then the state could override the Town's decision.

Commissioner Calabretta feels that if all of the accessory apartments that are not counted now were to be counted we would be at the 10% mark. The only housing that counts is housing that has a state or federal subsidy Ms. Sokoloff stated.

There are three things that make a unit affordable: state or federal subsidies, increased density with a guaranteed affordability over time stated Barbara Sokoloff. Just having increased density alone will not do it. Long term affordability is one of the goals. It could be new or additional affordable housing. It has to be affordable for at least a 30 year period.

Commissioner Calabretta stated there are that many accessory apartments now. It's up to either the parents or children to put the 30 year stipulation on it than yes it would count with the addition of either federal or state subsidy somewhere. If they are willing to do that than it would count but has to be for at least 30 years. Bruce Bartlett stated this is part of the educational process. Lisa Bryer said we are all saying the same basic thing and that the Comprehensive Plan says that accessory units need to be for family members only. Brigid Ryan is saying that we can't count those numbers yet because they have not come forward to agree to the deed restriction or accept any subsidy. Bill Murphy said you cannot put an only family members in the place since a lot of the family members will be gone within 30 years. Barbara Sokoloff stated you really can't make it just family members.

Commissioner Brown asked if there is any area in the downtown that would be exempt? Shoreby Hill may be exempt because of deed restrictions. Barbara Sokoloff said there are no recommendations yet for zoning other than the overlay district and inclusionary zoning but she doesn't think it is very feasible for Jamestown. Town should consider changing the density requirement for multi family uses in different zones. Commissioner Hubbard asked if she read correctly that we need more single family housing for starter homes. Bruce Bartlett answered yes we do need those but we also need single and multi family rentals, and there should be a mixture. Commissioner Hubbard stated that it is not her personal preference but she feels the carry on of family and young couples just starting out is represented more by a single family home.

Commissioner Kelly would like a clear definition of exactly what affordable housing is in the beginning of this document.

Lisa Bryer stated that it is going to be an upward climb, what is working in other communities does not necessarily work for Jamestown. We have environmental constraints that is the basis for our zoning in many areas so increasing density is not necessarily the answer. We cannot increase density in the shores area. A secondary benefit of slightly increasing the density for affordable housing only in the downtown areas is that it would provide more recipients and paying customers of the sewer and water system. We currently have 1000 users of Water and Sewer system. If we create an overlay district and allow some new units on slightly reduced sized lots then our economy of scale for payment of the water and sewer system would increase as well as providing permanently affordable units. Another secondary benefit to this is that those lots that are slightly undersized would realize some income that was not previously possible, thereby possibly keeping other affordable families in Jamestown.

Julio DiGiando asked what is the income level where homeownership does not work? Brigid, Ryan stated in the land trust program rarely do we get applicants with 80% of median income, it usually is at 50-60% of median. They try to keep the amount at 115,000 purchase price for the house. The money comes from RI housing and CDBG money, some federal home loans through affordable housing funds, partnered with community programs like CCHC etc. No longer one source. A trust fund for housing if it can be developed here in Jamestown would be a good idea.

When this plan goes to the state officials it has to go as the Town Councils plan and they have to be behind it. Commissioner Kallfelz asked how new is this law? The law originally passed in 92 and was updated in June. Which communities are under the most pressure and will have the hardest time he asked? Barbara would put Little Compton, Tiverton, New Shoreham and Jamestown in the difficult to comply area because of constraints beyond their control such as land cost. Brigid stated that Jamestown has one of the greatest potentials for success because this town does care and this is one of its greatest assets. Commissioner Kallfelz said it is important but being told by the state that we have to have 10%, what if a town says 10% is going to be tough to attain, then what? Nick Robertson stated if you don't do anything developers will do it on their own, and if you ignore the problem the State will solve it for you. The town has an opportunity to be in compliance with this or working toward this. Nick Robertson has been involved the affordable housing committee since 1989. The average blue collar worker cannot afford to live on the Island. Let's address the issue and create a plan that the state will endorse and they won't throw it back.

The Town Council made sure that the Comprehensive Plan clearly states affordable housing needs to be scattered through out the town. Commissioner Calabretta stated maybe the Comprehensive Plan needs to be modified and more creative when it comes to this issue. We need to provide an in depth education process, it is affordable not low income. The objective is how do we motivate people to come and be educated?

The Commission and Committee members should get any additional written comments to the Town Planner before next week. Commissioner Kallfelz stated "it's a great start." Commissioner Kallfelz asked to table this issue now and send comments to Lisa Bryer, Town Planner for a future meeting. The boards were in agreement to table this issue. The next item on this agenda needs to be discussed since the Town Council is waiting for input from the different committees on this issue.

VI. New Business

1. Jamestown Land Bank and Affordable Housing Trust Act – review and comment
Dennis Webster gave a brief overview that is attached to the minutes. In 1986 and 1998 Jamestown tried to have the state approve a real estate transfer tax but were denied so it was decided to try again in 2004. The original document was prepared by Teresa

Paiva Weeds legislative counsel with the Town's assistance. Commissioner Hubbard asked if the Town Solicitor has seen it. Commissioner Calabretta said this is like taking the cart before horse, we need an affordable housing plan first. The Planner stated that it is being discussed now to see if the Town wants to submit this for the next legislative session and the Housing Plan and the Open Space Plan should be completed prior to then so she felt the timing is very appropriate. Commissioner Hubbard agreed. Commissioner Kallfelz asked Commissioner Girard if he thinks this will have a negative impact on his property value. Commissioner Girard stated we have enough taxes now we don't need any more. Commissioner Hubbard made a motion to extend the meeting to 10:15 Commissioner Kallfelz seconded the motion. So unanimously voted. Commissioner Kallfelz stated lets table this issue for now and have the Town Planner send a status report to the Town Council.

The Planner stated that Randall Arendt is able to speak at the September 1 meeting on his conservation audit of our regulations. It was agreed that the Planning Commission switch new applications to 2nd meeting of the month and discuss this issue at the next meeting along with the Affordable Housing Plan, time provided. Commissioner Calabretta made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Commissioner Kallfelz at 10:15 p.m. So unanimously voted.

Attest:

Cynthia L Reppe

This meeting was recorded on 1-microcasette