

Approved As Written
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
September 17, 2014
7:30 PM
Jamestown Town Hall
93 Narragansett Ave.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. and the following members were present:

Michael Swistak – Chair	Duncan Pendlebury – Vice Chair
Rosemary Enright – Secretary	Mick Cochran
Michael Jacquard	Bernie Pfeiffer
Michael Smith	

Also present:

Lisa Bryer, AICP – Town Planner
Cinthia Reppe – Planning Assistant
Jack Brittain
Bill Munger

II. Approval of Minutes September 3, 2014

A motion was made by Commissioner Pfeiffer and seconded by Commissioner Cochran to accept the minutes with the following amendments:

Page 2, 6th paragraph, 3rd sentence: neighbors driveway will be made ~~imp~~ervious on the subject lot....

Page 3, last paragraph, last line: on the subject lot will be made ~~imp~~ervious...

Page 4, first paragraph, ~~All in Favor~~ **5 Yeah - 1 Nay**

So unanimously voted.

III. Correspondence

1. FYI – Memo to Zoning Board – Smith – motion. Rec'd
2. FYI – Memo to Zoning Board – Nelson/Uustal – motion. Rec'd
3. FYI – Memo to Zoning Board – Bottaro – motion. Rec'd

IV. Citizen's Non Agenda Item – nothing at this time

V. Reports

1. Town Planner's Report
2. Chairpersons report
Commissioner Enright attended a meeting with Valerie Tallmadge regarding the process for Historic easements anyone interested in doing this on their property can meet with the committee.
3. Town Committees

4. Sub Committees

VI. Old Business

1. Historic and Community Character Preservation – continued

Commissioner Swistak said the discussion tonight will be about the village design guidelines. As a recap to those in the audience, we have put residential regulation on the sidelines and we are considering taking the Jamestown Vision Book and Guidelines and making it part of the zoning ordinance to give applicants and the Planning Commission a guide.

a) Pattern Book & Design Guidelines for Building in the Village

Town Planner, Lisa Bryer said we need to compare the commercial design guidelines to Article 11 and identify potential gaps in the design guidelines with respect to commercial review. It was originally prepared for residential and therefore the commercial standards are very slim. I would not recommend that we draft it ourselves, we can engage Don Powers and have him update it for the town.

We are looking at what can be graphically represented. It addresses sidewalks, curbing, street trees, planters, rain gardens (we need guidance for this).

Commissioner Smith asked about Commercial Limited. Ms. Bryer said Article 11 differentiates between standards for CL and CD. Smith said should we be talking about residential or commercial since there can be mixed use with regards to CL. It addresses both Bryer said. Smith says these are great guidelines but should not be put into the zoning ordinance.

Guidance on green roofs would be helpful, siding, native plants. Pendlebury said the issue of landscaping on street corners and holding it back so there is visibility for cars is important.

Ms. Bryer said the first step would be to have Don Powers give his perspective. When it was drafted, it was simply guidance, if it is intended to now guide applicants and the Planning Commission from a regulatory perspective, Don may suggest it be different.

Commissioner Swistak said in terms of this making the design guidelines part of the ordinance does anyone have a strong opposition to it?

Smith thinks it shouldn't be part of the ordinance. Commissioner Smith thinks this is Mr. Power's version of a perfect world but not his. Each commercial property that goes up for sale each one is a special case situation and when you have something so prescriptive it ties the applicant's hands.

Pendlebury thinks just the opposite. If you don't use guidelines you run into things that don't fit the character of our commercial districts. 90% will want to work within the guidelines.

Pendlebury thinks it gives aid to the applicant. He thinks it provides more guidance for the applicant and makes it easier for them. Smith thinks it makes it easier for the boards to say it doesn't fit. Smith said it is one more hurdle for the applicant. Commissioner Enright said there are very few things that we are adding. Commissioner Smith said adding the whole document is too much.

Commissioner Pfeiffer said the pattern book is a design guideline and thinks it but should be referenced but not within the Zoning Ordinance. It can be a valuable tool. Since it is totally confined it should be a stand-alone document. The language that connects the guidelines to the ordinance is key.

Commissioner Jacquard said he sees it as going hand in hand and agrees with Commissioner Pendlebury's point as this is a helpful tool for both the applicant and Planning Commission.

Commissioner Swistak said if we have an application and the applicant wants to go 180 degree opposite of what the guidelines are, we have no say right now. We are saying we want to use this to bring the applicant back closer to the design guidelines. Having them know what we want from the very beginning will save them time and money.

Commissioner Smith said we have a commercial district that serves us as Jamestowners. If we have too many requirements it would be too hard to have more commercial businesses. If we lose the businesses we would be a poor community. They are a necessary part of the community.

Commissioner Cochran said the gas station downtown closed because the owner closed it. Cumberland farms went through TRC and it was handled administratively. Cochran was giving examples of why some businesses did close. We have to say as a community we care about something.

Commissioner Pendlebury said we are trying to maintain our village atmosphere. If we do not give the applicant proper guidance, they will go off in a different direction. Giving guidance is not a bad thing.

Commissioner Swistak says he looks at things differently than Smith. The diagrams and photos help him to make the decisions. He feels he is better off with the pictures than just the language.

Town Planner Lisa Bryer sees the applicant when they come through the door. They say tell me what you want and if we do not have the guidance it takes longer. This gives them guidance from the very beginning, and it is fair. Bryer noted that the applications are often very different when they get to the Planning Commission if it is a willing applicant and they are not too far along in their design. She works with them but often does not have the guidance to lean on either. She gave examples of those applications that made changes before they came to Planning.

Commissioner Swistak asked if there was anyone in the audience that wanted to comment.

Jack Brittain – he understands what Pendlebury and Smith are saying because he has been there. He felt the guidelines were pretty accurate. He felt that he made some mistakes but also the planning commission put him through a lot. It was a process that he will never go through again. He said you as a planning board are the most important people. You can put all the guidelines you want but there were people on the boards that were not as thoughtful as this board. I think this planning board is the best in years. He is in favor of guidelines. It would have saved him time and aggravation.

Enright – this will help the planning commission it will help us all to communicate better and understand each other.

Swistak said the majority are on board on utilizing the Design Guidelines as an adjunct to article 11 and thinks we should talk to Don Powers.

Do you think the pattern book should be a tool to refer to and base our decisions on? Bryer thinks it is a good idea to get all the opinions.

Pfeiffer – he believes the design guidelines should be incorporated by reference into Article 11 and that additional commercial items be added at a later date. It should be a stand-alone document.

Cochran – he would love to see language less mandatory, let's use our commercial inventory in the guidelines, what are we doing right and wrong. Let's use as a supplement until he can see language that allows for this.

Pendlebury – when we sit up here or in the TRC and we are trying to fight the good fight on behalf of the community, and when you do not have the tools to fight the good fight and the citizens are not behind you it is difficult to get the right results. We as a group need to feel that we have or are heading in the right direction. We are trying to interpret what the people want. A bit more specific guidelines are needed in certain cases. He does not have any problems where we are right now in R8 and R20 but we need guidelines for the commercial districts

Swistak thinks the pattern book should be used and it should be embellished if needed and he is on board with either integrating it or referencing it.

Enright is in favor of utilizing the design guidelines as a regulatory tool and feels she needs more guidelines.

Smith use as a reference only.

Jacquard he thinks it is nice to have the tools as part of the ordinance – it helps him to make the decisions.

Bill Munger – appreciates all the good work please keep in mind currently there are numerous properties for sale and if regulations get more restrictive it might push people away. He has no problem with having the guidance as long as there is wiggle room. It's easy to spend someone else's money but the property owner is the decision maker as far as how he wants to spend his money.

b) Amendments to Article 11

VII. New Business – nothing at this time

VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn at 8:50 was made by Commissioner Cochran and seconded by Commissioner Enright. So unanimously voted.

Attest:

Cynthia L. Reppe
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