

Approved As written
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
April 19, 2017
7:00 PM
Jamestown Town Hall
93 Narragansett Ave.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. and the following members were present:

Michael Swistak – Chair	Duncan Pendlebury - Vice Chair
Rosemary Enright – Secretary	Mick Cochran
Bernie Pfeiffer	Dana Prestigiaco
Michael Smith	

Also present:

Lisa Bryer, AICP – Town Planner
Andy Nota – Town Administrator
Michael Gray – Public Works Director
Wyatt Brochu – Town Solicitor
Cinthia Reppe – Planning Assistant
Hali Beckman – Landscape Architect
Nate Kelly – Horsley Witten Group – Sustainability Plan Consultant
Bill Munger – Conanicut Marina
Don Richardson
Mike Ridge - Spinnakers

II. Approval of Minutes April 5th, 2017

A motion was made by Commissioner Enright and seconded by Commissioner Cochran to accept the minutes as written. So unanimously voted.

III. Correspondence

1. Administrative Subdivision – Approval letter Burns and Snoeren Plat 15 Lots 290&293, addresses 134&142 Beacon Ave. Jamestown RI. Received
2. Final Approval letter – Burns and Snoeren – Plat 15 Lots 290&293. Received
3. Memo to ZB Re: Hemphill recommendation HGWTO. Received

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

V. Reports

1. Town Planner's Report
2. Chairpersons report
3. Town Committees
4. Sub Committees

VI. Old Business

1. Sustainable Jamestown Plan – Phase 2 Discussion

Nate Kelly consultant from Horsley Witten updated the Planning Commission on the plan for Phase 2.

They presented the outline for the first time at the last meeting. They would like to work interactively with the Planning Commission and have set up stations with the different themes that came out of the workshop and they want the planning commission to vote on ideas for the plan. Green they like, yellow is a maybe and red is a no I don't think it should be here.

The last dot is blue for elements we should track in the years to come.

Commissioner Swistak asked if the audience is going to participate, Nate said Planning Commission input first.

Nate Kelly went through the boards and addressed the Planning Commission on why the yellow dots and red dots were put on certain subjects. The Planning Commissioners that placed the dots explained in a bit more detail why they placed them where they did. Most yellow dots were placed because the commissioners need more explanation or a narrowing of the topic.

Some comments from Commissioner included:

- Drought should relate to water supply
- Renewable energy production should be just for Town use and the town should not be a power generator
- Do we want to encourage tourism?
- It is not as important to maintain historic and architectural character outside of the village area
- "green" (building practices) term is too overarching
- Housing affordability is market driven unless we are talking about state required affordable housing
- Housing diversity should include senior housing and aging in place
- Residential household/commercial waste should be handled by State/Fed
- Trash on beaches and other public spaces is outside of our sustainability box of planning
- Landscaping programs and standards – what does that mean?

Nate Kelly said they wanted to use this exercise to take it to the next level and the blue dots are potential indicators to track over time. This will help gather thoughts for the next public meeting.

Next steps, research and data and they will set next public meeting. Format an open house and organizing it for the next step and exercise to drill down strategies, priorities and cost.

Commissioner Swistak said we should do the next public participation before July or wait until after August.

VII. New Business

1. East Ferry Improvement project – Development Plan Review and Approval within the Jamestown Village Special Development District

Mike Gray, Public Works director is presenting the 3 schemes for the East Ferry parking area. Mike Gray wanted to address the letters in the paper and discussion as to why are we spending this money. After the Narragansett Ave streetscape improvements and pier repairs were done the last element for improvement in the village is East Ferry including the parking lot, sidewalks and curbing reconstruction. He was with Archie Clark today and parts of the parking lot were done in 1960 and some patching was done in 1977. The drainage needs fixing, curbs and sidewalks are in bad shape.

The Town Council wanted to take a step back and provided a little bit of funding to look at the design elements of the east ferry square area. This is the gateway to the community. The restaurants, ferry, boats and stores many are located at East Ferry. They wanted to make sure before we do this work that it is the best design it can be.

Hali Beckman a landscape architect and resident of Jamestown was hired to work on this project. They are presenting some plans tonight with a few different options. The council wanted some changes.

Town Planner Lisa Bryer explained the Planning Commission purview according to the Zoning Ordinance. The 3 parcels are zoned Commercial Downtown. The criteria that brings this issue to the Planning Commission is the proposed change in the parking layout. There are a few different schemes. Scheme 1 stays the same. She would like the commission to thoughtfully consider the options. This is not the first time the community has looked at this piece of property. They looked at it in detail in 1994 with Tom Todd, a world-renowned architect. And they looked at it again in 2007 during the Village Charrette.

The Town Council thinks scheme 2 is this the best alternative; moving the greenspace towards the waterfront. Jean Lambert and Hali Beckman came up with a plan that the council and staff supports.

The town is going to invest the same amount of money whatever the choice is.

Mike Gray gave a power point presentation to the Planning Commission similar to the one given to the Town Council. They are trying to carry the Narragansett Ave. theme to East Ferry. The top 3 priorities are asphalt, curbing and sidewalk. Drainage is an issue in a few places too and part of the paving.

Mr. Gray explained the reason why the lawns are so bad in the East Ferry area is because people walk across them, the dirt gets compacted and there is no way for grass to grow in those conditions, no matter what maintenance is provided. Mike included a page out of the vision document and he showed it to the planning commission. Hali can explain the existing scheme design in more detail. This will reduce some of the concrete downtown by softening the edges with green. It maintains 46 spaces. Stamped and colored crosswalks that match the Narragansett Ave. theme. This is scheme 1.

Commissioner Smith asked about the crosswalk on Conanicus Ave. in front of the Recreation Center. The state moved it, not the town, it is a state road. Mike Gray explained the engineering behind siting crosswalks.

Andy Nota Town Administrator said it did come before the traffic committee and they asked the state to relocate it, the state denied the request. The council is aware, we can continue to ask for it and it will be the same outcome. There would have to be some other change and something else would have to change like no parking on Conanicus or reduced speed limit. Mr. Nota thinks we have exhausted all possibilities. Commissioner Pendlebury asked if the state controls all the signs on Conanicus, Mike responded yes on the state roads.

Commissioner Swistak asked is the goal to maintain 46 spaces? Is there a tradeoff if we were to lose 5 spaces? Lisa Bryer said it was the goal to not lose any spaces. So we looked at whether we could we make it better and not lose any spaces? We wanted to compare apples to apples. Once you remove spaces then the discussion becomes about lack of parking. Commissioner Pendlebury does not like the decrease in the sidewalk and also the plantings. Mr. Gray agrees with Pendlebury as far as the sidewalk and narrowness.

Hali Beckman, when she was asked to look at the area and she was surprised at what she saw. One of the elements that she looked at was Veterans Square and beyond that all you see is concrete and now we have an opportunity to change it and create a green space to view instead. It should be a better pedestrian experience. It is more appealing to sit and relax at East Ferry and enjoy the waterfront instead of looking at parked cars. They have not picked out plantings yet at this point.

Commissioner Cochran asked about the entrance regarding the fire trucks and Mr. Gray said they did address this issue with the Fire Department and they always have assisted backups for safety reasons.

Commissioner Smith thinks the aisle width is less than what is there now. What we have in existence now is what Smith wants to remain. Mike Gray noted that the parking spaces and isle width meets all standards.

Commissioner Swistak said our purview and review process for Development Plan Review is parking and landscaping. Whether or not it triggers DPR he thinks it is good that we are talking about it and where they are grounded is in the standards and if we could make it bigger we would.

We all have to endure the decision for the next 30+ years. If the plan is changed then they have jurisdiction if it's not then it's just being replaced. Lisa Bryer asked the Commissioners to look at it conceptually first in terms of schemes and then we start talking about the details. Look at it holistically. Who is going to use it more, don't let one detail sway you at this point such as a few feet here or there. If it takes more than one night to get into the details then so be it.

Commissioner Swistak asked Hali Beckman about which design she likes better. Scheme 2 with the green space on water side. She likes that you see the waterfront. It is prime real estate that now has parking.

The traffic committee spoke to the business owners and employees at their meeting. They made a negative recommendation regarding scheme (2) because of the longer isle length and cars not being able to turn around so staff went back and looked at it.

Scheme 3 has narrower green space on each side. The Town Council has not seen yet. When they go back they will present it to the council. Mike Gray presented different renderings that they have in their packets. They need more consistency on signage and to coordinate furniture Hali said.

Mr. Nota said in terms of funding the schemes are about the same. There is always sticker shock with the numbers on any town project, since we have to publicly bid and pay prevailing wage, it will always be more. The bare minimum is probably about 250K. It is coming from the waterfront reserve fund, not taxpayer money and these funds are restricted to water front projects. Plans would be to break ground late fall and finish in the spring and we will have 270-300K by spring. The Funds are from the leases too. We just applied for a grant from Commerce RI, we asked for 50% match. We should know in the next several months if we get any funding from the grant.

Donald Richardson 12 Davis St. – Close to 300K who will maintain the shrubs and grass? The town of Jamestown, Parks and Public Works dept. They do not have a good track record maintaining anything. He spoke about the hurricane in 1938; boats were up to the USO. And in 44 and 54. He cannot see putting any greens at the seawall. Is the space between the cars big enough to back up in? Yes he was answered, it is to the standards.

Bill Munger – Ferry Wharf – Conanicut Marina - Thanked the team for putting the effort into this project. As far as the outdoor space and green space the season is pretty short about 12 weeks and in his world it has to be functional. Veterans square is a marvelous green space. The triangle doesn't get the attention. He likes this current footprint. He agrees with Don we do not need too much shrubbery. He supports the handicap curb cut. UPS, Boat trailers RIPTA buses all come through there and today's footprint it all works. Long term parking, short term parking, it all works. If the planners were going to bless a plan I would expect it to be built exactly as you bless it since you hold me to that same standard.

Mike Ridge – 3 Ferry Wharf - Spinnakers – Scheme 3 how many lost spaces? 1 space. He is opposed to losing any parking spaces. His first reaction would be the original plans. The bollards in plan 3 he thinks are troublesome. He asked about why the crosswalk on Conanicut Ave. There is a very poor site line to the south. There is something to be said for Jamestown having a waterfront parking lot. It's a burden to the tourist trade if they do not have parking. Plan # 2 becomes problematic because of traffic flow. He supports Scheme 1.

The Planters on the edge of the private sidewalk is up to the ferry wharf shops property owners. Mr. Gray said there was an ADA complaint on the shops and they will have to consider that soon.

Commissioner Pendlebury said he finds the waterfront sidewalk hard to navigate with little ones. He also asked why does the building inspector make him put railings on balconies and it is not that way downtown. There should be a standard. Pendlebury prefers scheme 2. But he can see the backing up is going to be an issue.

Ms. Bryer acknowledged that during the summer for 12 weeks there might be a problem backing out and suggested a turnaround space by the wharf even in the present scheme. The Town has heard the complaints and should respond. Bryer said it is a quirky parking lot that is always going to be quirky. Minimizing risk the best we can is the goal.

Commissioner Swistak said he is thrilled that the Planning Commission is looking at this. He questioned whether they have jurisdiction on Scheme 1. He believes they do since the handicap space will be larger and that is a change in parking "layout". Lisa Bryer suggested a recommendation on preferred scheme and then it may come back for formal DPR approval?

They will take a poll on 1,2 or 3. He said when the plan is almost final then they will come in with a proposed plan.

Commissioner Swistak polled the Commissioners on which scheme they liked:

Commissioner Pfeiffer said his choice is between 3 or 1, 2 is nicer but the parking issue is a major problem. The backing up issue is a safety issue.

Commissioner Pendlebury said he cannot support 2 - the backing up bothers him now and it would be worse. He would support a relook at scheme 3 and would like to see more green and make sure we do not lose any spaces. He wants more green in scheme 3. We need a buffer between cars and benches on the water and we could squeeze the triangle to get it.

Commissioner Cochran 1 & 3.

Commissioner Prestigiacomo agrees scheme 2 has more character but prefers scheme 3, but it needs tweeking.

Commissioner Smith likes 3 as long as the east west dimension is maintained.

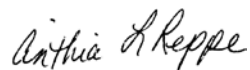
Commissioner Enright 1 & 3 hybrid with more green on water.

Commissioner Swistak 1 & 3 hybrid with more green on water.

VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Enright and seconded by Commissioner Cochran at 10:01 pm. So unanimously voted.

Attest:



Cynthia L. Reppe
Planning Assistant