

Approved as written
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
June 26, 2024
6:30 PM
Jamestown Town Hall
93 Narragansett Ave.

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm and the following members were present:

Michael Swistak – Chair	Mick Cochran
Rosemary Enright – Secretary	Diane Harrison
Bernie Pfeiffer	Dana Prestigiacomio

Not present: Duncan Pendlebury – Vice Chair

Also present:

Lisa Bryer, AICP - Town Planner
Carrie Kolb – Planning Assistant
Peter Ruggiero, Esq. – Ruggiero, Brochu & Petrarca
Dennis Webster

II. Citizen’s Non-Agenda Item- none

III. Correspondence

1. UDR decision for Theodore Mundy, 27 Luther Street, AP 8 Lot 322
2. Memo to Zoning Board of Review High Groundwater Table and Impervious Overlay District, Subdistrict A, Kirmil Residence: AP 15, Lot 210; 213 Seaside Drive
3. Memo to Town Council for Development Plan approval for Conanicut Island Sailing Foundation

Correspondence was recognized as received.

IV. New Business

1. No items at this time.

V. Old Business

1. Zoning Ordinance amendments related to 2023/2024 RI Legislative changes
 - A. Memorandum from Town Planner related to multi-family dwellings and projects.

Bryer said that the discussion will begin with multi-family dwellings and projects. Currently there is a six-month moratorium on building multi-family dwellings and projects and the intent is to change the Zoning Ordinance before the moratorium is lifted. The moratorium was put in place due to a last-minute change to the multi-family dwellings and project section of the Zoning

Ordinance that created an unintended significant change. The previous ordinance was too restrictive and multi-family dwellings and projects could not be built. The goal is to create an ordinance that is reasonable and will not create dwellings and projects that are overly dense. The State of Rhode Island does give a density bonus for units of affordable housing that are created. Multi-family dwellings and projects are only allowed in Village Special Development District.

Discussion ensued regarding multi-family dwellings and projects.

Commissioner Swistak asked why the minimum lot size was 200,000 sq ft in R-20? Bryer said the square footage was old, created many years ago and just never changed. The new zoning ordinance permits multi-family dwellings and projects on smaller lots now.

Commissioner Swistak asked what the average size lot in the R-20 is? Bryer said that she does not know, and explained that there are many conforming lots and there are existing non-conforming lots. Lots range in size from 5,000 sq ft up to 8 acres.

Detailed in the June 21, 2024 Planner's Report (see attached), Bryer gave three examples of proposed examples within the R-20 zone; CD zone and R-8 zone. The proposed examples were discussed.

Commissioner Harrison asked what size the multi-family units would be? Bryer said that was unknown. Commissioner Harrison asked if the affordable housing units are smaller sized units? Bryer said that affordable units must be comparable in size to other units. Bryer said that each example must plan for open space, parking, circulation, and utilities.

Commissioner Swistak asked about the increased density if all three examples were to be built, which would be 60 more units. It is more likely to be 90 more people. How do you support 60 more units with water? Bryer said that that multi-family dwellings and affordable units were projected in the water build out plan.

Commissioner Harrison asked about example with 17 units with 4 affordable units and 4 bonus incentive market rate units. The 21 market rate units will most likely sell for \$1 million each. How does this solve the need for senior and affordable housing? Bryer said that just creating additional housing will not bring the housing costs down but will provide additional housing choices in Jamestown, which are lacking.

Commissioner Swistak said the example in the R-20 zone with 24 units with 6 affordable units and 6 bonus incentive market rate units is too large. In his opinion, the number of units that can be built should be 15 units.

Commissioner Prestigiaco expressed her concern over water usage and being able to support that many extra people. Bryer said that the water build out plan projected multi-family dwellings

and projects. Commissioner Cochran asked what is the water build out plan? Byer said that the plan will be provided to the planning commissioners.

Dennis Webster of 22 Mount Hope Avenue, said that he thinks multi-family housing will likely be luxury condos. He thinks compact cottage development and affordable ADU have the possibility to be smaller and more affordable. He thinks reduction of 200,000 square feet to 60,000 square feet is too great. He thinks the setbacks for multi-family units should be greater than single family setbacks and gave an example of Bay View Drive where 2 or more large buildings would only be 22.5 feet from the road. Commissioner Swistak said that he liked the idea of greater setbacks. Commissioner Cochran likes the compact cottage development and liked the proposal from a few years ago for multi-family development on Narragansett Avenue. Bryer noted that was 24 units on just over an acre.

Discussion of smaller structures ensued. Commissioner Harrison asked if all the units in one large building could be prohibited? Commissioner Cochran asked how to encourage small structures on lots? Bryer said that allowing the number of units per structure could accomplish smaller structures. Commissioner Enright asked about having setbacks in relation to the height of the building, like with the communication tower. Commissioner Prestigiaco said to have design standards, limit building mass and larger setbacks. Commissioner Swistak said that the decisions that have allowed large mass buildings are the ones that are criticized.

Discussion of acceptable density ensued. The density should be about 50% of the examples provided. Bryer will create examples for future discussion with less density.

Discussion ensued regarding Zoning Ordinance changes due to RI Legislative changes 2023-2024. Commissioner Swistak asked if the Planning Commission has the opportunity to say “no” to any of the legislative changes? Bryer said no.

New zoning ordinance language and/or questions were discussed.

Commissioner Cochran asked about the difference between VI. Commercial Retail B. 2 and F. Miscellaneous Retail 7. Bryer will look into why the use table is different.

Sec. 82-708, Basements is a new addition. The reason it was added was due to the high water table across the island and the difficulty with people pumping into the street and neighbors property when they have a foundation in the groundwater table. The Engineering, Public Works and Zoning departments all said it is reasonable to have the ordinance. Commission Swistak asked if a house was taken down, could it be rebuilt on the foundation that has an existing basement? Bryer said that she will talk to dept heads about that.

Discussion ensued regarding setbacks and substandard lots. Bryer said that she has some ideas for more design standards that will be explored at further meetings.

Development Plan Review (DPR) has been moved to subdivision regulations. The Planning Commission will be reviewing subdivision regulations soon.

The State made changes to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) and the changes are effective on July 1, 2024. The main changes are the size of 900 sq. ft. or 60% of the floor area net of the principal dwelling. Discussion ensued regarding the minimum size. It was decided to make no additional changes and keep the state law as written.

A motion was moved by Commissioner Swistak and seconded by Commissioner Cochran to approve and forward changes discussed in the Town Planner's memo dated June 21, 2024 to the Town Council. All in favor.

VI. Reports

1. Planner's Report

A. Future meetings – topics and applications

No further discussion aside from the memos.

VII. Approval of Minutes

1. May 15, 2024, review, discussion and/or action and/or vote

A motion was moved by Commissioner Enright and seconded by Commissioner Cochran to approve the minutes of the May 15, 2024, meeting as amended. All in favor. Swistak abstained.

Page 7 Paragraph 3 removed:

~~He said the spaces are not the correct size. Aisle with is only 20 ft. needs to be 23 feet for 90 degree parking.~~

~~Photographs—event parking only—not golf parking related.~~

~~Private event parking photo—~~

~~Photo of 9 cars in the grassy area where 17 are supposed to be. Not enough space.~~

~~Photo of single car~~

~~Photo where cars are already parking on the grass.~~

~~Complete cluster and cram cars. By the ordinance there is enough parking.~~

~~Copy of planning memorandum, zoning ruling—as exhibits.~~

~~Rosemary—part of golf parking or event parking? Christian—it was for parking. Mick—is could solve the problem.~~

~~Followed through with what was previously approved. No need for relief stated in the minutes. March 2019 Zoning board ruling.~~

~~Not an allowable use—new ordinance has what is and what is not allowed.~~

2. June 5, 2024, review, discussion and/or action and/or vote

A motion was moved by Commissioner Enright and seconded by Commissioner Cochran to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2024, meeting as written. All in favor.

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VIII. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn at 8:35pm was moved by Commissioner Enright and seconded by Commissioner Cochran. All in favor.

Attest

Carrie Kolb