



TOWN OF PORTSMOUTH PLANNING BOARD

2200 East Main Road
Portsmouth, RI 02871
401-683-3717

PORTSMOUTH PLANNING BOARD Special Meeting July 27, 2016

Members Present: Guy Bissonnette, Edward Lopes, Luke Harding, Michael James, Kathleen Wilson, Ryan Tibbetts and David Garceau. Kathleen Wilson entered the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Members Absent: none

Others Present: Atty. Kevin Gavin, Portsmouth Town Solicitor, Gary Crosby, Town Planner, Michael Asciola, Assistant Town Planner and Leon Lesinski, Administrative Officer, Portsmouth Planning Board

The Meeting was called to order by Mr. Bissonnette at 7:00 p.m.

1. Agenda Continuances/Modifications: none

2. Minutes for Planning Board Special Meeting of June 29, 2016

MOTION: Mr. Garceau made a motion, seconded by Mr. Harding to approve the minutes of the special meeting of June 29, 2016 with the following correction: Delete "Edward Lopes" under members present. All in favor. So voted. Mr. Lopes abstained from the vote due to his absence from the meeting.

3. Discuss and approve operating procedures for the review and approval of each of the elements of the Comprehensive Community Plan

Gary Crosby, Town Planner explained a new element review process that was generated during a meeting on July 14, 2016, in cooperation with the Citizens Interested in the Comprehensive Community Planning Process Committee (CICPPC). The new process is intended to streamline the review of each element. Under this process, the CICPPC will submit itemized issues of concern for element drafts to Mr. Crosby. Mr. Crosby will meet with CICPPC members in order to act on any easily resolved issues thus reducing the list that would require Planning Board action at the special public hearings for each element.

Mr. Bissonnette explained that after the closing of the public testimony portion of each hearing, further public input could only be re-opened if a member of the Planning Board felt it necessary to have more information for clarification purposes on a specific issue.

Richard J. Marano, 200 Lepes Road, member, Citizens Interested in the Comprehensive Community Planning Process Committee commented that the July 14 process review meeting went well and should shortened the Planning Board hearings going forward.

Judy Staven, 51 Longmeadow Road, member, Citizens Interested in the Comprehensive Community Planning Process Committee expressed concern for the rigidity of the hearing schedule. Mr. Bissonnette that while the time consuming process should move forward at an expedient pace, there was room for flexibility. He suggested that the CICCPC bring timing issues, as they arose, up with Mr. Crosby.

Peter Roberts, 80 Ormerod Avenue, expressed his concern that the public be able to adequately address controversial issues within the hearing process. Messrs. Bissonnette, Harding and Tibbitts presented their views on how the new review process would address his concern.

4. Close out approval of the proposed Economic Development Element (5) of the Comprehensive Community Plan

Mr. Bissonnette opened up the public comment portion of the review of the proposed Economic Development Element (5).

Mr. Marano on behalf of the CICCPC presented following resolutions (concluded in cooperation with Mr. Crosby and/or the Planning Board) and recommendations for the Element 5 draft:

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- Action ED – 1.2b – Resolved that the language “Fund programs” be deleted and replaced with “Work with the School Department...”
- Action ED – 1.2c – Resolved that the language “ Establish and fund...” and be deleted and replaced with “Pursue the establishment of a public/private partnership, “Workforce 2038,” to support adult education and training as well as apprenticeship/internship programs to improve the Portsmouth workforce.”

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- Action ED – 2.1e – Resolved that the term “spruce the place up” be deleted and replaced with the following: “enhance the physical attractiveness of the community.”

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- Action ED – 2.4f – Resolved that the term “local businesses” remain in the language for the action item in order to be consistent with Policy ED 2.4
- Action ED – 2.3a – Resolved that the term “...negative...” be deleted and replaced with the term “...potential....”

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- Action ED – 3.3a and 3.3b – Recommend hearing from CICCPPC member on the controversial nature of the sea level rise issue and the possibility of removing reference to sea level rise from the Comprehensive Plan. **Requires Planning Board decision and action.**

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- Action ED – 2.4d – Resolved that the language “...and/or similar organizations,...” be inserted after “...Newport County Chamber of Commerce....”

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- Action ED – 2.5a – Recommend deleting this action item. **Requires Planning Board decision and action.**
- Action ED – 2.5b – Resolved that the language “...and/or similar organizations...” be inserted after “...Newport County Chamber of Commerce....”
- Action ED 3.1d – Recommend that the term “private” be inserted before “...collection system and wastewater treatment facility at Melville....” **Requires Planning Board decision and action.**

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- Action ED – 5.2e – Recommend replacing the language “Establish a Grant Coordinator who will monitor for...” with “Investigate monitoring....” **Requires Planning Board decision and action.**
- Action ED – 5.3e – Recommend rewording as follows: “As long as the position of the Director of Business Development is maintained as a town employee, the position should advocate for existing and prospective businesses.” **Requires Planning Board decision and action.**

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- Goal ED – 5 – Resolved that the language “Deliver the type of...” be deleted and replaced with “Achieve a level of”

Page 34

- Policy ED – 4.3 – Resolved that the language for this policy will remain as written with the assurance that the subject of landscape buffers and other regulatory safeguards that protect residential properties from the impacts of commercial and industrial development will be addressed in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Larry Fitzmorris, 50 Kristen Court presented his concern that the State of Rhode Island is “hostile” to small businesses as compared to Massachusetts, which puts Portsmouth economic development at a “substantial” disadvantage. He raised

the question as to how to address this problem, in terms of state advocacy, within the Comprehensive Plan. He agreed to work with Mr. Crosby on developing language for the plan.

Ms. Staven expressed her concern for the inclusion of the Relevant State Goals and Policies on page 26. She recommended that they be removed. Mr. Crosby explained that he included the state goals and policies as context and guidelines for the benefit of the Planning Board. He agreed that they could be pulled out at the final review. In subsequent element drafts, he agreed to make a notation that the state goals and policies are for Planning Board reference. Ms. Staven stated that this approach met with her satisfaction.

Referring to the town business director position, Ms. Staven spoke on her objection to mandating town employee positions through the Comprehensive Plan.

Referring to Policy ED – 2.4, Ms. Staven questioned why the Melville tank farms are restricted to “maritime-related businesses” under certain action items. Mr. Crosby explained how the reference is in-line with the policy, is consistent with the tank farm redevelopment plan, and supports the maritime, technology and defense-related business that have a long-time presence in the area. He agreed with Mr. Bissonnette’s suggestion that the term “...and other businesses...” be inserted into certain action items where appropriate.

David Reise, 66 Freeborn Street, member, CICCPC requested that action item be inserted under Policy ED – 3.3 that states the following: “Evaluate and review quantitative data on sea level trend change in five year intervals and determine if sea level is decreasing, increasing or remains at predicted level. The review of data at five- year intervals will determine if remedial action is required based on direction and rate of change. The review will direct and implement changes where possible to reduce the effects of tidal change.” The Planning Board and Mr. Crosby discussed Mr. Reise’s proposal and resolved to remove the language referring to funding and grants. Mr. Crosby raised his objections to the proposal and spoke on planning objectives that are centered on low risk tolerance with regard to sea level rise.

- Action ED – 3.3a – Resolved that the language “Dedicate funding and seek grants to...” be deleted from the beginning of the action item.

Mr. Roberts, in supporting Mr. Reise’s proposal, expressed his concern for considerable funding to implement changes to accommodate sea level rise that might not occur. He noted that in his lifetime living and fishing in Island Park, he has not notice significant change in sea level rise.

Tom Grieb, 110 Thayer Drive, raised his objections to language in the Economic Development Vision statement, page 28 particularly the words “...without compromising...” which he argued should be replaced with the word

“...support...” He read his lengthy visionary statement in which he advocates and recommends an alternative approach to economic development in the town. Mr. Bissonnette directed Mr. Crosby to include Mr. Grieb’s statement on the list of items that require Planning Board decision and action.

Mr. Marano asked if the public would have opportunity to comment on the draft after the evening’s proceedings. Mr. Bissonnette answered, stating that the formal public comment portion is closed as of the end of the meeting and that further public comment would be acceptable only at the request of a Planning Board member who seeks more information and explanation. Mr. Marano declined to make additional comments.

At 8:27 p.m., a motion was duly made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. So voted.

Respectfully submitted:
Dede Walsh
Recording Secretary for:

Leon Lesinski
Administrative Office