



MIDDLETOWN
Rhode Island

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

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Memorandum

To: Planning Board
From: Ron Wolanski, Town Planner
Date: December 31, 2022
Re: Project updates

Following is an update on the status of projects that the Planning Board is involved with, either as part of Comprehensive Plan implementation, or items otherwise initiated by or referred to the board for consideration:

Planning Board work complete

1. **Historic Resource Preservation** - Consideration of potential Regulations and/or Zoning Ordinance amendments to promote preservation of historic buildings (Comp Plan) – Draft documents were revised based on input received during public workshop meetings and Board discussion. During its February 5, 2020 regular meeting the board voted to forward the proposal to the Town Council for consideration. Presentation to the Town Council was delayed due to potential budgetary impacts of the proposed program and uncertainty of COVID-19 impacts on Town finances. **Status: During the June 8th meeting the Planning Board tabled discussion until the January 11, 2023 Planning Board meeting. This item is on the January 11th agenda for discussion.**

Prioritized ongoing Planning Board work items

1. **Affordable Housing** – Consideration of Comprehensive Plan action items on affordable housing. Listing of action items and preliminary proposed work plan for high priority items provided to the Planning Board during the April 14, 2021 meeting. **Status: During the September 19th Town Council hearing on the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Housing Element to add language about town actions and ongoing housing developments, the Council requested that the Planning Board reconsider drafting an inclusionary zoning ordinance for Town Council consideration. The Board established a subcommittee to develop a draft ordinance amendment. The subcommittee presented its draft ordinance to the full Planning Board on December 14th. The draft was forwarded to the Town Solicitor for review and comments. The matter was continued to the January 11th meeting. During the December 14th meeting staff also presented proposed amendments to allow ADUs in town, in order to address changes to state law. Options for addressing the state law will be considered again during the January 11th meeting.**

2. **Airport Zoning** - Draft overlay for airport zoning (Comp Plan) – A Planning Board Subcommittee asked staff to create a draft ordinance based on the Westerly ordinance, which was approved by the subcommittee and forwarded to the full Planning Board. During its March 11, 2020 meeting the Board requested that a public workshop meeting be scheduled, which was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Status: A public workshop meeting was held on October 13, 2022 to review the proposed ordinance and accept public comment. During that meeting the Board requested that a follow-up meeting be scheduled to consider the input received and determine how to proceed. This meeting was held on November 29th. Officials from the RI Airport Commission were in attendance to answer questions. It was decided that the draft overlay zone map will be revised to revert to the FAA recognized runway protection zone (RPZ), and that staff will work with RIAC to get data that will allow for more analysis to determine the appropriate limits of the height compliance area. Staff was also asked to research zoning efforts of other host communities. This work is underway, and results will be presented to the Board during a future meeting.**
3. **Use Table/parking zoning Review** - The Board's use table subcommittee was tasked with also reviewing zoning ordinance parking requirements as requested by the Town Council. **Status: The Planning Board, in response to requests of the Town Council for potential amendments to zoning ordinance parking requirements, provided proposed amendments to Zoning Ordinance Article 13 to the Town Council. The Town Council public hearing and first reading was on September 6th. During the second reading on September 19th, Town Council members asked about the rationale for several of the proposed amendments. The PB subcommittee drafted a response which the full board voted to send to the Town Council during the Nov.9th regular Planning Board meeting. The Town Council will receive the PB recommendations during a future meeting. The use table subcommittee also resumed its work to review and recommend amendments to the use table. This work is ongoing, with the next subcommittee meeting scheduled for January 6th.**
4. **Build-out Study Action Items** – The Planning Board's full-build impact study completed in 2020 provided recommended actions to address the anticipated impacts of additional development in town. With the Planning Board's assistance, the Town Council prioritized several items for action by the identified responsible departments. **Status: Memo providing status of Town Council priority action items provided to the Planning Board for the August meeting. Work on items identified as Planning Department responsibilities is underway.**
5. **Application Fees** - Draft Regulations amendments to implement new application fees and revise application checklists (Planning Dept.) – Amendments approved and forwarded to the Town Council in February 2019. At the request of the Town Administrator, the Town Council referred the proposed fees back to the Planning Board for additional study, including review by the Finance Dept. to ensure that all overhead costs are included in the fees. Proposed revised fees to be recalculated based on current town personnel and other costs. **Status: Awaiting additional information on overhead costs from Finance office to complete calculations for proposed fee schedule. During the August meeting the Planning Board voted to send a memo to the Town Administrator requesting assistance to complete the fees update. The memo, dated August 15th, was provided to the Town Administrator. The Planning Board chairman and I are scheduled to meeting with the Finance Director on January 17th.**

6. **Rural Village District zoning amendments (Comp Plan)** – The Planning Board subcommittee met with subject property owners to seek input and buy-in for creation of the new district. Given the lack of urgency on the part of the impacted property owners, the subcommittee advised the board that action on this item be delayed. The Planning Board agreed to table the matter. **Status: Tabled by the Planning Board for further discussion at a future date due to lack of interest from impacted property owners. During the December Planning Board meeting Mr. Weber stated that he would reach out to the property owners to determine if there is interest in proceeding.**
7. **Transportation Options** - Consideration of amendments to the Regulations and/or Zoning Ordinance to promote transportation options (Comp Plan) - Following a public hearing in January 2020 the Planning Board adopted the requirement to provided bike racks (and other items) on site plans and forwarded those amendments to the Town Council for approval. **Status: Planning Department staff are researching other options for promoting transportation alternatives. We are participating in a new effort to identify opportunities to expand bicycle infrastructure on Aquidneck Island.**

Cc: Town Administrator
Town Council