



Memorandum

To: Planning Board
From: Ron Wolanski, Town Planner
Date: April 28, 2023
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: This item had been tabled pending discussion during a joint meeting with the Town Council on February 21st. During that meeting no decisions were made on how to proceed.**

Prioritized ongoing Planning Board work items

1. **Affordable Housing** – Consideration of Comprehensive Plan action items on affordable housing. **Status: The Town 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 Board requested that a public workshop meeting be held to present and accept public comment on the inclusionary zoning draft, which was held on April 6th. At that time the Board requested additional research on how other towns have addressed the issue. That research is underway and is expected to be ready for presentation during the June regular Planning Board meeting. Discussion of amendments regarding accessory dwelling units (ADUs) has been tabled due pending state legislation.**
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: As a result of assistance offered to the Town by the RI Airport Corporation and its consultant Stantec, Planning staff were able to revise the limits of the proposed height compliance area as defined in the draft ordinance. This revision was presented to the Planning Board during a special meeting held April 26th. During that meeting the revisions were deemed acceptable and the Board voted to forward the amendments to the Town Council for consideration.**

3. **Use Table Review** - The Board's use table subcommittee was tasked with reviewing potential amendments to the Zoning Ordinance use table. **Status: The use table subcommittee has completed its work to review and recommend amendments to the use table. The proposed amendments were presented to the Planning Board for consideration during its special meeting on April 26th. The Board requested that a public workshop meeting be held to present the amendments and accept public input.**
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: Quarterly memo providing status of Town Council priority action items to be provided in June.**
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: Additional information on overhead costs has been provided by the Finance office. We are now seeking updated hourly staff costs. This will allow calculation of a proposed fee schedule, which will be provided for review during an upcoming Planning Board meeting.**
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. Mr. Weber is in the process of reaching 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 provide 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, "Ride Island", to identify opportunities to expand bicycle infrastructure on Aquidneck Island. The most recent meeting was held on March 27th.**

8. **Zoning for cannabis-related uses** – The Planning Board is assisting with development and vetting of proposed zoning ordinance amendments to regulate cannabis-related uses, including cultivation, testing, and retail establishments. **Status: The Board received the revised draft ordinance prepared by the Town Solicitor’s office and Planning Dept. staff during its April 26th special meeting, at which point the Board requested that a public workshop meeting be scheduled to present and accept public input on the proposal.**
9. **Short-term rental research** – The Town Council has requested that the Planning Board investigate two questions related to short-term rentals: 1) The impact short-term rentals have on the availability of housing for use by full-time residents, and 2) how other communities regulate short-term rentals. **Status: The initial results of staff research on these questions will be discussed by the Board during its May 10th meeting.**

Cc: Town Administrator
Town Council