



MIDDLETOWN
Rhode Island

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

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Memorandum

To: Planning Board
From: Ron Wolanski, Town Planner
Date: August 31, 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 was 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. This item will appear on the Planning Board's December 2023 meeting agenda for discussion.**

Prioritized ongoing Planning Board work items

1. **Implementation of 2023 planning & zoning legislation** – Draft and recommend adoption of amendments to the zoning ordinance and subdivision & development regulations required by state legislation. **Status: Solicitor and Planning Staff have provided a list of required amendments. Highest priority items, including amendments to criteria for special use permits to proceed first. Special Planning Board meeting held August 29th. Draft amendments to be provided for the September 13th regular meeting.**
2. **Comprehensive Community Plan update** – Complete draft of the new 2025 Middletown Comprehensive Community Plan. **Status: Members of the Comprehensive Community Plan Update Committee (CPUC) have been appointed. First CPUC meeting scheduled for September 14th.**
3. **Affordable Housing** – Consideration of Comprehensive Plan action items on affordable housing. **Status: Inclusionary housing zoning ordinance amendments, as well as**

other housing related amendments to be considered as part of the work to respond to new state legislation, as noted above.

4. **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: During the April 26, 2023 special Planning Board meeting the revised draft ordinance was deemed acceptable and the Board voted to forward the amendments to the Town Council for consideration. The Town Council received the draft during its June 20th meeting, and ordered the public hearing to be advertised for an upcoming meeting.**
5. **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. A public workshop meeting was held on August 3rd, during which the board voted to forward the amendments to the Town Council with a positive recommendation. The Town Council will receive the recommendation and consider scheduling a public hearing during an upcoming meeting.**
6. **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: Draft nutrient & pesticide control ordinance presented to the Planning Board during its June 14th meeting. Discussion was continued to the July 12th meeting, with the chairman and Town Planner to meet with Solicitor Desautel in the interim. As a result of that meeting it was decided that revised documents, including a revised ordinance and an alternative policy document would be prepared for consideration. The matter was continued to the September 13, 2023 Planning Board meeting for further discussion with Solicitor Desautel.**
7. **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 from the recently adopted FY2024 budget. This will allow calculation of a proposed fee schedule, which will be provided for review during an upcoming Planning Board meeting.**
8. **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. Mr. Weber is in the process of reaching out to the impacted property owners to determine if there is interest on their part in proceeding.

9. **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 in June. The group will continue to work towards implementing improvements to bicycle infrastructure.**
10. **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. A public workshop meeting was held on May 25th to present the draft and accept public input. During its June 14th meeting the Planning Board forwarded the draft to the Town Council with a positive recommendation. The Town Council's public hearing and first reading of the amendments is scheduled for September 18th.**
11. **Review of commercial development design standards contained in the Subdivision & Development Regulations for potential amendments** – The Planning Board will review the current design requirements for potential amendments. **Status: The Board should consider establishing a subcommittee to work with staff to review requirements and propose amendments.**

Cc: Town Administrator
Town Council