



MIDDLETOWN
Rhode Island

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

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Memorandum

To: Planning Board
From: Ron Wolanski, Town Planner
Date: October 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: Amendments required to in response to bills S1032A & S1035A approved and forwarded to the Town Council following a public workshop meeting held on October 25th. Amendments to address bills S1034A & S1038A will be considered during the Planning Board's November 8th regular meeting. Amendments to address remaining bills will be drafted and presented to the Planning Board for consideration as soon as possible.**
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. The first CPUC meeting was held on September 14th. Going forward, meetings will**

be held on the second Thursday of the month, with the next meeting November 9th.

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 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 received the recommendation during its September 18^h meeting. Advertising for public hearing will be in conjunction with additional revisions needed in response to state legislation. It is anticipated that the public hearing will be scheduled for the Dec. 4th regular Town Council 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 and policy presented to the Planning Board during its September 13th meeting. The Board decided to proceed with drafting a policy document rather than an ordinance. The draft policy document was presented during the Board's October 11th regular meeting. At that time it was decided that a public workshop meeting would be scheduled and the draft would be provided to the Conservation Commission and Tree Commission for comment. The public workshop has yet to be scheduled.**
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 group will continue to work towards implementing improvements to bicycle infrastructure. The Town Council has asked the Town Solicitor to draft a complete streets ordinance to require inclusion of pedestrian and bike facilities on road projects.**
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 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 was held on September 18th. Second reading and adoption occurred on October 2nd.**
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: During its September 13th meeting the Board established a subcommittee to work with staff to review requirements and propose amendments. A subcommittee meeting was held on October 19th. A second meeting will be scheduled.**

Cc: Town Administrator
Town Council