

Planning Board Work Session
August 24, 2010

A work session of the South Kingstown Planning Board was held on Tuesday, August 24, 2010 in the Council Chambers at the South Kingstown Town Hall, 180 High Street, Wakefield, RI.

The work session was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by the Chair, Maria Mack.

Planning Board attendance:

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| Mack - Present | Clendenen - Absent | Riendeau – Present | Morrison – Present |
| Kenerson – Present | Castovillari - Absent | | |

Mr. Vincent Murray, Director of Planning and Ms. Nancy Letendre, Special Legal Counsel were also present as well as Nathan Kelly and Douglas McLean, consultants from the Horsley Witten Group.

1. Comprehensive Plan Update Process, Review of Draft Land Use Element, Etc.

Mr. McLean discussed the broader draft changes to the Land Use Element. The consultants have reorganized and slightly expanded this element to direct attention more toward a village planning model, to highlight growth management, and stressing quality design and development. Some issues relative to Land Use are reinforced as well in other elements (i.e. discussion of affordable housing in the Housing Element and a discussion of land preservation in the Natural and Cultural Resources Element). This theme of reference cross-referencing in different plan elements is felt to be a means to strengthen the overall document. Board members noted that care needed to be taken to ensure overall policy consistency within the document. In their drafts of the various elements the consultants attempted to focus more on relationships between such issues as housing and economics, transportation and economics and design and village quality. They also added some discussion to multiple elements that has been mandated by the State on climate change and hazard mitigation.

Mr. Murray mentioned that the consultants have also completed a draft of the Economic Development Element. He noted that when the Planning Board and the Planning Department have completed their respective reviews, the element would be forwarded to the Economic Development Committee for comment. In this recessionary environment, economic development priorities should be focused on properly scaled infill, reuse and rehabilitation versus sprawl. Discussion ensued relative to language deletions and additions, preserving small areas of green spaces in the downtown section (pocket parks) and other issues.

Mr. McLean elaborated on the scheduling of the update review process. Through September the consultants plan to complete drafts of the Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources, and Housing Elements. They would like to have the Conservation Commission review the Open Space Element and the Recreation and Natural Resources Element drafts at its earliest convenience. The Housing Element has to be restructured to incorporate the Affordable Housing Plan but the draft should be ready by the end of September. Drafts of the remaining elements would be ready by the end of October. A discussion ensued relative to the maps for the Comprehensive Plan.

The consultants are tentatively planning to schedule one more public workshop for November and public hearings on the overall plan will follow.

4. Discussion of Zoning Ordinance, Article 8, Sign Ordinance (Focus on Provisions Pertaining to LED Signs, Electronic Messaging Boards and Sandwich Board-type Signs)

Mr. Murray related the current LED sign situation to the Board. Wakefield Prescription has erected a large, very bright, animated LED changeable sign at its new location on Kingstown Road. When the sign specifications were submitted to the Building Official's Office the permit application only mentioned that it had a changeable electronic display sign. Many community members have voiced their objections to it. The Town does have an ordinance in place that prohibits animated signs but it doesn't address the newer technology. The Town Council had held a public hearing recently where the members discussed the current sign and adopted a new ordinance which bans such signs through November 22, 2010 but allows (via the grandfather clause) Wakefield Prescription to keep its sign providing that the store changes the sign copy only once a day. He noted that the Council asked the Economic Development Committee to make recommendations to the Planning Board on this issue. He added that CVS had submitted an application for an LED sign at the Dale Carlia corner before the ordinance was amended.

John Reiner, a town resident, voiced his concerns about the distraction dangers such signs present to traffic.

Mr. Riendeau expressed his concerns with pedestrian and traffic safety as well but also feels that the sign ordinance cannot possibly keep up with the specifics of ongoing technology and therefore it must stand on its own basic current criteria.

Mr. Murray noted that a working group has been formed (members of Town staff, Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Committee and some residents) to address the subject of sandwich board signs. He added that both the Town Code and the Zoning Ordinance do not allow for sandwich boards or wares to occupy the sidewalks. Discussion ensued.

2. Discussion of Conservation Commission (Tree Board) Recommendations for Amendments to Zoning Ordinance Section 504.1 (Concerning Special Use Permits for Residential Construction, OWTS within 150' of Wetland Areas)

Mr. Murray led a discussion relative to defining OWTS Class IV Soil Evaluator. Staff had decided not to change the Town's definition but to use the State's definition in our ordinance for continuity. Other ordinance discussion notes related to repairs meeting performance technology standards, depth of the water table, extending alternative technology to the GPOD, the acreage of percent of impervious cover of a lot under current conditions and with proposed development, wellhead protection areas, the cost of the new technology OWT Systems to the homeowners and restrictions on house size. Mr. Murray stated that a number of items remain that need to be clarified.

3. Mid-year Program Review, Biennial Growth Management Program (Continuation from July 27, 2010 Work Session)

Mr. Murray stated that the only additional item to be included before formalization of the program review is a statement of support for the free trolley system sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

Discussion ensued relative to various edits to the document.

5. Other Items of Interest and Concern

Fantel Appeal

Ms. Letendre, in updating the Board on the Fantel appeal, stated that abutter, Michael Cocci has filed an appeal for a stay which would essentially not allow any changes to occur on the property until the court has completed the Fantel appeal. Discussion ensued.

Definition of “Yield Plan”

Ms. Letendre related to the Board members that the State does not have a definition of a yield plan in its regulations and the South Kingstown Zoning Ordinance’s definition is very general and open-ended. Her advice on this topic is that the Town develops a better definition of yield plans since they are involved in the Comprehensive Permits, Flexible Frontage Requests, Flexible Design Residential Projects and Inclusionary Zoning. The Board agreed to place this item on a future Planning Board agenda.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m. by unanimous consent of the membership.