

CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE

PLANNING BOARD

MINUTES OF OCTOBER 11, 2011

Present at the meeting were: Chairman Robinson, Mr. Batty, Mr. Almeida, Mr. Cole, Mr. Cunha, Jeanne Boyle (staff), Diane Feather (staff), James Moran (staff), and Orlando Andreoni, City Solicitor.

Chairman Robinson welcomed the newest alternate member, Christopher Grant to the Board.

1. SEATING OF ALTERNATE MEMBER

Mr. Cunha was seated for Ms. Moravec.

2. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

A. Minutes of August 9, 2011

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Almeida, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of August 9, 2011

B. Minutes of July 11, 2011

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of July 11, 2001.

C. Minutes of May 9, 2011

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board unanimously approved the minutes of May 9, 2011.

3. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

A. Memo dated 8/10/11 to the City Council, Re: File # 2011-3 Wampanoag Farms”, Seeking Zoning Change from C-1 for Partial Rezoning to R-1 for Single-Family Frontage, Lots on Hospital Road

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board unanimously approved Correspondence A. above.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Request for Release of Performance Bond – Appl. # 2007-28, 2 Main Street Minor Subdivision

The attorney for the applicants of the 2 Main Street Minor Subdivision has requested a release of the performance guarantee. Mr. Moran gave a brief history of the subdivision regarding the approved plan. All subdivisions that were in the process were able to get another two years. They met all the requirements of the final plan approval. It was recorded last week. The Department of Public Works has inspected and approved the completed work. The Department recommends a full release of the guarantee of \$15,800.

Motion – Staff Recommendation and Attached Documentation

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board accepted the staff recommendation and accompanying attachments into the record.

Motion – Request for Release of the Performance Guarantee

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Cole, the Board unanimously voted to release the performance guarantee in the amount of \$15,800

Roll Call Vote

Mr. Almeida	Aye
Mr. Batty	Aye
Mr. Cole	Aye
Mr. Cunha	Aye
Chairman Robinson	Aye

B. Proposal from Land Plan Associates Regulating East Providence Timber Land Authority

Mr. Wesley Plante, 5 Ferncrest Drive, Riverside, RI was sworn in by City Solicitor, Orlando Andreoni. Mr. Plante is the president of Land Plan Associates.

Mr. Plante went through his proposal. It entails the formation of a quasi-public corporation charged with the development of a timber farm at the former Forbes Street Landfill property. Mr. Plante included a sketch which depicts the location of the proposed timber farm as well as other improvements to the site. His submission describes a mechanism for financing that envisions a partnership with the RI EDC and the U.S. Small Business Administration. He explained that an estimate of \$3.25 million for some capital costs associated with engineering infrastructure necessary for the project to be paid for by revenue bonds. The total up-front capital costs in his proposal are \$4,894,584.80. These costs will be funded through a combination of grants, SBA loans and revenue bonds.

Ms. Boyle said she sent a copy of Mr. Plante's proposal to Mr. Queenan of the RI EDC. Mr. Queenan's response was that he has had several conversations about Mr. Plante's proposal, but that it is premature in terms of the financing. Ms. Boyle gave a brief summary of the staff

recommendation. She noted that the Planning Department had several concerns regarding the proposal from Mr. Plante and listed them in the staff recommendation below:

- The area shown on the plans as the location of the timber farm overlaps with the area currently being considered for development of the first phase of the solar facility by CME/OCI Solar;
- Portions of the area where the timber farm would be located would require the disturbance of many acres of forested wetlands and would pose significant permitting issues with RIDEM;
- Penetration of the landfill cap by the Planting of trees does not appear to comply with RIDEM Solid Waste regulations for landfill closure;
- The Parks Superintendent has raised concerns regarding the crop type, planting methodology and product market for the proposed tree farm;
- The significant up-front capital costs envisioned as being borne by the City are a concern giving the City's current financial constraints, notwithstanding Mr. Plante's intent to refund those costs from project revenues at a later date
- Issues have been raised by the City's Finance Director regarding the fiscal impact of the proposal upon the City's taxpayers and the necessity for special State Enabling Authority to create the proposed entity
- No documentation has been provided that RIEDC or US SBA will provide the funding or technical assistance necessary to make the project financially feasible
- No market study, business plan or other supporting documentation has been provided to support the revenue projections submitted in the proposal

Ms. Boyle noted that Mr. Plante is to be commended for his creativity and initiative in bringing forward the proposal, but given the apparent conflicts with RIDEM wetlands and solid waste regulations and the lack of substantiation for the financing proposals, the Planning Department recommends that the Planning Board advise the Council not to proceed with the plan.

Mr. Batty asked Ms. Boyle if the solar company state that they would like the opportunity to expand at some time. Ms. Boyle said the first phase of the solar facility encompasses everything that is not wetlands with the exception of the buffers that are required. Unless it is a wetland it will be occupied by the first phase. After further discussion on the costs of the development and cost of the trees the Board made a motion. Mr. Plante concluded his presentation at this time.

Motion – Staff Recommendation and Attached Documentation

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board unanimously voted to accept the Department's staff recommendation with accompanying documentation including the worksheet that was provided by Mr. Plante and make it part of the Board's official records

Motion – Proposal from Land Plan Associates for a Timber Farm Authority

Since the Plan is premature, the Board did not make a motion and went to the next item on the agenda.

**C. Transportation Improvement Program – 2013 – 2016 – Project Priority List
Requests of the City of East Providence – New Priority Projects 1, 2, and 3.**

*1. Submission of Pawtucket Avenue sidewalk improvements to State
Transportation Improvement Program (T.I.P) 2013-2016*

Ms. Boyle explained that the State is soliciting proposals for the State's TIP program. It requires that any new projects in the T.I.P. requires a finding that consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. She noted that Diane Feather and Jim Moran attended a workshop at the State DOT. There is only going to be \$40 million dollars available statewide for the entire length of the T.I.P which goes for 4 years. Even though it is a bad budget year, we are going to try to get some of the funding.

At this time, Mr. Moran provided to the Board additional photographs of the area which our intern had taken. The proposals entail Pawtucket Avenue to the Veterans Memorial Parkway, approximately 2 miles. It is one of the City's mostly densely utilized corridors in terms of both vehicles and pedestrians.

Regarding the Recreation, Conservation and Natural/Open Space Plan Element, our objective is to construct sidewalk and dedicated pedestrian and bicycle paths where feasible to connect to and expand the existing network.

Mr. Moran went through the objectives regarding the Circulation Element. The objective is to focus on providing walkable neighborhoods and a development scale that supports pedestrian movement with the City's Waterfront District. Also to encourage the construction of sidewalks for pedestrian traffic in areas near schools, libraries and municipal recreation facilities. It would also be to improve accessibility to public and private facilities for handicapped residents.

Mr. Moran noted that the Public Works Department provided a general estimate of the curb drops and replacing sidewalks of which the cost would be \$1.9 million dollars.

The Department of Planning asks that the Board state that the proposed project is consistent with the East Providence Plan.

Motion – Staff Recommendation and Documentation attached

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board voted unanimously to accept the staff recommendation and materials on number 1 of the T.I.P.

Motion – Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board voted that the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Roll Call Vote

Mr. Almeida	Aye
Mr. Batty	Aye
Mr. Cole	Aye

Mr. Cunha Aye
Chairman Robinson Aye

*2. Submission of Taunton Avenue Corridor Improvement & Road Diet
Project to State Transportation Improvement Program
2013- 2016*

Ms. Feather states that the State of Rhode Island is soliciting for projects for inclusion in the 2013-2016 T.I.P. program. She described the process and stated that a study is underway of a portion of Taunton Avenue from Hall Street to the Seekonk, Massachusetts border. This is called "Auto Row". Horsley Witten Group is doing the study and is focusing on design guidelines. It would include future land uses, public transportation, safe and convenient pedestrian access, and streetscape amenities. A portion of the project is on the east side of the Pawtucket Avenue intersection with Taunton Avenue. This section would be reconfigured from a 4-lane roadway with two travel lanes in each direction to a three-lane roadway and a center turn lane for vehicles traveling either eastbound or westbound.

Ms. Feather explained there are approximately 13,000 vehicles traveling per day on this road and noted that pedestrians are at risk crossing a four travel lanes. She explained the "Road Diet" objectives which include: improved safety and traffic operation, enhanced corridor character, improved access to existing and future businesses and transit and improve environmental conditions.

Ms. Feather noted the proposed project is in conformance with the General Purposes of Zoning to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. She went through the objectives of the Land Use Element, Economic and Circulation Elements of the Comprehensive Plan. She informed the Board that the project priority list will be submitted to the City Council for review at a Public Hearing to be held on October 18th. She said that staff asks that the Board find a positive recommendation that the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Motion – Staff Recommendation and Accompanying Attachments

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board voted unanimously to accept the staff recommendation and accompanying attachments and make them part of the Board's official records.

Motion – Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board voted unanimously that the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

*3. Submission of Newport Avenue Connector to State Transportation
Improvement Program 2013-2016*

Mr. Moran explained that the City's Waterfront District is a critical part of the City's plans for re-use of the City's undeveloped and underdeveloped properties along the waterfront from Kettle Point to Phillipsdale. To assure the economic viability of using these parcels is to provide efficient access of the Waterfront Drive project which is part of

the Newport Avenue Connector which is the primary means of improving northerly access from I-195. This will be accomplished through the construction of Waterfront Drive.

Motion – Staff Recommendation and Accompanying Attachments

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board voted unanimously to accept the staff recommendation and accompanying attachments and make them part of the Board's official records.

Motion – Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board voted unanimously that the project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

5. CONTINUED BUSINESS

6. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Copy of resignation letter dated 9/2/11 from Matthew Robinson of the Planning Board

B. Copy of Notice of Decision dated 8/10/11, File #2011-03 – Wampanoag Farms - Amended Master Plan, A.M.J.A.M. L>L.C., 1279 Wampanoag Trail Map 711, Block 3, Parcel 15

C. Copy of Notice of Decision dated 8/10/11, File #2011-03 – Wampanoag Farms – Major Subdivision/Master Plan, A.M.J.A.M. L>L.C., 1279 Wampanoag Trail, Map 711, Block 3, Parcel 15

Motion

On a motion by Mr. Batty, seconded by Mr. Cole, the Board voted to accept Communications A through C. as part of the Board's official records.

7. ANNOUNCEMENT

Next Meeting - **Monday, November 14, 2011, 7:00 p.m.**, Room 306

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Robinson
Chairman