

# **November 16, 2009 - Planning Board Meeting**

## **CITY OF EAST PROVIDENCE**

### **PLANNING BOARD**

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#### **Minutes of November 16, 2009**

Present: Michael Robinson (Chair), Anthony Almeida, Krista Moravec, Octavio Cunha, Robert Cole, Matthew Robinson (Board); Jeanne Boyle (Planning Director); Diane Feather, James Moran, Patrick Hanner, Wayne Barnes (Planning Staff).

The Board recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **1. SEATING OF ALTERNATE MEMBER AND CHAIRMAN**

Mr. Cunha is seated as a voting member in place of Mr. Burton Batty

#### **3. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

A. Minutes of September 14, 2009 – To Be Submitted

B. Minutes of October 21, 2009

The Planning Department submitted an amendment to the minutes, which include a detailed discussion on the Enterprise Zone amendment proposal as requested by Mr. Matthew Robinson.

On a motion by Ms. Moravec, seconded by Mr. Cunha, the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2009 meeting.

#### **3. APPROVAL OF PLANNING BOARD CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **A. Public Hearing – Report on the East Providence Comprehensive Plan Update**

Planning Director Boyle asked Chief Planner Diane Feather to go over the Executive Summary and offered that the planners who worked on individual elements would then be available to answer any questions on those respective elements.

Ms. Feather noted that at the October meeting, the Board was provided a document outlining the Update process along with a Draft Executive Summary, with Board

comments requested by November 9<sup>th</sup>. Tonight's submitted document includes a narrative on each plan element. She described how municipalities must update their Comprehensive Plan every 5 years, and described the process that has been followed in the current update including two previous public meetings, as well as a meeting with a prominent developer, Colin Kane of the Peregrine Group, who provided a developer point-of-view. Their general comments are reflected within the Executive Summary. Ms Feather noted that Community Development Director David Bachrach is concurrently working on the City's Consolidated Plan for submission to HUD, which enables the City to participate in the Federal CDBG program. Planning Board reviews the draft and makes a recommendation on its approval to City Council, who votes on its adoption at a public hearing. It then goes out for state agency review, which is administered by Rhode Island Statewide Planning. With their approval, the updated Plan becomes valid and becomes the basis for City land use decisions.

Ms. Feather pointed that the most recent decennial census is still from 2000, but that a 2006 population estimate is available and it appears that our population is relatively stable. She also noted that everything from the 2004 update "continues forward in full force and effect", and that this wording was approved by the City Solicitor. She then listed the mandatory Plan elements as determined by Rhode Island Statewide Planning: Land Use; Housing; Economic Development; Historic, Cultural and Natural Resources; Community Services and Facilities; Recreation, Conservation and Open Space, and Circulation. We have added a Community Sustainability Plan Element.

The major change summary is another important part of the Executive Summary, with the biggest change being the adoption of the Waterfront Special Development District plan, replacing the old Strategic Waterfront Plan which more industrial-oriented than the current plan, which is mixed-use oriented. Diane reviewed recent Waterfront Plan initiatives including Rossccommons Condominiums, Tockwotton Home, Village on the Waterfront, and Waterfront Drive.

Warren Avenue enhancement is another significant initiative noted in the major change summary, as is the initial I-195 waterfront interchange design process. Other initiatives include a hazard Mitigation Plan, Turner Reservoir Raised Boardwalk, Runnins River land donations, Rose Larisa Park, and the Fish Ladder project.

Chairman Robinson inquired as to what needed to be voted upon at this meeting.

Planning Director Boyle told the Board that their role is to provide an advisory recommendation to the City Council regarding their adoption of this draft, and the Council should take this action at one of their December meetings as the draft needs to be submitted to the State by December 31.

Mr. Matthew Robinson asked for clarification on the population estimate, and on street mileage in the City. These figures will be reviewed by the Department and any necessary corrections will be made. Mr. Robinson also asked about the proposed new Interstate 195 interchange near the waterfront. Mr. Moran explained the proposed new configuration,

noting that there would be access to the waterfront area from I-195 westbound, and to I-195 eastbound, which currently do not exist. Mr. Robinson also asked if there could be a direct ramp from Broadway onto I-195 eastbound. Ms. Boyle explained that it would likely be difficult to construct such an on-ramp here that would meet engineering standards. DOT is paying for the design, and there is a Federal earmark for the early phases of construction.

Chairman Robinson asked it was standard to include an overview of public comments. Ms. Boyle responded that public participation is a necessary part of the process, and considering that the Plan update needed to be as brief as possible, this was the best way to show evidence of public participation.

### **Motions**

Ms. Moravec moved to recommend to the City Council that they approve the Draft of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Cole seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote:

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|-------------------|-----|
| Ms. Moravec       | Aye |
| Mr. Cole          | Aye |
| Mr. Almeida       | Aye |
| Mr. Cunha         | Aye |
| Chairman Robinson | Aye |

### **5. CONTINUED BUSINESS**

There was no continued business.

### **6. STAFF REPORT**

Planning Director Boyle commended the staff for their work on the Draft Comprehensive Plan. Most communities hire outside consultants for this task which can run six figures in cost. Given the City's budget situation we felt it important to do it with City staff. She reiterated that certain State agencies will review the plan and that they require changes in some goals and objectives.

Ms. Boyle stated that CRMC's Metro Bay SAMP Port Chapter public meeting was coming up soon, and the this plan may have some Comprehensive Plan and Waterfront Plan implications down the road. She will keep the Board posted on this matter.

Mr. Patrick Hanner of the Planning Department updated the Board regarding the Turner Reservoir Raised Walkway project. He noted that it was about 85% complete, includes both stone-dust walkway and boardwalk segments, and is already seeing significant use. Project cost is about \$500,000, with funding broken down as follows: \$250,000 from

DEM, \$200,000 from the Champlin Foundation, and \$50,000 from a City Open Space Bond. Remaining items include installation of benches, barrels and interpretive signage. Chairman Robinson asked if a trail could be developed along the water north of Newman Avenue. Mr. Moran and Ms. Boyle noted that funding is in place for this, but this project is not a priority for DOT considering ongoing ARRA projects. There may also be additional wetlands issues. The sustainability element addresses this issue, along with the larger goal of making a better connection between the Tenmile Greenway and the East Bay Bike Path.

## **7. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no new communications.

## **8. ANNOUNCEMENT**

Planning Board members will be polled regarding their availability to meet on December 13.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Moravec made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Cuhna seconded.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.

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