

TOWN OF WESTERLY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – December 29, 2016 – 6:00 p.m.
Development Services Conference Room – Town Hall

A. 6:01 P.M. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Gail Mallard, Chair
Joseph T. MacAndrew, Vice Chair
Faith Bessette-Zito
Stuart Blackburn
James J. Federico, III
Gina T. Fuller

Members Absent: Nancy N. Richmond (entered 6:10 p.m.)

Staff Present: Jason Parker, Town Planner
Benjamin Delaney, Recording Secretary

B. 6:01 P.M. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the November 9, 2016 meeting was made by Mr. MacAndrew and seconded by Mr. Federico. By a unanimous vote, the motion was **CARRIED**.

C. 6:01 P.M. DISCUSSION OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Ms. Mallard stated the Committee had previously identified the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month as the most suitable times to meet and questioned if this remained the case.

The Committee was in consensus to schedule the next meetings for January 11, 2017 and January 25, 2017.

D. 6:03 P.M. REVIEW OF DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Ms. Mallard summarized the Committee had nearly completed a first review of the draft Primary Report except for certain items requiring additional discussion: a police boat, the Potter Hill dam and flood mitigation, the extension/location of the Highway Commercial zoning district, hazardous trees and limbs, Westerly State Airport, risk mitigation, stormwater system mapping, aquifer protection regulations, discussion of natural resources and reviewing and tabulating all suggested changes. She noted missing and out-of-date material had also been identified.

Police Boat

Mr. MacAndrew stated the Town currently owned a boat which was not in use. He noted the Town of Stonington's Harbormaster and Police Department each had a patrol boat in use.

Ms. Fuller questioned if marine enforcement should be addressed through harbor management.

Mr. MacAndrew stated he would contact the Police Department to determine whether the

status of a patrol boat.

Potter Hill Dam and Flood Mitigation

Mr. Parker noted the fourth action under Natural Hazards was proposed by the Committee.

Mr. MacAndrew stated the US Army Corps. of Engineers recommended in a report on the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed that the Potter Hill dam be removed. He recalled the Committee had wanted to cite the specific report in the draft plan.

Ms. Mallard recalled the Committee had been in consensus to discuss the proposed action further.

Mr. Blackburn suggested “catastrophic failure” be revised to “flood mitigation.”

Ms. Mallard suggested the action be revised as “Remove the Potter Hill dam on the Pawcatuck River for flood mitigation, as recommended by the [US Army Corps. of Engineers report].”

Hazardous Trees and Limbs

Ms. Mallard requested confirmation the Committee was in consensus to eliminate the twelfth action under Safe Circulation.

Ms. Fuller noted recent concerns about hazardous trees on specific roads.

Mr. Blackburn noted the impact of hazardous trees on roads in Connecticut following an October 2012 snowstorm and questioned if the action should be eliminated or revised.

Ms. Mallard recommended the action be eliminated noting questions of cost and responsibility.

Mr. Parker stated inclusion in the plan would strengthen any possible application to receive funding for such a project if made available by the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency.

Ms. Bessette-Zito suggested the action should be revised to support such activities.

Mr. Blackburn recommended the action should be maintained to at least identify hazardous trees and limbs.

Mr. Federico stated he was aware National Grid had a proactive program for removing hazardous trees and limbs.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended “public right-of-ways” be revised to a more general term for streetscapes.

Ms. Mallard and Ms. Richmond recommended the action be revised as “Remove hazardous trees and limbs overhanging public infrastructure as needed.”

Westerly State Airport

Ms. Mallard noted a group of citizens previously attended a meeting to state their concerns regarding the intensification of airport activity and her understanding the Committee agreed with the group. She provided an overview of items she recommended the Committee consider for inclusion in the draft plan based on the group’s input: documenting baseline conditions in the Transportation chapter of draft Appendix I, summarizing the relevant Transportation chapter text in section three of the draft Primary Report and adding three action items. She recommended the summary include a statement that ‘Westerly State Airport can remain an asset to the community if it remains as it exists currently, intensification can have an adverse impact on residential neighborhoods in the airport’s vicinity and town officials and representatives should use their influence in the State government to

protect citizens' quality of life.' The proposed actions were to (1) maintain airport use records, (2) control potential airport hazards by limiting future expansion and (3) resist any intensification of airport use. She stated for Ms. Fuller the inclusion of baseline conditions was necessary to identify potential future intensification.

Mr. MacAndrew noted former Town Councilor Louis Sposato had previously stated airport runways could be modified to allow use by heavier aircraft without expanding runways.

Ms. Fuller stated concerns regarding airport activity should be addressed by the Town Council through zoning, as stronger zoning regulations would have prevented the current situation from occurring.

Ms. Bessette-Zito stated her understanding zoning regulations should be used or revised in context with a statement on the airport utilizing existing capacity, enhancing business and avoiding use of eminent domain.

Ms. Fuller questioned if some baseline conditions would be available.

Mr. MacAndrew noted the citizen group had stated there was documentation indicating the Rhode Island Airport Corporation actively sought to increase use of Westerly State Airport.

Mr. Parker noted the Town did not have control over airport activity within the airport.

Mr. Federico stated his understanding the group's primary concern was increased commercial aircraft and that the proposed second action would not be possible.

Mr. Parker confirmed there was an updated Airport System Plan containing information for all state airports.

Mr. Federico recalled the group was not opposed to recreational flights or flights by New England Airlines.

Ms. Richmond suggested the draft plan include text seeking to prevent the installation of a control tower and hardening of runways at Westerly State Airport. She also suggested the draft plan include text seeking to prevent airport activity from ever being under Instrument Flight Rules regulations.

Mr. Federico recommended the fourth action under Transportation Assets be eliminated.

Ms. Mallard stated the group's concern was that the economic development accrued by the airport was less than the loss of quality of life and declining property values.

Ms. Fuller stated the economic development generated by the airport was from visitors arriving to the town via flight.

Mr. MacAndrew stated the current Comprehensive Plan sought to encourage small businesses as it was developed during the late 2000s recession.

Ms. Bessette-Zito stated her understanding residents' concerns were primarily regarding airport expansion through eminent domain.

Ms. Fuller questioned if a similar action was included in the economic vitality section.

Mr. Parker noted the action implied the Town had some control over airport activity which it arguably does not have. He suggested the action be revised as "Support strategies that better utilize..."

Ms. Mallard questioned the job opportunities at the airport noted in the action. She stated the creation of three or four new jobs did not outweigh the disruption to the citizens residing near the airport and the potential loss of property values which would affect the Town budget.

Ms. Richmond recommended the discussion be tabled until more information was known.

Ms. Mallard stated she would confirm the group's comments were forwarded to the Committee.

Risk Mitigation

Ms. Mallard recommended the third action under Community-wide Services be eliminated.

Stormwater System Mapping

Mr. MacAndrew stated, regarding the sixth action under Infrastructure, the US Army Corps. of Engineers was planning to map every culvert draining into watersheds in the State of Rhode Island through a Superstorm Sandy grant.

Mr. Parker suggested "Within the next phase of GIS development..." be revised as "Continue to improve and update infrastructure within the Town's GIS."

Ms. Mallard recommended the action be revised as "Within the continuing improvement of the GIS system..."

Mr. Parker stated for Mr. Blackburn the mapping was being done by a consultant hired by the Town through a grant. He suggested the action be revised as "Support the continued development of the Town's GIS data, including stormwater, sewer and water services."

Aquifer Protection Regulations

Ms. Mallard stated a cited report needed to be specified.

Mr. MacAndrew stated a final report was published in 2013 or 2014 and may be in the Westerly Library's archives.

Natural Resources

Mr. MacAndrew recommended his proposed revised text for the Natural Resources section be inserted into the draft Primary Report for the Committee to read in its second review.

Mr. Parker stated the Committee should ensure it reviewed the draft plan in a timely manner as he assumed the Planning Board sought to begin reviewing it in January 2017.

The Committee confirmed revised drafts could be sent electronically for their review.

Mr. Parker stated markups could be turned on and off manually.

Ms. Mallard stated the Committee should identify incomplete areas of the draft Primary Report in its submission to the Planning Board.

(Ms. Mallard exited at 7:17 p.m.)

Ms. Fuller confirmed she would revise the text in section 2.7 of the draft Primary Report as needed.

Appendix I – Housing Chapter

Page 1

Mr. Federico recommended "...sensitive neighborhood development..." be revised as "...sensible

neighborhood development...”

Mr. MacAndrew stated, citing “As indicated in Table 2-1...,” Washington County did not grow at two percent based on the table’s data. He recommended the sentence be eliminated.

Page 2

Mr. MacAndrew stated the numeric change of 1,710 between 2000 and 2010 was not shown in Table 2-3.

Mr. Parker suggested “Based on the numeric change from 2000 to 2010 (1,710), by 2020 Westerly’s population over the age of 50 is estimated...” be revised as “Based on the numeric change from 2000 to 2010 (placeholder), by 2020 Westerly’s population over the age of 55 is estimated to be (placeholder) percent...”

Mr. MacAndrew noted table and figure numbers were inconsistent with references in the text.

Ms. Bessette-Zito stated generally some tables and figures were confusing or missing.

Mr. Parker identified figures did not appear on Ms. Bessette-Zito’s copy of the draft Housing chapter and confirmed he would resend the draft to the Committee.

Page 4

Mr. MacAndrew stated “31.2” in “31.2 percent of Westerly’s households...” should be spelled out as it began a sentence and all similar cases should be corrected.

Page 5

Mr. MacAndrew questioned the meaning of “prospecting” in “There is some prospecting in the development of...” and noted there was no further immediate discussion of senior housing.

Mr. Federico and Ms. Fuller stated the sentence was identifying new multi-family units were particularly needed for the town’s senior population.

Page 6

Mr. MacAndrew questioned if “35.4” in the sentence “Table 2-6 demonstrates that the number...” was the same as the “35.5” included in Table 2-6.

Mr. Federico confirmed 35.4 was the average for 2000 to 2014.

Mr. MacAndrew questioned if “HMI” was meant to be “MHI.”

Mr. Parker confirmed he would be reviewing the draft plan for formatting errors and misspellings.

Mr. MacAndrew questioned if “...have made up 60 to 64 percent of total...” should be revised as “...have made up 61 to 64 percent of total...” to be consistent with Table 2-7 data. He stated the initialism CDBG should follow Community Development Block Grants as it was the first time the name appeared in the chapter.

Mr. Federico recommended ‘.0’ be eliminated in the text “...moderate income households (41.0% of total...” and wherever else it occurred in the draft plan.

The Committee was in consensus to revise “percent” as “%” throughout the draft plan.

Page 7

Mr. MacAndrew recommended "...conventional rehab loans..." be revised as "...conventional rehabilitation loans..."

Page 9

Ms. Fuller recommended "...belong to landowners outside the Town..." be revised as "...belong to owners who reside outside the Town..."

Page 10

Mr. MacAndrew questioned if "...and excludes utilities and..." was needed in "According to the 2015..." and requested clarification on the sentence "The 2010-2014 median..."

Mr. Parker clarified the sentence was discussing income rather than payments.

Mr. Blackburn questioned if the sentence should be revised to as "...needed to afford the median home price."

Mr. Parker suggested the identified owner income needed to afford the monthly payment should be included.

Page 12

Mr. MacAndrew noted the references to Tables 2-11 and 2-12 in the text should be revised as Tables 2-10 and 2-11 and the title of Table 2-11 should be revised as "Change in Averaged Assessed Values, 2006-2015." He noted the discrepancy between values cited in the text and Table 2-10.

Mr. Delaney confirmed he would review the values.

Page 14

Mr. MacAndrew, citing Figure 2-3, questioned if any maps showed the town's Census Tracts.

Ms. Fuller recommended that a map of Census Tracts be included in the draft plan if not already.

Pages 18-19

Mr. MacAndrew recommended the RICH estimate of 4,067 homeless persons be clarified as a statewide estimate.

Mr. Delaney confirmed he would contact the Rhode Island Coalition for the Homeless, Westerly Area Rest and Meals and Westerly Public Schools to request local estimates on homelessness.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended a statement be added that the Town was not exempt from the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act mandate.

Page 22

Mr. MacAndrew stated the reference to Table 2-15 in the text should be revised as Table 2-14 and noted a discrepancy between the number cited in the text and table.

Ms. Fuller recommended "project" be revised as "projected" in Table 2-14.

Mr. Parker stated Table 2-14's information was incorrect as units identified as complete in Fieldstone Estates were not yet constructed.

Page 23

Mr. MacAndrew recommended "2016" be revised as "2017."

Page 24

Mr. MacAndrew stated the Committee should discuss whether to use the data considering its margin of error.

Ms. Fuller recommended "Unfortunately, these estimates have to be used with caution." be revised as " Unfortunately, these estimates must be used with caution."

Page 25

Mr. MacAndrew stated the text referencing Table 2-17 should be revised to reference Table 2-16 and there was no Table 2-17 in the draft chapter.

Ms. Bessette-Zito cited several strategies contained missing information or text.

Mr. MacAndrew outlined the agenda for the Committee's next meeting and confirmed Mr. Parker would resend the draft plan to ensure all members were working from the same version.

Mr. Parker noted the Comprehensive Plan state's approval had expired and his understanding the Town was unlikely to face any ramifications from the State in the short-term.

Mr. MacAndrew noted the Committee needed to progress at a faster pace.

Mr. Federico stated he would be unable to attend the January 11, 2017 meeting.

Mr. Parker recommended the Committee review two chapters at its next meeting.

E. 8:22 P.M. PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were present for public comment.

F. 8:22 P.M. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Federico and seconded by Ms. Fuller. By a unanimous vote, the motion was **CARRIED**.

Minutes for the December 29, 2016 meeting submitted by:



Benjamin Delaney