

TOWN OF WESTERLY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Regular Meeting – January 11, 2017 – 6:00 p.m.
Development Services Conference Room – Town Hall

A. 6:04 P.M. CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Gail Mallard, Chair
Joseph T. MacAndrew, Vice Chair
Faith Bessette-Zito
Stuart Blackburn
Nancy N. Richmond

Members Absent: James J. Federico, III
Gina T. Fuller

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

B. 6:04 P.M. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 29, 2016 meeting was made by Mr. MacAndrew and seconded by Ms. Bessette-Zito. By a unanimous vote, the motion was **CARRIED**.

C. 6:04 P.M. DISCUSSION OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Ms. Mallard stated the next meeting was scheduled for January 25, 2017.
The Board was in consensus to schedule a meeting on February 8, 2017.

D. 6:06 P.M. DISCUSSION AND REVIEW OF DRAFT PLAN

Mr. MacAndrew stated the committee had stopped reviewing the housing chapter of the draft appendices due to missing text and information.

Ms. Mallard stated Table 2-17 appeared to have no data.

Mr. MacAndrew suggested the consultant be contacted to provide additional text and information.

Mr. Parker noted the clean copy draft cited the table as Table 2-18 and Table 2-16 in the tracked changes copy was not included in the clean copy.

Mr. MacAndrew stated the committee stopped reviewing the chapter at Strategy 1.3.

Ms. Mallard noted additional text was included in the clean copy.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended the committee continue its review based on the draft sent by Mr. Parker.

Mr. Parker questioned if it would be more effective for committee members to revise the document through tracked changes and review a single document containing each member's revisions.

Ms. Mallard stated the committee would be effective when all members were reviewing the same copy.

Mr. MacAndrew questioned who would be responsible for additional text and information.

Mr. Parker stated he would contact the consultant to provide additional text and information or advise what the Town needed to provide for additional text and information. He noted the consultant would be responding to comments received from the Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program (Statewide Planning) based on its preliminary review of the draft plan.

Ms. Mallard stated her concern new text may be inserted into the document by the consultant following the committee's completion of its review.

Mr. Parker noted revisions should not be eliminated if they were made based on comments from Statewide Planning.

Mr. MacAndrew noted the need to maintain a single version of the draft.

Mr. Parker stated for Ms. Richmond he requested the consultant to track all changes it makes to the draft in responding to Statewide Planning comments. He stated for Ms. DeNoia he was unsure of a timeframe for the consultant to provide responses to Statewide Planning comments and stated the consultant confirmed it will work with the Town to verify information and complete the draft. He noted the committee's review was more reactive than proactive and questioned if major concerns were addressed strongly, such as the streetscape of Granite Street.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended committee members identify their major concerns to confirm they are addressed in the Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Parker noted limiting Highway Commercial zoning along Route One while not limiting General Commercial zoning and the lack of environmental protections, such as drainage requirements, in some ordinances as examples. He suggested the committee consider struggles the Town experienced within the past five years.

Ms. Mallard stated the number of action items made it difficult for the most imperative actions to be identified.

Mr. Parker noted their maintaining in the review indicated their importance and confirmed the Town would not be penalized for not achieving actions.

Ms. DeNoia suggested the most imperative actions be called out in an executive summary.

Mr. Parker suggested allowing looser parking regulations and alternative uses downtown as another example.

Appendix I – Housing Chapter Affordable Housing Strategies

Mr. Blackburn noted Table 2-18 was not filled out.

Ms. Mallard questioned who would generate the projections for each strategy.

Mr. Parker stated the Town would need to set its own policies and the consultant would assist in generating projections. He recommended the committee focus on the strategies.

Ms. Mallard questioned how a projection would be generated for Strategy 2.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended the consultant be requested to provide additional information for Strategy 1.3.

Mr. Parker confirmed for Mr. MacAndrew, citing Strategy 3.1, the Zoning Ordinance still included a Historic Mill Overlay District. The overlay district allowed for both residential and commercial uses.

Ms. DeNoia noted there were no vacant mills in the town and the Potter Hill mill previously

collapsed. She stated her expectation no mill used currently would become available for affordable housing in the near future.

Ms. Mallard recommended the consultant be requested to provide additional information for strategies in order to better support the generating of projections.

Mr. Blackburn noted the need for consistency between the housing chapter of the appendices and the housing section in the draft Primary Report.

Mr. Parker stated the Griswold mill, former Bradford Dyeing Association, Moore Company mill and Potter Hill mill were all within the Historic Mill Overlay District.

Ms. DeNoia noted the Moore Company may own an additional building on Canal Street.

Mr. Parker questioned if it made sense to project affordable housing in the Moore Company mill which is actively used.

Ms. Mallard questioned if it was accurate there are some sites which the Town has identified as potential for collaboration with non-profit and public agencies. She questioned where the sites were located and noted the concern about an affordable housing development on South Drive by the proposed development's neighbors.

Mr. Parker stated there were no plans for development until a developer submitted an application. He noted an existing ordinance contained an appendix recognizing large parcel alternative development which referenced specific lots.

Ms. Mallard noted some action items related to Strategy Five and questioned if the strategy was still relevant. She recommended the proposal for an Affordable Housing Overlay District in strategies one and five be eliminated and stated her understanding the proposal was inserted by the state.

Mr. MacAndrew noted many additions were made to the current (2010) Comprehensive Plan after the committee completed its drafting and questioned if the proposed overlay district might allow affordable housing to be developed on large pieces of land at the expense of the town's character. He recommended the consultant be requested to clarify the function and purpose of the proposed overlay district and if its adoption is required by the state.

Ms. Mallard stated the chapter was focused only on affordable housing and questioned if the Town's petition for exemption from the state mandate was successful.

Mr. Parker stated the proposed legislation was tabled indefinitely.

Appendix I – Economic Development Chapter

Page 1

Mr. MacAndrew stated "...global recession which took place in the later 2000s..." should be revised as "...global recession which took place in the latter part of the first decade of the 2000s..." He noted the same revision should be made on the seventh page.

Page 2

Mr. Blackburn requested clarification on "...Westerly continues to be one of only two municipalities in Rhode Island falling outside the Providence-Warwick New England City and Town Area (NECTA)."

Mr. Delaney stated the Town was included in the Norwich-New London-Westerly NECTA due to the percentage of residents employed in the area and historical economic ties between Westerly and

southeastern Connecticut. He confirmed the consultant would provide clarifying text.

Mr. Blackburn questioned if the information regarding employment projections for General Dynamics Electric Boat were accurate.

Mr. Delaney stated the information was provided by a company representative to the Planning Board as part of the application for the Westerly Higher Education and Industry Center.

Ms. Mallard recommended text regarding the Westerly Higher Education and Industry Center be updated to reflect its current status.

Page 3

Mr. MacAndrew stated the number of total workers employed at the Pfizer facility in Groton, Connecticut was incorrect.

Mr. Delaney confirmed the consultant would seek another source.

Ms. Mallard requested text regarding the Town's financial health be updated, noting her understanding its bond ratings had been downgraded.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended "The local economy... the colonial era)." be eliminated.

Page 4

Mr. MacAndrew recommended "Three business associations are also presently active in town..." be revised as "Three business associations are active in town..." He also recommended the Washington Trust Company be referenced in the sentence "Westerly is primarily... largest headquartered locally."

Mr. Blackburn recommended the affiliation of The Westerly Hospital with Yale New Haven Health System be noted in the text.

Mr. Parker questioned if AGFA HealthCare was still present in the community.

Page 5

Mr. Parker suggested "Westerly Airport offers... passenger service available." be revised as "Westerly Airport offers regularly scheduled commercial flights to and from Block Island Airport solely via New England Airlines."

Page 6

Ms. Mallard requested the estimated generated economic activity value of the airport be verified.

Mr. Parker stated construction on the fourteenth parcel noted had been recently completed. He also confirmed for Mr. MacAndrew he would revise the text regarding the Moore Company.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended "Numerous other contractors... craftsmen of distinction." be eliminated.

Mr. Parker noted Arnold Lumber was also located in the community.

Page 7

Mr. MacAndrew stated "...global economic downturn in the later 2000s ..." should be revised as "...global economic downturn which took place in the latter part of the first decade of the 2000s..." He recommended "The ability to... of the project." be eliminated.

Page 8

Ms. Richmond stated the Watch Hill Inn did not contain a restaurant.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended “Also through the involvement of Royce Funds,” and “With approval from...added for purchase.” be eliminated.

Mr. Parker suggested “Along with these, Westerly includes many...” be revised as “Westerly also includes many...”

Mr. MacAndrew recommended rooms available in Table 3-1 should not include those which are occupied for seasonal workers. He stated the Sand Dollar Inn may be occupied by seasonal workers only.

Page 9

Ms. Bessette-Zito stated the reference to a hotel feasibility study to be conducted through the University of Rhode Island as a student project was not accurate.

Discussion was held by the committee regarding the establishment of a chain hotel in the community.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended “In Westerly, residents... revenue for Westerly.” be revised as “In Westerly, residents living in vacation property accounted for \$600,754,900 in total assessed value (or 13.9 percent of total assessed residential property) in 2015 and contributed about \$6.4 million to property tax revenue for Westerly.”

Mr. Parker stated for Ms. DeNoia he was unsure of the impact of AirBnb rentals in the community and discussion by the Town of regulating AirBnb rentals was recent.

Ms. Mallard stated for Mr. MacAndrew “In addition to... and numerous charities” was likely included to acknowledge seasonal residents’ contributions.

Mr. Delaney confirmed for Ms. Bessette-Zito the consultant would update the total value of property tax revenue for seasonal properties.

Page 10

Mr. MacAndrew stated the 2015 Food System Snapshot should be introduced in the text prior to being used as a reference.

Mr. Parker suggested “farms (of which there are more than the three identified in the 2015 snapshot),” be eliminated from “The following table... of product distribution.”

Mr. Delaney confirmed for Mr. MacAndrew “fishers” was the term used in the Food System Snapshot.

Page 11

Mr. Parker suggested “the Chamber” be revised as “the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce.”

Mr. MacAndrew confirmed for Mr. Blackburn farmers’ markets operated seasonally in the community. He questioned if “While land constraints...through promoting agritourism.” should be eliminated.

Ms. Mallard recalled the committee may have recommended to eliminate text on agritourism elsewhere.

Mr. Parker suggested “While land constraints... through promoting agritourism.” be maintained.

Discussion was held regarding the establishment of and drafting an action item in support of an indoor farmers' market.

Page 12

Ms. Richmond stated for Mr. Parker townhomes and senior rental units did not seem to be predominant residential project types in 2015.

Mr. Parker confirmed for Ms. Mallard revitalization was interchangeable with rehabilitation. He noted the need to consider parking limitations in regard to the completion of the United Theatre.

Ms. Mallard suggested "The Town of... at least 1991." be eliminated.

Mr. Blackburn suggested "There is a... preservation tax credits." be eliminated.

Mr. Parker recommended "There is a broader interest in mixed use development." be eliminated and "The Town of...and functionally integrated." be revised as "The Town of Westerly has fostered mixed-use development since at least 1991, though this concept has only born fruit in recent years. ¶Mixed-use development done well... and functionally integrated."

Ms. Bessette-Zito confirmed for Ms. Mallard the Lanphear Livery rehabilitation was completed and the building was occupied.

Mr. Blackburn recommended "The Lanphear Livery,... preservation tax credits." be eliminated.

Ms. Bessette recommended "The Lanphear Livery,... preservation tax credits." be maintained.

Ms. Mallard recommended "The Lanphear Livery,... the modern necessities." be revised as "For example, the Lanphear Livery,... the modern necessities."

Ms. DeNoia, noting the completion of the rehabilitation, stated the text should be revised to past tense.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended "The Livery, which... for several years." be eliminated.

Ms. Bessette-Zito stated for Ms. Mallard KeepSpace seemed to be cited in the chapter to identify the KeepSpace vision would be maintained despite KeepSpace no longer being funded.

Ms. DeNoia clarified Westerly Landing was the property across from McQuade's Marketplace.

Mr. Parker clarified Westerly Depot was the site of the Westerly Higher Education and Industry Center.

Mr. MacAndrew questioned why Westerly Landing would be considered an economic development initiative or organization.

Ms. Bessette-Zito clarified KeepSpace was aimed at funding community-generated ideas.

Ms. Mallard recommended "In May 2008,... multi-modal Westerly Station." be eliminated.

Mr. MacAndrew questioned if the Hotel Savoy/Martin House should be cited.

Ms. Mallard recommended the Westerly Landing and Westerly Depot section be eliminated.

Mr. MacAndrew recommended the committee finish its review at the statewide growth center section.

Ms. Mallard recommended the committee review the remainder of the economic development chapter and the natural resources chapter at its next meeting.

Mr. MacAndrew requested clarification if there was a difference between the Pawcatuck watershed and the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed.

E. 8:09 P.M. PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public were present for public comment.

F. 8:09 P.M. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. MacAndrew and seconded by Ms. Bessette-Zito. By a unanimous vote, the motion was **CARRIED**.

Minutes for the January 11, 2017 regular meeting submitted by:



Benjamin Delaney

Benjamin Delaney