



City of Woonsocket, RI

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Tue, February 4, 2020 | 6 p.m.
Location: Harris Hall (3rd Floor of City Hall)
169 Main St, Woonsocket, RI 02895

I. Call to Order:

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

II. Attendance Review

Members in Attendance:

1. Ken Finlay, Chairman
2. Roji Eappen, Vice-Chairman
3. Ron Miller, Secretary
4. Wendall Gardner
5. Jon Pratt

Others in Attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, Administrative Officer/City Planner
2. Theresa Dunigan, Recording Secretary

III. Correction/Approval of Minutes:

Motion to APPROVE the January 7, 2020 meeting minutes: Member Pratt

Second: Member Gardner

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed 4-0-1 with Secretary Miller abstaining due to his absence at that meeting

Motion to AMEND THE AGENDA to correct the year on item III to 2020: Vice-Chairman Eappen

Second: Member Gardner

Discussion: A typo on the agenda was discovered, listing 2019 instead of 2020 on item III. A brief discussion followed, and it was decided the agenda should be amended and reposted with a corrected year.

Vote: Passed 5-0-0

V. **Request for advice and recommendation from the Woonsocket City Council pursuant to Resolution 20-R-13 regarding Woonsocket Assessor's Plat 10, lot 22, former National Guard Armory.**

Mr. Proft provided a packet with the following:

1. A copy of City Council Resolution 20-R-13 in which the City Council asks the Planning Board for advice and recommendation regarding the possible designation of the property at Woonsocket Assessor's Plat 10, lot 22 as subject to the *Historic Structures Floating Overlay District* (January 2020)
2. Zoning Ordinance §12.7 *Historic Structures Floating Overlay District* (December 2017)
3. The City Planner's Staff Report: "*Zoning Amendment – Adding the former National Guard Armory to the Historic Structures Floating Overlay District*" (January 2020)

4. A draft letter from the Planning Board to the City Council: “*Recommending a Historic Structure Floating Overlay Designation of Woonsocket Assessor’s Plat 10, Lot 22 to the Woonsocket City Council*” (February 2020)

The City Planner found that adding the Armory to the Overlay District is consistent with the comprehensive plan and several purposes of the Overlay District listed in 12.7 of the Zoning Ordinance.

The Staff report highlighted two key concerns regarding adding the property to the Overlay District.

1. The lack of a development plan from a private developer
 - a. Previously, a development plan has already been proposed prior to considering a resolution to add a parcel to the Overlay District. Without the development plan, the Planning Board cannot determine if the eventual development will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the purposes of the Overlay District identified in section 12.7. Further, the Council cannot give consideration to some of the eligibility items identified in section 12.7.2.
2. The parcel in question is privately owned
 - a. In §12.7.1, the Zoning Ordinance states that structures must meet three (3) criteria to be included in the Overlay District:
 - i. Built before 1950
 - ii. Built specifically as a building to be used by the municipal, state, or federal governments, or instrumentalities thereof
 - iii. Has been declared surplus property by such governmental entity and offered for sale and development by a private developer
 - b. The property in question is being sold by a private owner (Saint James Baptist Church), not a governmental entity that has declared the property surplus and offered it for sale for private development. That said, the property in question was previously offered by a governmental entity for sale and development.

The City Planner recommended that the City Council confer with the City Solicitor regarding these concerns prior to adding the parcel to the Overlay District. If the solicitor states that the parcel may be added to the District, the City Planner recommended adding the parcel to the district with the stipulation that any future development plan for this property to be sent to the Planning Board for consideration. Chairman Finlay said he does want to see any development plan prior to City Council approval of said plan.

During this discussion, several members explored potential parking problems caused by the currently limited parking at the property. Chairman Finlay asked if the Overlay District would allow future developers to apply for historic tax credits. Mr. Proft stated he did not think there were local tax credits available, but there are state-level credits that the Armory may be eligible for.

Chairman Finlay requested the dates on the drafted letter to City Council be updated to the current correct date.

Vice-Chairman Eappen wanted to change the wording of the second underlined section of the drafted letter to specify the points discussed in the letter are based on the language found in the existing Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Proft suggested, “The Planning Board requests, per existing language in the Zoning Ordinance, that any development plan proposed in the future for this parcel be referred to the Planning Board for advice and recommendation.”

With no further discussion, Chairman Finlay called for a motion.

Motion to APPROVE the amended Recommendation Letter with updated language as suggested by Vice-Chairman Eappen and the two corrected dates: Member Pratt
Second: Member Gardner
Discussion: None
Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Eappen	Yes
Secretary Miller	Yes
Member Gardner	Yes
Member Pratt	Yes
Motion Passed	5-0-0

Member Pratt then had to leave the Planning Board meeting at 6:25 PM due to a scheduling conflict as had been previously discussed prior to the meeting being called to order.

VI. Administrative Officer's Report

Mr. Proft announced the departure of Acting Director Steven J. Lima from the Department of Planning & Development. Due to the large number of Directors in recent years, Mr. Proft stated he believes a contractor or consultant will need to be hired to assist in completing the next Comprehensive Plan for the City of Woonsocket.

The Planning Division is currently working on a zoning map change for Boilermakers (Plat 14, Lot 390), the Major Land Development application for 1099 Social Street, and several other zoning updates. Mr. Proft has also drafted several grant applications. One grant would help with the upcoming census (RI Foundation), and another grant is for infrastructure-related programs (RIIB MRP) over a two-year period.

Upcoming projects for the Planning Division include the Planning Board's yearly report for the Mayor and the capital improvement plan.

Referring to the previous meeting's item V (*New Business*) regarding a subdivision on Simonne Avenue, Chairman Finlay informed the Board that the developer has stumped the property. Mr. Proft noted that the stumps may have been buried, which is against City regulations. If this is the case, the developer will need to be cited and required to remove the stumps.

Chairman Finlay said the Singleton Street solar array is now partially installed and is less intrusive than previous concerns. Mr. Proft stated Singleton Street has officially recorded its plans in the Land Evidence Record, so its Planning Board process is now complete. He then said 139 Hamlet (Consumers Propane) made the required changes to the plans so the letter of approval was sent. Manila Avenue received its required signature so its process is now complete and properly recorded.

A new solar project will be proposed for the parcel behind Cumberland Farms, near the industrial park. The developers have begun the pre-application process. Mr. Proft believes it to be a good site for an array as the site was already disturbed and has limited narrow street frontage. The engineer recently worked on the Fairmount Solar project. Mr. Proft stated it will likely be a larger array, 1 - 1.5 megawatts.

Chairman Finlay asked for an update regarding the Old Middle School property, particularly regarding the previous developer TAI-O. Mr. Proft confirmed TAI-O is no longer associated with the project. Former Director of Planning Steven Lima had suggested several options to move forward with the project, but there were no new updates since his departure in January.

Vice-Chairman Eappen asked Mr. Proft about the self-driving green buses recently piloted in Providence. Vice-Chairman Eappen volunteered to help research options to bring a similar project to Woonsocket, particularly to address the high demand for parking space for CVS commuters and summer concert/event attendees. He also asked if there were plans to bring back the bike path murals. Mr. Proft responded that the bike path murals should go forward again as the Truman Drive Greenway is likely further off in the future due to the departure of the Acting Director of Planning.

VII. Next Meeting Dates:

Regular Meeting: Tuesday, March 3, 2020 (Harris Hall)

VIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn (6:53p.m.): Secretary Miller

Second: Member Gardner

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed 4-0-1 due to Member Pratt's early departure