



City of Woonsocket, RI

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Tuesday, March 8, 2022 | 6 PM

Location: Teleconference Via Zoom, Meeting ID: 871 4730 0987

I. Call to Order

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m..

II. Attendance Review

Members in Attendance:

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

Staff in Attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, City Planner/Administrative Officer
2. June Mousseau, Recording Secretary
3. Michael Debrousse/Planning Director

III. Correction/Approval of Minutes:

- Planning Board Meeting - January 25
- Design Review Commission Meeting – January 25
- Planning Board Meeting – February 1
- Design Review Commission Meeting – February 1
- River Corridor Review Commission Meeting – February 1

Motion to approve the Planning Board and Design Review Commission minutes included above:

Pratt

Second: Gardner

Discussion: None

Vote:

Chairman Finlay Yes

Vice-Chairman Gardner Yes

Secretary Eappen	Yes
Member Pratt	Yes

Motion	Passed	4-0-0
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IV. Meeting Business:

A. Planning Director to introduce himself to Planning Board

Mr. Michael Debrousse introduced himself as the new planning Director. He stated that he has been employed by the City of Woonsocket for 32 years, most recently as Superintendent of Engineering. He state that he has been serving as Interim Planning Director for the past 8 weeks.

Chairman Finlay said they are looking forward to working with Mr. Debrousse on upcoming projects.

B. Discussion Regarding Parking Regulations | The Planning Board will review existing parking regulations in the Zoning Ordinance and discuss potential amendments to better suit the goals of the City and developers.

Chairman Finlay continued the Planning Board's discussion of parking regulations, which began at the previous Planning Board meeting. He stated that he had recently spoken to the City Council at a City Council meeting to determine their interest in revising the parking regulation to better meet the needs of the City and developers. He stated that the Council encouraged the Planning Board to move forward. Mr. Finlay stated that new developments are required to have a minimum number of parking spaces, but often the number of required spaces is higher than what is necessary to meet the needs of the development. Chairman Finlay used the recently approved O'Reilly's Auto Parts and Family Dollar development at the corner of Social Street and Diamond Hill Road as an example. The development was required to have 81 parking spaces by regulation. The applicant secured a variance to reduce the number of spaces to 59. Chairman Finlay stated that even with the parking variance that the parking lot still has more spaces than necessary to meet demand, according to his own observations. He noted that if applicants were allowed to build less parking, they would have a greater opportunity to increase the amount of greenspace and other amenities on their sites. He suggested that the City's parking minimums in the Zoning Ordinance be reviewed and, where applicable, reduced.

Mr. Pratt stated that he was concerned about reducing the parking minimums because future uses on a given parcel may require greater parking than the current use, thereby making parcels more challenging to redevelop once an existing use goes out of business.

Mr. Proft provided a comparison of other cities' parking minimums. Mr. Proft recommended obtaining a copy of the ITE Parking Generation Manual (2019 5th Edition). He said he would ask consultants the City is currently contracting with to share this document with them.

Mr. Proft stated that there are two priorities in terms of revising the parking regulations in the Zoning Ordinance: 1. Minimum Parking Requirements 2. Parking Categories. Regarding parking categories, he stated that each use in the Zoning Ordinance's use table has to be matched to an applicable parking category to determine the parking requirement for a project. Currently, certain projects do not have an applicable parking category. This leads to these projects being shoehorned into other categories which can result in parking minimums that are not appropriate given the nature of the project. He recommended going through each use in the use table to determine whether the use had a corelated parking category, and where there wasn't a corelated category, creating a new category specifically for that use. Alternatively, for certain uses that require Planning or Zoning Board approval, the parking minimum could be based on the findings of a parking analysis/study that determines the level of parking needed given the unique circumstances associated with a project.

Mr. Proft noted that at the recent City Council meeting where the Chairman requested permission to move forward with developing an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance, Council President Gendron asked the Planning Board to reconsider an earlier amendment that allowed off-site parking up to 600 feet away in the Downtown Overlay District. After reviewing the issue, Mr. Proft believes that Mr. Gendron's understanding of the existing regulation is incorrect. He said he would discuss the issue with the Council President and determine whether further action is needed.

Vice-Chairman Eappen suggested learning what types of vehicles are most prevalent in Woonsocket. He stated that this information could potentially be identified using the tax assessor's records relating to the car tax.

V. Administrative Officer's Report:

Mr. Proft summarized recent Comprehensive Plan progress and stated that a public engagement workshop would be held on 3/24/22

VI. Upcoming Meeting: April 5, 2022.

VII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:14 PM: Vice-Chairman Gardner

Second: Member Pratt

Discussion: None.

Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Gardner	Yes
Secretary Eappen	Absent
Member Pratt	Yes

Motion

Passed

3-0-0