



# City of Woonsocket, RI

## Planning Board Meeting Minutes

**Date/Time:** Tue, January 7, 2020 | 6 p.m.  
**Location:** Harris Hall (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor of City Hall)  
169 Main St, Woonsocket, RI 02895

I. Call to Order:

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 6:28 PM.

II. Attendance Review

Members in Attendance:

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

Members Not in Attendance:

1. Ron Miller, Secretary

Others in Attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, Administrative Officer/City Planner
2. Theresa Dunigan, Recording Secretary
3. Ron Lemieux of 195 Hemond Ave, Woonsocket, RI 02895

III. Correction/Approval of Minutes:

- a. Motion to APPROVE the December 3, 2019 meeting minutes: Member Gardner  
Second: Member Eappen  
Discussion: None  
Vote: Passed 3-0-1 with Member Pratt abstaining due to his absence at that meeting
- b. Motion to APPROVE the December 9, 2019 meeting minutes: Member Pratt  
Second: Member Gardner  
Discussion: None  
Vote: Passed 3-0-1 with Member Eappen abstaining due to his absence at that meeting

Motion to WORK OUT OF ORDER to skip to New Business: Member Pratt

Second: Member Eappen

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed 4-0-0

V. New Business

- a. **Ron Lemieux to address Board regarding a bond** required to begin work on the formerly approved (2013) Simonne Ave subdivision. Mr. Lemieux is requesting that the required bond amount be reduced by the Planning Board compared to the recommendation of the Engineering Department.

Mr. Ron Lemieux spoke in front of the Board. He said his contractor has cut down the trees in preparation for the Simonne Ave project, but had not stumped the trees yet. Mr. Lemieux requested the required bond be reduced from the original \$276,350 to \$159,610. Mike Debrosse, of the City of Woonsocket Engineering Department, had suggested the Board lower the bond to \$192,000 (\$159,610 + 20% contingency) to protect the City's interests in case

the project was not finished.

Member Eappen asked if the standard 20% contingency amount was necessary in this case since the applicant had already completed the tree work valued at \$7,500. It was determined that reducing the bond estimate by \$7,500 and then adding 20% still resulted in an amount greater than \$159,610. Chairman Finlay questioned if the new contractor cost estimate includes paving, and Mr. Lemieux indicated it does. Member Eappen asked why there was such a large discrepancy between the original cost estimate and the new estimate. Mr. Lemieux said the initial estimate was a “fat estimate” created to streamline the original approval process, but he is now dealing with the “true cost” with his contractor. Mr. Lemieux also said he recently received two other estimates that were significantly lower than the original estimate. He stated that \$159,610 was the lowest.

Mr. Kevin Proft reviewed the Planning Board’s role and power regarding required bonds – the Board approves a bond amount after obtaining a recommendation from the City’s Engineering Department and City Planner. The Planning Board decides the final bond amount.

Member Pratt suggested reducing the bond to 10% contingency on the \$159,610 for a total cost of \$175,571.

Motion to APPROVE the reduction in contingency from 20% to 10% of the total bond amount for the Simonne Avenue Subdivision approved in 2013: Member Gardner

Second: Member Eappen

Discussion: None

Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
-----------------	-----

Vice-Chairman Eappen	Yes
----------------------	-----

Member Gardner	Yes
----------------	-----

Member Pratt	Yes
--------------	-----

Motion Passed	4-0-0
---------------	-------

Mr. Proft will draft an official letter for Chairman Finlay and the City Planner to sign. Mr. Lemieux said he did not mind receiving the letter via email.

Mr. Lemieux then asked if he could use concrete blocks for a 2’ and a 4’ retaining wall instead of poured concrete on a short graded hill. His contractor told him previously the property could be appropriately graded to eliminate the need for the walls completely. Mr. Proft asked if the Planning Board would consider this a “minor change” so that he could authorize this change administratively. The Board agreed that the requested change could be made administratively by Mr. Proft with the consent of the Engineering Division.

- b. **Election of Planning Board Officers** | The Planning Board will elect its slate of 2020 officers.

Following the Administrative Officer’s suggestion at the December 3, 2019 meeting, Chairman Finlay called for any new officer nominations with no response.

Motion to APPROVE keeping the officers voted for at the December 3, 2019 meeting: Member Gardner

Seconded: Member Eappen

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed 4-0-0

#### IV. Old Business

- a. **Amendment to Zoning Ordinance – Section 6.15 Solar & Wind Energy Systems, Facilities, and Installations** | The Planning Board will provide additional feedback to the City Planner regarding the above referenced draft amendment and determine whether the draft is ready to be shared with the Renewable Energy Subcommittee of the City Council. A revised draft amendment will be reviewed at a future Planning Board meeting at which time the Planning Board

may take official action to recommend the zoning amendment to the full City Council.

Mr. Proft completed all the changes discussed during the December 3 meeting except for changes that require advice from attorney Mr. Peter Wasyluk of the City of Woonsocket Law Department. The most important outstanding question remains whether the regulations can limit city-wide solar in industrial zones by total acreage.

Mr. Proft noted that the language regarding the use of pesticides had been changed from previous versions after consultation with DEM staff. The requirement will now be that pesticide use be the least practicable, that pesticides be applied by a “licensed commercial applicant,” and that all label instructions and State and Federal regulations be followed.

Mr. Proft added language regulating renewable energy storage facilities (RESF) to the ordinance stating that they are mostly regulated the same way as solar energy systems.

Mr. Proft provided the Board with photos of façade-mounted arrays (as requested during December 3 meeting)

Two typos were corrected by Member Pratt

Mr. Proft added height limits for Solar Canopies. Those designed for large trucks shall have a maximum clearance of 14’ with a 7° pitch. Those designed for passenger vehicles shall have a maximum clearance of 8’ with a 7-degree pitch.

Chairman Finlay stated the draft should be reviewed by the City Council’s Renewable Energy Subcommittee for feedback. Mr. Proft said he would have the item added to the subcommittees agenda.

Two items were identified as future additions to the ordinance. (1) the creation of an overlay zone that identifies properties throughout the city that are fit for solar energy even if they are not permitted to be developed by the Solar Ordinance (an overlay zone). (2) regulations regarding chemical pollution concerns at solar energy battery storage facilities.

## VI. Administrative Officer’s Report

- a. Comp Plan/Zoning Map Amendments | The Planning Board will be briefed on potential changes to the comprehensive plan and zoning map.

Mr. Proft explained the process of changing or updating the Future Land Use Plan through an amendment and briefly mentioned the following:

- i. Elm St (just past the River Haven development) – it is currently zoned MU-2 but has requested changing to R-4. Given its neighboring residential lots, this change is not unreasonable.
  - ii. The Boilermaker Mill – currently zoned MU-2 but is surrounded Mills that have been converted to condos. A developer has requested the designation be changed to MU-1 or C-1 which would allow for commercial on the first floor and residential on the upper floors.
  - iii. Island Place Mills – Neighborworks is currently trying to renovate these mills and convert them to commercial/residential. They are currently zoned MU-2, but should be MU-1 or C-1 instead.
- b. Zoning Ordinance Amendments | The Planning Board will be briefed on the ongoing effort of the City Planner and Zoning Official to improve the Zoning Ordinance through the amendment process.

Mr. Proft and the Zoning Official Mr. Carl Johnson are continuing to draft amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Currently, they are working on the parking section and are reducing parking requirements. This will lower the amount of variance applications needed.

- c. Previously Approved Subdivisions: Fairmount Street Solar, Singleton Street Solar, 1725 Mendon Road, Manila Avenue
    - i. Fairmount Street Solar has been approved by the Design Review Committee and received a special use permit and variance from the Zoning Board.

- ii. Singleton Street Solar has met all conditions, including obtaining DEM approval, but has not been recorded in City Hall.
  - iii. 1725 Mendon Road is complete, and the plans have been recorded.
  - iv. Manila Avenue is complete, and the plans were recorded. The plans are missing a required stamp though. The Administrative Officer is working with the Applicant to correct this.
- d. Grants: Cass Park, Pre-Disaster Mitigation, Brownfield Assessment, Municipal Resilience Program
- i. Cass Park – The City applied for the DEM Recreation Grant, which was the subject of the special Planning Board meeting in December.
  - ii. Pre-Disaster Mitigation – The City applied for the RIEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant which, if awarded would allow the City to develop engineered plans to improve flooding conditions at five culverts in the Mendon Rd/Cass Ave area.
  - iii. Brownfield –Fuss & O’Neal selected as qualified environmental professional to implement the EPA assessment grant which will focus mainly on 719 River St.
  - iv. Municipal Resilience Program – The City will apply by January 30<sup>th</sup>. If selected, Mr. Proft will receive training throughout the coming year, develop a list of priority projects that help the city combat the impacts of climate change such as flooding and heat island effect, and then be eligible to apply for Infrastructure Bank funding for projects on the list.

VII. Next Meeting Dates:

Regular Meeting: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 (Harris Hall)

VIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn (7:47p.m.): Member Eappen

Second: Member Gardner

Discussion: None

Vote: Passed 4-0-0