



City of Woonsocket, RI

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Date: Tue, June 4, 2019, 6 p.m.
Location: Harris Hall (3rd Floor of Woonsocket City Hall)
169 Main St, Woonsocket, RI 02895

I. Call to Order

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

II. Attendance Review

Planning Board Members Present:

1. Kenneth Finlay
2. Roji Eappen
3. Ron Miller
4. Stephen Crisafulli
5. John Pratt

Others in attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, City Planner
2. Carl Johnson, Zoning Official

III. Correction/Approval of Minutes

Motion to Approve the minutes of the May 8, 2019 Planning Board Meeting: Member Miller

Second: Member Crisafulli

Discussion: None

Vote: The motion PASSED - 5-0-0

IV. Old Business

- a. Allowing dimensional variances in conjunction with special use permits

Mr. Proft stated that the City Council has received a proposed zoning amendment from the Department of Planning and Development. The Council intends to hold a public meeting. Following the meeting the Council will ask the Planning Board for a recommendation.

- b. Churches and places of worship in C-1 districts

Mr. Proft stated that an exception to the buffer zone surrounding places of worship needs to be approved by the State General Assembly. Chairman Finlay asked whether this bill has been submitted to the General Assembly yet. Mr. Proft said he would find out and report back.

c. Solar Energy System Zoning Amendment

Mr. Proft stated that he would continue the previous planner's work to draft a Solar Energy Systems zoning amendment with the Zoning Official. Chairman Finlay suggested reviewing Cumberland's ordinance because that town did a lot of research when passing their ordinance.

d. Bike Path – Response from RIDOT to Planning Board letter about concerns with segment 8B-1 of bikeway including the use of Jersey barriers to separate the bike lane from traffic

Member Crisafulli said he understood that RIDOT was resistant to design changes considering that construction has already begun as they could result in cost/schedule overruns. He contested RIDOT's claim that the Jersey barriers are needed to protect cyclists, noting that sections of the East Bay Bike Path along Veterans Memorial Boulevard have only a strip of grass between swift moving traffic and the bike path. He also noted that the guidelines for bike paths seemingly contradict RIDOT's claim that Jersey barriers are necessary. Mr. Finlay stated that the offer by RIDOT to manage spray painted tags during construction does not solve the long-term problem; the city will be on the hook for such maintenance after construction. He also noted that the contrast between the bike path in Blackstone and the bike path in Woonsocket will be obvious if the Jersey barriers remain and will reflect poorly on both the city and state.

Mr. Proft said he intended to follow up with RIDOT to request a meeting. Mr. Proft said he would obtain the project's CAD files from RIDOT on June 5 so the Planning Board could create a preferred design rendering to bring to the meeting. The design would include reducing Truman Drive from three lanes to two lanes and creating a vegetated median between the bike path and vehicular traffic lanes, eliminating the need for the Jersey barriers. At minimum, the Planning Board would like to see RIDOT remove the barriers. The Planning Board agreed that it was important to have a clear understanding of the preferred design, its cost, and the ways in which the city would support implementation prior to the meeting.

V. New Business

a. Appointment of Kevin Proft as City Planner

Motion to appoint Kevin Proft as the City Planner: Member Miller

Second: Member Crisafulli

Discussion: None

Vote: The motion PASSED - 5-0-0

b. Request for advice and recommendation from the Woonsocket City Council pursuant to Resolution 19 R 63 – Referring a Request for Designation of a Historic Structures Floating Overlay District for Property at Woonsocket Assessor's Plat 6, Lot 1 [the former Fifth Ave School] to the Woonsocket Planning Board.

Mr. Proft explained that this resolution was tabled due to a technical issue associated with the zoning code – section numbering issues. When the issue is corrected, the City Council will refer the resolution to the Planning Board for advice and recommendation.

Motion to table the issue: Member Crisafulli

Second: Member Eappen

Discussion: None

Vote: The motion PASSED - 5-0-0

- c. Communication to the Planning Division from BBJ Group RE: Proposed Telecommunications Collocation BS73XC138 191 Social Street

Mr. Proft stated that the letter requests feedback from the City if there are concerns that antenna replacements on top of 191 Social Street will have a negative impact on the city's historic structures. After reviewing the plans the City Planner determined that no new impacts will result as the new antennas are only marginally larger than what already exists. The board reviewed the plans during the meeting and agreed with this assessment.

- d. Filling a Planning Department position to assist with the Comprehensive Plan update

Mr. Proft noted that the Agenda for this meeting stated that the Planning Department would be hiring a consultant, but this was a misstatement. Instead, the Department will be hiring a part-time staff person to fill a vacant position within the department. The staff person will be someone with experience drafting comprehensive plans. Chairman Finlay asked if this position is budgeted for. Mr. Proft said would find out and report back.

VI. Administrative Officer's Report

Mr. Proft noted that the **Capital Improvement Program** needs to be updated annually and has not been updated this year. Member Eappen asked what the budget for CIP projects was last year. Other members of the planning board said it was not a lot. Mr. Proft said that he would find out and report back. Mr. Eappen was concerned that an opportunity was missed by not completing this report earlier in 2019 so it could be considered during the budgeting process. Mr. Proft noted that the previous version of the report is likely very similar to what the updated version will look like, so it is unlikely that a major opportunity was missed.

Mr. Proft noted that an **annual report** of the Planning Board's activities needs to be completed for 2018. He will review the Planning Board minutes from 2018 and complete the report. The report also requires the listing of 2019 planning efforts. Mr. Proft said he will reach out to the Board for assistance with this section. He noted that items in the Comprehensive Plan that remain outstanding could be included. He also noted that the Planning Department is cleaning up the zoning ordinance to eliminate errors and contradictions that currently exist. The Solar ordinance will be a priority. Member Eappen suggested coming up with a list of priority sections to update as it may not be possible fully review of the Zoning Code this year.

Mr. Proft noted that the previous planner was working on a **master subdivision application** that would allow developers to use the same form for all types of subdivision. Currently there are at least four different applications. The form was completed by the previous planner; Mr. Proft will go through the Subdivision Regulations and identify places it refers to the old forms and update the language to reflect the use of the new form. Once this is complete, he will bring the amended form and subdivision regulation language before the Planning Board.

Mr. Proft noted that the previous planner was drafting a list of **street trees** that would be appropriate for use in Woonsocket's urban context. The trees need to be able to accommodate power lines, avoid displacing the sidewalk, and be salt tolerant. He will work with the City's new forester/arborist to develop this list and draft an amendment to the City's regulations so the list is included. Member Crisafulli noted that there was also the intention to look into requiring developers that cut down established trees to replace them with more than one new tree; the benefits of an established tree are greater than the benefits of a single new tree.

Mr. Proft noted that he would continue the previous planners work **researching software training** for the Planning Department, possibly funded by an RI Foundation grant.

Mr. Proft described a **pre-application meeting** with a developer interested in installing a ground mounted **solar array on the northern portion of 85 Fairmont St.** The area is a brownfield. It is in an I-2 zone. The application, when submitted, will require review by the Design Review Committee. The standards to which the project should be held are unclear as the Design Review Committee does not normally look at parcels in an I-2 zone. Mr. Proft said he will speak with the City Solicitor to determine what guidance he should provide for the developer.

Mr. Proft stated that he would reach out to Pam Rubinoff of RI Sea Grant to set up a flood plain training session to meet State requirements for Planning Board Members.

VII. Next Meeting and Adjournment

Mr. Finlay stated that the next meeting would be on Tue, July 2, 2019.

Motion to adjourn at 6:52 p.m.: Member Miller

Second: Member Eappen

Vote: The motion PASSED - 5-0-0