

City of Woonsocket, Rhode Island
Planning Board Meeting
Tuesday, July 2, 2019 @ 6:00 P.M.
Harris Hall, 169 Main Street

Present: Kenneth A. Finlay, Chairman
Ronald Miller, Member
Stephen R. Crisafulli, Secretary
Roji Eappen, Vice-Chairman

Excused: Jonathan R. Pratt, P.E., Member

Also Present: Kevin Proft, City Planner/Administrative Assistant
Pauline Washington, Recording Secretary

I. Call to Order

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

II. Attendance Review

Attendance was taken by Chairman Finlay that identified the above members as present.

III. Approval/Correction of Minutes

- Meeting of Tuesday, June 4, 2019 - MOTION by Member Eappen, seconded by Member Miller to approve the June 4, 2019 minutes as submitted. The MOTION passed.

IV. Old Business

a. Churches and Places of Worship in C-1 Districts

Mr. Proft updated the board on the Administration's efforts to have existing buffer zones around churches eliminated (the existing law is that you cannot have a liquor licensed facility within 200 ft. of a church). He noted that there are churches on Main Street that are permitted uses, within a C-1 District. The city is attempting to have that buffer zone waived in the downtown area along Main Street. Mr. Proft stated that this resolution was submitted to the General Assembly by both representatives and senators and went through the process of going through committee meetings. At this point the resolution has had its final approvals. The House approved their version, and the Senate approved, in concurrence, the process is complete at this point. Mr. Proft stated that the buffer zone law will not apply to the section of Main Street from Market Square to the Longley Building.

b. Bike Path (Segment 8B-1) - Discussion of Next Steps in Conversation with RIDOT

Mr. Proft presented the board with a rendering of "*Truman Parkway - Propose Modifications to the Blackstone River Bikeway Segment 8B-1: Northeast Lane Modifications, Lofts Emergency Access Easement, and Lane Modifications at Rotary.*" Chairman Finlay congratulated Member Crisafulli for his work on the Bikeway rendering, which is much better

than what exists. Mr. Proft commended that the rendering gives the public a better idea of the proposed design.

Mr. Proft stated that he believes, at this point, that the barriers will go in and stay in for the time being. He stated that Steven Lima (Planning Director) is trying to set up a meeting with RIDOT to make sure that we get the connections right so that we will be able to change the southbound lanes into two-way traffic, so that when we go back and are able to develop the plan that Member Crisafulli drew, we don't have to redesign the intersections and realign the road, which could be a very costly and difficult project.

Mr. Profit stated that the two things we want RIDOT to do is align the Rotary so that if you're coming off the Rotary and trying to go northbound on Truman Drive you would actually go into what's currently the left southbound lane of Truman Parkway.

And secondly, beneath the railroad bridge where we transition from a four-lane highway down to a two-lane highway. We want this to be done now by RIDOT so that we don't have to change any intersections or touch the street at all. Eventually, we want to remove the barriers and plant grass and trees.

Mr. Proft stated that he and Steven Lima have been trying to set up a meeting with RIDOT, unsuccessful so far but they will keep trying. He also stated that he would discuss with Mr. Lima the possibility of asking Mayor Baldelli-Hunt to arrange a meeting with DOT.

V. New Business

a. 2018 Annual Report of the Woonsocket Planning Board

Mr. Proft distributed a copy of the 2018 Annual Report . Mr. Proft stated that the report notes board members and personnel for 2018, subdivisions that were approved, Design Review Overlay and River Corridor permits that were approved, and a list of petitions sent by the City Council requesting feedback from the Planning Board and how the board responded to those requests. Mr. Proft stated that the board is welcomed to comment on anything in the report, however he's looking for board input specifically on the final section titled "Plans and Actions for Future Development".

Member Eappen suggested that when the board set goals, the goals should be clearly defined, has a start and end date, and has a measurable outcome so that when the board review the goal (at the end date), there's quantifiable data to determine if the goal was met. To that end Member Eappen suggest that some of the goals language might be revised.

Regarding the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations, Mr. Proft stated that he included a few examples of things that he would like to get done this year, including the Solar Ordinance, which he has already begun work on. The goal is to produce a document whereby he and the Zoning Officer are both satisfied and the Ordinance is in someone else's hands. He stated that it's difficult to say if the Ordinance will be approved beyond that. Mr. Proft stated that the Special Use Permit and Variance is already going through the process. And lastly, he stated that there's talk about a unified development idea. The idea is that rather than the Planning Board giving a positive recommendation with the condition that a variance is met (*in a case where an applicant is going before the Planning Board but also needs a variance*), the Planning Board would be given the ability to grant the variance. Mr. Proft stated that he personally feel like this is a major change, however, Carl Johnson, Zoning Official, seems to think that it's something that the Zoning Board and City Council are comfortable with. Mr. Proft stated that the change would give the board more power but not sure to what degree--limited to

dimensional, dimensional and special use? He stated that the Zoning Official stated that this Ordinance is a priority for this year, and recommended that the board focus on these three zoning areas for the remainder of the year and beyond.

Chairman Finlay asked if the EPA grant is intended for 719 River Street. Mr. Proft replied yes, the 19 is a typo. He stated that this project will be an ongoing goal. This year the plan is to hire a contractor/qualified environmental professional to help guide us through the process. He stated that we need to draft an RFP beginning in October, and hopefully by the end of that quarter have a contractor on board. Mr. Proft stated that after the contractor is on board he will be able to provide us with a schedule/timetable. Mr. Proft stated that we will concentrate on implementing this project the remainder of the year and beyond.

Regarding the Comprehensive Plan, Mr. Proft stated that the big goal would be to have a strategy/schedule and maybe begin to implement some of that by the end of the year. To also have public meetings and do some drafting the following year (2020).

Mr. Proft stated that the Administration is in the process of creating plans for the River Street Park. Both Steven Lima and Mayor Baldelli-Hunt appear to be very excited about starting this project, which is why he included it. He stated that the building that's located on the property will be demolished and the area redesigned to accommodate a dock.

Mr. Proft asked if there are any recommendations and/or questions from the board. Member Eappen asked if the board would need additional certifications in terms of the additional powers that the board maybe assuming. Mr. Proft stated that he's of the opinion no, but he would confer with the Zoning Official.

MOTION by Member Miller, seconded by Member Crisafulli to APPROVE and SUBMIT the 2018 Annual Report of the Woonsocket Planning Board to the Mayor. The MOTION carried by a VOTE of 4-0.

b. Administrative Subdivision Approved - Lot Line Adjustment for 11-164 & 11-349

Mr. Proft stated that basically this was a small change – a lot line adjustment. He noted that the attached plan demonstrates that the existing lot line was moved about 12 ft. in order to make the driveway width wider. He approved the subdivision administratively, wrote up the decision for the approval, and informed the applicant of the approval. Mr. Proft stated that the findings and decision that he wrote have been recorded in the Land Evidence Office. The only item outstanding is that the applicant/owner must record the new plan within the City's Land Evidence Records within 90 days of the date of approval, or the approval shall be void.

c. Floodplain Training - Scheduling a Date to hold the Floodplain Training Required

Chairman Finlay stated that the board had agreed that it would meet on a separate night for this training. Mr. Proft stated that he's aware that there are certain dates that have been eliminated due to conflicting schedules, however, the training must take place before September 30, 2019.

After a brief discussion the training date was set for Tuesday, July 30, 2019, 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. Mr. Proft stated that he would confirm the date with the trainers. Chairman Finlay noted that we need to post the special meeting just as we would a regularly scheduled board meeting.

VI. Administrative Officer's Report

Regarding the Capital Improvement Plan, Mr. Proft stated that he has reached out to all departments to solicit projects. It appears that Ian was able to get projects from the Fire Department, Police Department and some divisions within the Public Works Department. He noted that the deadline for department requests is approaching. Mr. Proft stated that there is no Capital Improvement Plan in 2018 due to staff turnover, therefore it's important to get 2019 done.

Regarding the Solar Energy Siting Amendment, Mr. Proft reiterated that he's working on coming up with the first draft of the Solar Energy Ordinance, which will mostly be based on recommendations from Statewide Planning. He noted that he will also be reviewing Massachusetts and Cumberland documents for helpful information. Thereafter he will review the information with the Zoning Official, make recommended changes, then forward the draft document to the board prior to a Planning Board meeting for discussion. Mr. Proft noted that his goal is to have the document available for discussion at next month's board meeting.

Regarding the EPA Brownfields Grant, Mr. Proft stated that he and Mr. Lima have attended two trainings on this topic at DEM and EPA thus far, and he's working on forms that are due by July 10, 2019 in order to actually receive the money. Chairman Finlay asked what is the grant amount. Mr. Proft stated \$300,000, all for Phase I and II assessments, none for cleanup. Mr. Proft stated that initially when they wrote the grant it concentrated on Syville Dye and 719 River Street, the plan was to spend most of the assessment money on those two properties. However, the good news is that Syville Dye is already assessed at this point so we don't need to spend money on that project. He stated that RIDEM just granted the city a \$100,000 grant whereby they will fund and perform the Phase I assessment of 719 River Street, allowing funding from the EPA grant to be stretched further.

Recent Activities - Solar Energy System (Fairmount). Mr. Proft stated that this applicant wanted a Variance in addition to a Special Use Permit. The applicant decided to wait on applying until a zoning amendment is passed that would allow such a combination. The applicant probably won't resubmit until the zoning amendment has been approved.

Solar Energy System (Singleton Street). Mr. Proft stated that Singleton Street was a smaller solar energy project that we have discussed. They plan to submit an application this week, in time for next month's meeting to be viewed as a Minor Subdivision application.

Mr. Proft stated that he and Mr. Lima met with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council today and earlier this month on two separate issues. One discussion involved adding a floating wetlands installation in the vicinity of the River Street park that will hopefully include a dock. He noted that a local resident received a grant from Fuss & O'Neill to help the community with a project of their interest. The grant would add a wetland that would act as an educational installation for people on issues, i.e., getting nitrogen out of the river, with signage to explain the process. He noted that this could be incorporated into our plans for the River Street park area.

Mr. Proft stated that the second meeting today involved the Bike Mobility Master Plan, a statewide plan that will be included as part of the state's larger transportation plan which is part of the state's larger overall planning document for the state. The plan concentrates on bike paths and bike paths connections. The deadline for comment on the plan is July 10, 2019. Mr. Proft stated that he and Mr. Lima will review the plan and put together some comments. He noted that he can send the board a link to the plan if they would like to review it and forward him comments before the July 10, 2019 deadline.

Mr. Proft stated that he received a signage application (RISE Prep) and he's confident that the regulations state that he can approve the application administratively. Mr. Proft stated

that he feels comfortable doing that for most signs, but asked the board for their recommendation. Member Eappen asked if the recent controversy between the applicant and City Council could spark Council involvement regarding the sign. If yes, then perhaps the board should review the application. Chairman Finlay stated that the City Council does not have any involvement in approving or denying a sign; the only criteria is that the proposed sign meet all zoning regulations. Mr. Proft stated that the Zoning Official would review the application to ensure that it adheres to the zoning ordinance for signs.

Mr. Proft stated that until the board is more comfortable with him administratively approving this type of signage application he can always email the application for the board's review, if a member feels that the application should be put on the agenda for board review he will do so. The board was in agreement with Mr. Proft .

Chairman Finlay asked Mr. Proft if he would give the board an update on Cass Park at the August 6, 2019 board meeting.

VIII. Next Meeting

Scheduled for Tuesday, August 6, 2019 at 6:00 P.M.

Adjournment

MOTION by Member Miller, seconded by Member Crisafulli to adjourn, the MOTION carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Pauline Washington
Recording Secretary