



PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
Special Joint Meeting with Town Council
December 13, 2023, 6pm
Town Council Chambers – Town Hall
350 East Main Road
Middletown, RI 02842

Board members present:

Paul Croce, Chair
Bill Nash, Vice Chair
Michael Fenton, Secretary
Art Weber
B.J. Owen
John Ciummo
Leon Amarant

Also present:

Anita Guo, Principal Planner

1. Joint meeting with the Town Council to receive a presentation and discuss 2023 RI General Assembly legislation impacting local zoning and land use regulation and proposed amendments.
 - a. Town Council President Paul Rodrigues called the meeting to order and provided introductory remarks.
 - b. Town Solicitor Peter Regan and Assistant Town Solicitor Michael Monti presented an overview of the legislative changes impacting local zoning and land use regulation including adaptive reuse, substandard lots, zoning modification permits, variances, special use permits, and process for land development and subdivisions. Mr. Regan shared that most of the changes are mandatory with some under Town discretion, such as the criteria for special use permits. Mr. Regan shared the intent of these changes is to encourage the construction of more housing and to streamline the land development process.
 - c. There were discussions and concerns regarding the capacity of the Town's sewer infrastructure, stormwater management, loss of local control, and comprehensive plan changes.
 - d. There were clarification questions about calculating the setbacks for substandard lots and modification permits. Mr. Regan clarified that property owners with substandard lots will now get a "sliding scale" requirement for setbacks, while maximum height of 35' still applies. Those property owners would also be able to apply for modification permits based on the new setbacks. Modification permit applications are only allowed for up to

15% of the dimensional requirements. Any modification requests of 5% or more would require abutter's notice.

- e. Mr. Turano shared his previous experience with obtaining zoning relief on his substandard lot and noted the lengthy time it took.
- f. Mr. Logan expressed concern with unexpected hardship on Town infrastructure, costs, and staffing. There was discussion about reviewing development impact fees.
- g. Ms. Tessier pointed out that in the current comprehensive plan, there are areas that call for similar land use regulation changes and the need for different types of housing in Middletown.
- h. Mr. Amarant expressed concern about unintended consequences and possible environmental impacts.
- i. Mr. Rodrigues suggested a follow-up in six months or a year on the impact of these legislative changes on Middletown.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Fenton, Secretary

DRAFT