



MIDDLETOWN
Rhode Island

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN

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Memorandum

To: Planning Board
From: Ron Wolanski, Town Planner
Date: January 31, 2024
Re: Project updates

Following is an update on the status of projects that the Planning Board is involved with, either as part of Comprehensive Plan implementation, or items otherwise initiated by or referred to the board for consideration:

Planning Board work complete

1. **Historic Resource Preservation** - Consideration of potential Regulations and/or Zoning Ordinance amendments to promote preservation of historic buildings (Comp Plan) – Draft documents were revised based on input received during public workshop meetings and Board discussion. During its February 5, 2020 regular meeting the board voted to forward the proposal to the Town Council for consideration. Presentation to the Town Council was delayed due to potential budgetary impacts of the proposed program and uncertainty of COVID-19 impacts on Town finances. **Status: During its December 2023 regular meeting the Planning Board voted to forward the proposal to the Town Council for consideration. The proposal was included on the Council's January 2nd meeting agenda for discussion. At that time the Town Administrator stated that an assessment of the economic impact of the proposal would be needed before he would be able to advise the Council.**

Prioritized ongoing Planning Board work items

1. **Implementation of 2023 planning & zoning legislation** – Draft and recommend adoption of amendments to the zoning ordinance and subdivision & development regulations required by state legislation. **Status: Amendments required to in response to bills S1032A & S1035A were considered by the Town Council and adopted on December 18th. Amendments to address bills S1034A & S1038A were forwarded to the Town Council and adopted on January 16th. Amendments to address bills S1037A and S1050A regarding comprehensive affordable housing permits were considered by the Planning Board during the December 13th meeting and were forwarded to the Town Council for consideration.**
2. **Comprehensive Community Plan update** – Complete draft of the new 2025 Middletown Comprehensive Community Plan. **Status: During the January 11th meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee continued discussion on**

the housing element with the consultant that will assist with drafting that chapter. A public visioning session will be held on February 15th, 6pm at Town Hall. The Planning Department will work with the Finance Office to issue an RFP for consultant assistance to complete other elements of the plan. The comp plan committee previously decided that the transportation element would be the next to proceed.

3. **Affordable Housing** – Consideration of Comprehensive Plan action items on affordable housing. **Status: Inclusionary housing zoning ordinance amendments, as part of the work to respond to new state legislation, yet to be considered. It is anticipated that further revisions to that statute will be considered in the current legislative session.**
4. **Airport Zoning** - Draft overlay for airport zoning (Comp Plan) – A Planning Board Subcommittee asked staff to create a draft ordinance based on the Westerly ordinance, which was approved by the subcommittee and forwarded to the full Planning Board. During its March 11, 2020 meeting the Board requested that a public workshop meeting be scheduled, which was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Status: During the April 26, 2023 special Planning Board meeting the revised draft ordinance was deemed acceptable and the Board voted to forward the amendments to the Town Council for consideration. The Town Council received the draft during its June 20, 2023 meeting, and ordered the public hearing to be advertised. It appears that the hearing will be scheduled for later this winter or early spring.**
5. **Use Table Review** - The Board's use table subcommittee was tasked with reviewing potential amendments to the Zoning Ordinance use table. **Status: The use table subcommittee completed its work to review and recommend amendments to the use table. The proposed amendments were presented to the Planning Board for consideration during its special meeting on April 26th. A public workshop meeting was held on August 3rd, during which the board voted to forward the amendments to the Town Council with a positive recommendation. The Town Council received the recommendation during its September 18^h meeting. It appears that the public hearing to consider the proposed amendments will be scheduled for later this winter or early spring.**
6. **Build-out Study Action Items** – The Planning Board's full-build impact study completed in 2020 provided recommended actions to address the anticipated impacts of additional development in town. With the Planning Board's assistance, the Town Council prioritized several items for action by the identified responsible departments. **Status: Draft nutrient & pesticide control ordinance and policy presented to the Planning Board during its September 13th meeting. The Board decided to proceed with drafting a policy document rather than an ordinance. The draft policy document was presented during the Board's October 11th regular meeting. At that time it was decided that a public workshop meeting would be scheduled and the draft would be provided to the Conservation Commission and Tree Commission for comment. The public workshop meeting was held on January 24th, where revisions to the draft were requested. A revised version will be presented to the Board for consideration during it February 14th meeting.**
7. **Application Fees** - Draft Regulations amendments to implement new application fees and revise application checklists (Planning Dept.) – Amendments approved and forwarded to the Town Council in February 2019. At the request of the Town Administrator, the Town Council referred the proposed fees back to the Planning Board

for additional study, including review by the Finance Dept. to ensure that all overhead costs are included in the fees. Proposed revised fees to be recalculated based on current town personnel and other costs. **Status: Additional information on overhead costs has been provided by the Finance office. Updated hourly staff costs from the adopted FY2024 budget have also now been provided. This will allow calculation of a proposed fee schedule, which will be provided for review during an upcoming Planning Board meeting.**

8. **Rural Village District zoning amendments (Comp Plan)** – The Planning Board subcommittee met with subject property owners to seek input and buy-in for creation of the new district. Given the lack of urgency on the part of the impacted property owners, the subcommittee advised the board that action on this item be delayed. The Planning Board agreed to table the matter. **Status: Tabled by the Planning Board for further discussion at a future date. Mr. Weber is in the process of reaching out to the impacted property owners to determine if there is interest on their part in proceeding.**
9. **Transportation Options** - Consideration of amendments to the Regulations and/or Zoning Ordinance to promote transportation options (Comp Plan) - Following a public hearing in January 2020 the Planning Board adopted the requirement to provided bike racks (and other items) on site plans and forwarded those amendments to the Town Council for approval. **Status: Planning Department staff are researching other options for promoting transportation alternatives. We are participating in the “Ride Island” the to identify opportunities to expand bicycle infrastructure on Aquidneck Island, including a work session held with Island planning staffs and BPAC committee members on January 26th. The group will continue to work towards implementing improvements to bicycle infrastructure and Planning Department staff will participate. Also, the Town Council has asked the Town Solicitor to draft a green & complete streets ordinance to require inclusion of pedestrian and bike facilities on road projects.**
10. **Review of commercial development design standards contained in the Subdivision & Development Regulations for potential amendments** – The Planning Board will review the current design requirements for potential amendments. **Status: During its September 13th meeting the Board established a subcommittee to work with staff to review requirements and propose amendments. The work of the subcommittee is complete and it is anticipated that draft amendments that will be forwarded to the full Planning Board for consideration during the February 14th meeting.**

Cc: Town Administrator
Town Council