

Zoning Ordinance update slated to begin in January

By Michaela Kennedy

At its Nov. 15 meeting, the Planning Commission received guidance from Town Planner Lisa Bryer concerning approaches to update the town's Zoning Ordinance. The update, scheduled to

begin in January, is required by the state to bring the document into alignment with the Community Comprehensive Plan, which was last approved by the state in 2004.

Bryer identified the existing

zones on the island, which are open space, public, residential, and commercial districts. The current zoning system used by the town is Euclidian, or traditional, zoning. Traditional zoning divides the municipality into a series of mapped districts, and then assigns permitted uses to each zone, according to the town planner. However, Bryer pointed out, "Zoning by use generally ignores how much difference design can make in ensuring the compatibility of neighboring developments."

Bryer also pointed out that traditional zoning has failed to adapt to special situations, such as historic districts or downtown needs, making the update "very timely since we're getting a new wave of construction."

The town planner suggested that the community decide on a vision, and work together with experts to craft drawings and images of the kind of development and preservation that would physically illustrate that vision. "Traditional zoning has worked outside the village; inside the village is where we need to look at some other type of zoning," she added.

Bryer suggested looking at form-based codes. These are methods of development that address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks.

She also suggested considering SmartCode, a form-based code which provides an alternative to traditional zoning. The tool includes urban design and basic architectural standards along with zoning and subdivision regulations. Because of the unique quality of the village and

rural character of the island, "we may want to consider a hybrid" of the traditional and form-based approaches, Bryer added.

The commission agreed to begin the zoning update in January with a request for proposals for a village "charrette," an intensive effort that will join the community with experts to create a visual goal for the future design of the downtown village. The commission expects to hold the charrette sometime in February or March.

More information regarding form-based codes can be found online at formbasedcodes.org. For those interested in learning more about SmartCode, go online to placemakers.com.

In other business, Architect Ron DiMauro and associate John Tumino gave a presentation about the review process for development plan applications. The commission has recently discussed using architectural consultants, when needed, for downtown development projects.

DiMauro explained what his company looks for in a building and described the process of an architectural review. "I hope to help the board with the architectural integrity of the town," he said.

DiMauro mentioned some of the building design regulations that North Kingstown considers and how he has worked with the town to originate a design fitting with its character. He showed a sketch of a typical Home Depot alongside a modified rendering he and his associate made. He brought attention to the size of the commercial building and the changes made in its dimensions. "You don't really understand the scale until you go beyond the building and look at the surrounding area," he said.

DiMauro went on to say his background in contracting has helped him to "try to be sensitive to the cost" of construction.

Planning Commissioner Barry Holland asked about the report that is written for a municipality and if the applicant would receive a copy.

DiMauro said it was a good idea. The town planner added that such a report would be distributed from the planning office.

How to quit smoking topic of library program

The Friends of Jamestown Library and the Jamestown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force will host a program to help participants learn the facts they need to help them quit the smoking habit.

The event will be held Monday, Dec. 4, from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Jamestown library's museum room.

Three professionals will provide the information at this lively meeting. They are: Robert Rodgers, PhD, professor of biomedical sciences at the University of Rhode Island; Laura Hosley, MS, co-ordinator, Jamestown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force, manager of Prevention and Cessation Services, RI Student Assistance Services; and Tim Baker, president of Baker's Pharmacy.

This is a presentation for people who think they want to quit smoking for a New Year's resolution, or for people who want to help someone else quit smoking. The program will discuss what smoking is actually doing to people's bodies, help participants figure out how dependent a person becomes to nicotine, how ready smokers are to quit, and what kind of assistance they need. Finally, the types of medications that are available to help smokers will be discussed by Pharmacist Tim Baker. There will be time for questions and discussion.

The program is free and open to the public.



Hoop hopefuls

Former Pro basketball star Christina Batastini ran a clinic for girls at the Lawn Avenue gym last week.
Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten

MURPHY'S LAW

Mrs. Johnston's house (a/k/a "Day Break Cottage") was one of five shingle-style summer homes, situated side-by-side, along the East Passage shore, near what is now Coulter Street. They were designed by Mrs. Johnston's husband, noted Newport architect, J.D. Johnston. Each was unique, and an architectural jewel.

Before the 1960's, there were few other houses nearby, and the Johnston plat was absolutely the greatest place to be a kid. The Murphy, Lareau, Allen, and Mason-Woods families were certainly fortunate to be Mrs. Johnston's neighbors.

Causing the destruction of a home by arson is always a serious offense. Under RI law, arson is a capital offense, calling for a sentence of up to life in prison.

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CONANICUT ISLAND LAND TRUST

Second Annual Clearing Project

Once again, the Conanicut Island Land Trust is looking for volunteers to help with its North Road clearing project. Last year, with the help of about 50 volunteers, the Land Trust opened up the view of the Neale farm and the salt-water marsh separating the farm from the Golf Course.

Quentin Anthony, President of the Land Trust, said, "We have had so much positive feedback in connection with last year's project that the Board of Directors decided to continue the project this year. This year we will move to the west side of the road, clearing brush and removing many of the invasive Norway maples that are now diseased and dangerous. Harry and Gail Chase, the owners of the land, are enthusiastic about participating in opening up the views of their fields and making this stretch of North Road one of the most beautiful landscapes in the state. Our community is fortunate to have George and Martha Neale and Harry and Gail who understand the public benefit of opening these views."

The project will start on Saturday, December 3rd, 2006 at 8:00 am and continue to approximately 1:00 pm. Lunch will be served to all volunteers. The Conanicut Island Land Trust grilling team is hard at work developing new recipes for the event.

Anyone wishing to help should contact Craig Amerigian at 423-1653 or 423-3537.

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