

Planners considering new zoning option

By Michaela Kennedy

Planning Commission members, at their May 2 meeting, scheduled a special agenda to introduce how form-based zoning codes may be included in the zoning ordinance update. The informational workshop is slated for June 6, beginning at 5 p.m., at the library, and will be followed by a downtown stroll with the board.

Town Planner Lisa Bryer arranged for summer resident Sandy Sorlein to lead the workshop. Sorlein is the national coordinating editor for SmartCode, a land development blueprint for planning and urban design. The workshop is in coordination with the Town Council, Zoning Board of Review, and the Chamber of Commerce.

Bryer noted that Sorlein would help the town to learn what form-based zoning could do for Jamestown. Sorlein will offer a visual introduction to SmartCode, with overlaid images of the downtown village. Discussion about the existing character and future development potential of the commercial area will be included, according to Bryer.

Form-based codes address physical forms of buildings and development, as opposed to conventional zoning codes which are

based on use and density, according to the SmartCode Web site. More information on form-based planning may be found online at www.smartcodecomplete.com.

In other business, Commissioner Betty Hubbard gave an overview of the research done by the Shoreby Hill district concerning a possible historic designation for the neighborhood. She told the board about a workshop, organized by the Shoreby Hill Homeowners Association, which will present information about historic districts.

Commission Chairman Gary Girard noted that the association asked the board to participate in the workshop to be held on June 21. "It (a designated historic district) will affect the whole community," he said. "We will have to create an ordinance that addresses it."

James Buttrick of the Shoreby Hill Homeowners Association stood up to ask for the commission's support of the workshop. He explained the role of the speaker for the event.

"Pam Kennedy, who is an expert on historic districts, is a liaison between towns and the state. She has answers to how it works," he said, referring to the process of creating a historic area. He went on to say the association hoped to expand

the audience beyond Shoreby Hill. "Think of it as a town issue, not a neighborhood issue," he added.

Harrison Wright, vice president of the Jamestown Historical Society, also stood up to solicit the help of the commission. "It's a terribly important issue. We get a feeling from the comprehensive community plan that the town recognizes the importance, too," he said. "We hope to have a constructive discussion on the pros and cons of a historic district."

Girard agreed a discussion about whether a historic district was appropriate "would be an educational opportunity for the town."

Also in new business, the commission reviewed and approved the application for the Community Development Block Grant for fiscal year 2007. Girard noted that the annual \$250,000 grant is applied mostly in the same areas of ongoing funding, such as operating costs for affordable housing programs and other public services.

In old business, the commission gave unanimous approval to recommend construction of a new dwelling on Hull Street. Applicant Lawrence Peltier amended the plans to address all changes requested by the board last May, according to the town planner.



Konnicha-wa

Students in grade 1 studied Japanese culture and made samurai hats last week at the Melrose school.

Photo by Adrienne Downing

Land trust receives substantial gift

Fox Hill Farm owner Ellicott "Tot" Wright, as part of a land sale agreement, has given a significant gift that will ensure the pristine setting will not be developed.

"As a result of a gift from Ellicott Wright, Fox Hill Farm will remain substantially in its present state for all future generations," said Quentin Anthony, president of the Conanicut Island Land Trust.

"Last week Tot gave the land trust a conservation easement over four lots with frontage on Fort Getty Road and an easement that limits two other buildable lots to an existing cottage or replacement structure. This easement complements an existing easement over the 41 acres

of open fields presently planted in alfalfa. In effect, with this new easement, the number of houses at Fox Hill Farm will never change, and the fields and views of Dutch Harbor and the Watson Farm will remain protected forever," said Anthony.

This gift was part of a larger transaction in which Wright sold 60 acres of the historic farm to Patrick and Jemma Driscoll. Driscoll purchased the colonial farmhouse, said to be built in the early 1700s or earlier, from Wright in 2003, and the sale last week unites the entire farm under one owner. Anthony said, "It was a serendipitous event when Tot and Patrick met. Tot was anxious to see the farm remain undeveloped,

and, fortunately, Patrick and Jemma were equally committed to the same objective. They worked almost four years to make the permanent protection of this special part of the island landscape a reality. The loss of Fox Hill Farm to development would have been incalculable. Now, this can never happen. Our island is the beneficiary of the work of Tot and Patrick to preserve a part of its heritage," Anthony said.

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