

Commission approves additional building for Randall Art Gallery lot

By Michaela Kennedy

The Planning Commission approved a revised land development project on Narragansett Avenue, on the site of the Randall Art Gallery. The gallery building remains on the main avenue in the new conception. The vote was 5 to 2 at their June 20 meeting.

William Burgin, architect for the mixed-use design, showed a reduction of 180 square feet of the new structure on the lot, and a removal of a connection to the gallery building on the first level. No amendments were made to the parking accommodations suggested in the original plan.

Commissioners Gary Girard and Richard Ventrone were the only two commissioners who complained about the original plan, which fronted the commercial construction on Narragansett Avenue and moved the residence to Howland Avenue. They also were the only two votes against the amended design.

Applicants Allen and Nancy Randall defended the dimensions of the new building design with a picture presentation of other structures in the commercial district. "We are not the biggest building," they noted. Commissioners Betty Hubbard and Michael White, who praised the original plan, agreed with the Randalls and showed support for the revisions.

Commissioner Barry Holland also countered the complaint of

size. "Relatively speaking, it's smaller than other buildings on the island," he said.

A public hearing for the project is set for August.

In other business, Joseph Manning and his development team went before the commission to request an amendment to the nine-lot major subdivision on Cedar Lane, previously recommended for approval by the board. John Murphy, attorney representing the Manning family, said the state's Department of Environmental Management (DEM) noted the under-road drainage system was placed too close to a well on one of the lots.

Matthew Viana of Northeast Engineering said the design team worked with DEM to create a new plan with only eight lots. "Lot 5 will become a right-of-way and will have a draining system on it," he noted. The redesign was necessary in order to receive a state permit. The engineer explained the more conventional system included a grass basin with a maintenance schedule.

Commission Chairman Girard requested documentation that outlined the changes presented by the engineer. Girard looked for assurance that the upkeep of the grass basin was included in the homeowners' agreement, and asked for calculations of the amended lot sizes. He also asked the town planner to review the amendments for final approval of

the preliminary plan.

The major eight-lot subdivision has been named Upland Farm. Murphy assured the commission that more than half of the site would continue to remain as open space.

After some discussion, the commission agreed the changes were minor and showed no detrimental effects to the project. Ventrone moved to accept the amended plan, subject to administrative approval. The commission gave unanimous approval to the changes.

In the planner's report, Bryer announced the award of a contract for services to the town to Donald Powers Architects. Details of the contract include a general update of the zoning ordinance. Updates to be written will address affordable housing initiatives and design guidelines for downtown. Also included in the work was preparation for a public workshop, referred to as the Downtown Charrette, to discuss economic development and regulations.

The bid was awarded on June 11. Powers will meet with the commission soon to discuss a schedule for the project, Bryer noted.

Also in her report, Bryer announced that Gates Leighton and Associates won the bid for development of the land use plan for the Jamestown Schools and vicinity. Bryer welcomed anyone who wanted to get involved to join Rolling Agenda, the grassroots committee that spearheaded the campaign.



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