Development plan is flooded with complaints

By Michaela Kennedy

Abutters to a property located at Bark Street and Seaside Drive protested a development plan for the site at the July 18 meeting of the Planning Commission. The plan for a two-bedroom house on the lot, which is located in a high-groundwater area, was continued.

Peter Brockmann, the attorney representing John Hayes from Wyman, Mass., noted that the applicant wanted to build the dwelling as a retirement home. William Christopher of Roche-Christopher Architects presented the layout of the home. John Braga, engineer for the proposed construction, showed a plan to drain runoff from Bark Street.

Commissioner Victor Calabretta challenged the drainage plan, saying the pipe was too small to accommodate heavy runoff from the higher elevation of the hill. He claimed the plan would add more trouble to a long-time problem of drainage in the neighborhood. "You cannot convince me that it won't make it worse," Calabretta added.

Brockmann countered that the applicant had been working with the planning department to make sure all details of the plan conform to the ordinance. "We can't fix the problem. All we can do is make sure we don't exacerbate the problem," he said.

John Kalooski of Seaside Drive, whose property abuts Hayes' lot on the south side, stood up to object to the proposal. He showed concern that the planned construction would ruin his lot. "Water comes down that road like Niagara Falls," he claimed.

David Gorelik, an abutter to the north side of the lot, complained about elevated plans for the driveway. "I don't like the idea that they are raising the driveway to allow the water to flow right by," he said. Gorelik noted his own lot on the north side was deemed not buildable.

Charlotte Zarlengo of Seaside Drive also objected, saying that runoff water floods across the street and no drains are found north of Frigate Street. "We will get all the water to the lowest point," she said.

John Regan of Seaside Drive, a neighbor on the north side of Hayes' lot, claimed that three wells already burdened the aquifer in the area, and brown water is seen after watering his garden for 15 minutes. "We don't have any data hydrologically in putting a fourth well in an area that already has yield issues," he said. Referring to storm runoff, he added, "The volume of water acts as a shoot into my driveway."

The commission asked Hayes' development team to re-address site grading and storm water drainage. The plan review was continued.

In old business, Jack Brittain of Windridge Properties on Clinton Avenue went before the commission with a new attorney, Donald Packer from Narragansett. Packer said that he would re-submit to the zoning board a modified plan to share parking with abutter Edward Holland, but a recommendation on parking was needed from the commission.

Packer addressed modifications to the third floor attic plan. "We will remove all flooring and storage in the attic, which would allow the removal of two extra parking spaces," he noted.

The building and parking plan received 44 letters of support from neighborhood residents and merchants. The only letter of objection came from Frank Andres of Clinton Avenue who aired "opposition to having compact parking in the public right-of-way."

The commission agreed to continue the review.

In other business, James Thompson of North Main Road asked for a pre-application review for a two-lot subdivision of his property. The large house had become a hardship to maintain, according to Thompson.

Commissioner Richard Ventrone challenged the claim of hardship, and suggested Thompson sell his property. Town Solicitor Peter Ruggiero interjected the hardship issue was a point that the zoning board would address, not the commission.

Chairman Gary Girard pointed out the lot was already part of a subdivision in the 1980s. He noted the lot has a deed restriction that does not allow the property to be divided again without consent from the other major subdivision property owners. "It would be difficult to justify a further subdivision," he said. Girard told Thompson he should first get permission to subdivide from the other property owners before approaching the commission with a plan.

Thompson's lot has a 100-ft. frontage on the property, and a subdivision requires 200 feet, according to the ordinance. Town Planner Lisa Bryer suggested a survey to see if the property has adequate acreage to create frontage by building a cul de sac.

Calabretta asked why the commission was reviewing a plan that had a deed restriction.

Pamela Storey, Thompson's wife, insisted the board give them help on how to address frontage, instead of "hyper-focusing" on the deed restriction.

The town solicitor stepped in and told Storey that the applicant's burden was to come up with a plan that meets the ordinance. "It's not the privy of the board to tell you how to draw up a plan. It's not their job to come up with a plan for you," he said. Ruggiero repeated Girard's suggestion to meet with the abutting property owners first.

Reporting for the Fort Getty Master Plan Committee, Hubbard said additional campground space was made available to the left of the gatehouse. The new camping area includes fire pits.

As liaison to the Harbor Management Commission, Ventrone reported that the harbor commissioners discussed adding more moorings and a pump-out facility at the Jamestown Shores Beach, known locally as Head's Beach. Ventrone voiced concern about expansion of the mooring field. He referred to a passage in book 51 of the town's land evidence records, which cites the beach as a swimming area for residents in the neighborhood.

Housing head resigns post

By Tom Shevlin

Jamestown Housing Commissioner Shirley Dean has resigned from her position effective immediately, citing repeated verbal abuse by island residents.

"I have served since 2003 as an unpaid volunteer, resident commissioner and have been verbally abused by residents and often close to physical harm by these same people…I will not tolerate this behavior any longer and shall end my term as of July 11, 2007," Dean wrote in a letter to the town council.

Councilman Michael Schnack voiced his distress over the allegations in Dean's letter and asked that the matter be looked into. Other councilors agreed and instructed Town Administrator Bruce Keiser to forward her letter to the Jamestown Police for further investigation.

Dean's resignation leaves the commission with three voting members capable of reaching a quorum: Susan James, Valerie Topp, and Kathleen Rushton.

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