

Planning commission prepares to implement new zoning ideas

By Michaela Kennedy

The Planning Commission has set its focus on learning about SmartCode, a unified land development ordinance template. SmartCode is the tool that will be used to implement form-based zoning for downtown Jamestown, according to members of the planning department.

At the commission's March 5 meeting, Town Planner Lisa Bryer noted that creating an updated zoning ordinance with SmartCode would take much time and effort. She reported that consultant Don Powers expected to have the downtown design guidelines completed by next week, and the board would have it by the next meeting. "We're still looking at SmartCode. We're hoping to have that on the agenda sometime in April," Bryer

said.

Commissioner Richard Ventrone asked the town planner if she needed more time for the zoning project. He made a motion to put off receiving any new development plan applications and to dedicate one or two meetings to SmartCode. "We are so busy, unless we give her the time to do that, it won't get done," Ventrone said.

The board approved the motion after commissioner Michael Swistak mentioned it would be unfair to put off anything that was "already in the pipeline."

Bryer suggested forming two or three sub-committees to scrutinize sections of the proposal. Acting chairman Barry Holland added that two or three "dedicated meetings" should be devoted to SmartCode.

Bryer offered a history of traditional zoning to present-day community design concepts. She started from the Industrial Revolution, a time when the first planning of its kind was adopted. "We

have many industrial towns, where houses and factories were built side by side," she said.

Bryer went on to explain planned developments, where every aspect of a community is planned before construction. She then explained urban renewal, creating interstates, before and after the war, and continuing into the 1970s with urban sprawl. "We had a lot of vacant storefronts in the seventies. Mid-to-late eighties, new urbanism ideas emerged," she noted, offering "great designs that have happened in the last 20 years" in a slide show.

One design example Bryer illustrated was the idea of smaller schools. "A lot of school funding comes from the federal level. They try to encourage them (cities and towns) to relocate schools within communities where the kids can walk to school."

After fielding questions about implementation from the commission, Bryer said that many of the

questions would have to be looked at more closely and they could see what works.

"I feel this is really the answer for us. We really are developed in the village, but there's room for in-fill. This will help us guide how we want to develop. We developed our vision based on who we are. The vision will translate into the code for development," she explained.

In other business, the commission elected officers. Holland was elected as the vice chairman, and commissioner Jean Brown was elected to the office of secretary, both with unanimous votes.

Swistak asked if historically the secretary had a function. Bryer noted that "quite a lengthy job description" was written in the by-laws. More recently, however, the planning assistant or the planner wrote up minutes and handled correspondence, traditional duties of the secretary in the past.

Alexandra Nickol was nomi-

nated and elected unanimously as liaison for the Ft. Getty Master Plan Committee. Commissioner Nancy Bennett volunteered for the tree committee, and also expressed interest in joining the wind energy committee.

In a building and facilities report, Bryer noted that the committee was still touring town buildings and facilities to complete the town's inventory. "For example, we look at the sewer treatment plant. How big is it, does it need maintenance, have any surveys ever been done, anything that relates to the building, former use, and future use," Bryer explained.

In a report from the parking committee, Brown said members made a decision to eliminate the no parking restriction on Union Street from the first home on the street, and move the sign down to the first driveway at the community center.

Commission chairman Gary Girard was absent.

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- Blanca Rincon, of Jamestown, has been named to the Community College of Rhode Island dean's list for the fall 2007 semester.
- Andrew Nadeau, of Jamestown, was named to the President's list at Bentley College in Waltham, Mass. Nadeau is majoring in corporate finance and accounting.
- Gary Largess, of Jamestown, made the Commendable Scholar list at Mitchell College in New London, Conn. for the fall 2007 semester.
- David Marshall, of Jamestown, was named to the dean's list at Connecticut College in New London, Conn. Marshall received dean's honors.
- Michael Marshall, of Jamestown, was named to the dean's list at Connecticut College in New London, Conn., receiving dean's high honors.
- Ben Anacleto, of Jamestown, was named to the dean's list at Suffolk University in Boston, receiving dean's high honors. Anacleto is majoring in chemistry and physics.

Picking the perfect kayak paddle topic of talk

The Kayak Centre is offering a free talk on choosing the right paddle at their Wickford location. The talk will be on Monday, March 17, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Having the right paddle for specific kayaking needs will make the on water experience much more enjoyable. The Kayak Centre's Billy Stark will walk paddlers through the many considerations of selecting a paddle, from weight and blade shape to size, budget and paddling style. The shop is located at 9 Philips St. in Wickford. Call 295-4400 for more information.



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"If the Court does not temper its doctrinaire logic with a little practical wisdom, it will convert the constitutional Bill of Rights into a suicide pact."
 —U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson

That was Justice Jackson in 1949 dissenting against the Court's overruling of a suppression of speech via prosecution for disturbing the peace. He would have permitted the prosecution.

Five years earlier, Justice Jackson was in "an eloquent minority" protesting the Court's approval of the forcible internment of Americans of Japanese ancestry. Most knowledgeable scholars now agree that the dissenters voiced the "legally and morally correct position", as opposed to the majority which supported the internment.

The superficial disparity between Justice Jackson's decisions demonstrates the difficulty in characterizing principled jurists (or anyone, for that matter) as "conservative" or "liberal". In many instances, such an attempt at labeling is undertaken purely for nefarious reasons, or out of simple ignorance.

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