

New zoning ordinance rules are prepared for consideration

By Michaela Kennedy

After voting to deny a recommendation for a minor subdivision request, planning commissioners rolled up their sleeves last week to begin calibrations on the town's new model for its zoning ordinance.

At its May 21 meeting, the commission reviewed comments from a preliminary public hearing previously held for the subdivision application located on Prospect Avenue off Summit Avenue. Objections from abutting property owners included a possible increase in traffic flow in the area. Applicants Michael and Janice Dutton had agreed to relocate Holly Street, which was constructed by a previous developer outside the right of way. However, disagreements between the applicant and the town about road materials and design stalled the proposal.

The commission turned its attention to the new Zoning Ordinance amendments for the village. The new town ordinance, SmartCode, is a model development code which will be used as a template to structure the use of form-based zoning downtown. Sandy Sorlien, national editor of the SmartCode, was on hand to answer questions. She emphasized that one of the goals of adopting a form-based code was to simplify the zoning process. "When people come in to develop, they know what to expect," she said, adding, "A lot of this is about protecting the character that exists."

The new code will replace Article 11 of the zoning ordinance, said Town Planner Lisa Bryer. The code focuses on the whole village area including downtown residential areas. Bryer pointed out that everything done now under development plan review should be done under this new ordinance.

"Our existing zoning has a lot of specifics, but a lot is left up to board interpretation," Bryer said. "The new ordinance is more prescriptive."

Sorlien noted that fewer zoning conditions would need to be reviewed by the planning board once the SmartCode was adopted. She mentioned having met with Fred Brown and made some revisions since the charrette. "So much of the public process, the vision of the community is already integrated in the code," Sorlien said. "You get what you want in the code. There are fewer things that need to be reviewed. The public process has already happened."

After the new zoning is adopted and goes into effect, if someone wants a substantial modification, more than 50 percent of modifications to their property, typically the new zoning would kick in then, Sorlien explained.

Sorlien noted that SmartCode has modules attached to it that address very specific things, like storm drainage and new sustainable energy modules. "There's this whole system you can plug into if you want to use the tools in the future," she continued. "There are more and more tools being created."

The consultant discussed the re-labeling of zoning codes. Some commissioners voiced concern that zoning policies already in place might be lost or abandoned. Sorlien assured the board that town laws and variance processes would still be in place.

Sandy warned the town to think about changes downtown that would affect the rural character. She used infrastructure as an example. "Once we put curbs on these streets, it does something to the rural character," she said. "Watch out for garages in the front. You don't want the house to look like it is inhabited by cars."

Bryer encouraged posing different scenarios in order to visualize ideas that could work.

Ordinance changes were focused on the village because it had the most potential for growth, according to Bryer. "We are committed to 140 affordable housing units by the 2040 check date," she told the commission.

Bryer stressed the importance of scrutiny with the new zoning ordinance. "It's a huge change for us. We need to decide if we are comfortable with it."

Chairman Gary Girard was absent.



Play ball

The Lawn school baseball team played tough all season long. Members of the team are front row, from left, Nico Rienzo, Drew MacIntyre, Eric Stroud, Kevin McDermott, Alex Burke, Graham Jamison, and Adam Southworth. At rear, from left, are Coach Bill Piva, Jacob Morris, James Chamberlain, Nick Anding, Matt Rafanelli, Dan Irwin, Owen Heath, Connor Downing, Nick Fay, Christian Ellerbee, Jacob Gomez, Dan Harpool, and Coach Eric Bush.

Photo by Adrienne Downing

Roger Chase Memorial Tennis Tournament slated for June 8

The third Annual Roger Chase Memorial Tennis Tournament, presented by Jamestown Fitness, will be held on Sunday, June 8, at the Conanicut Yacht Club and the Jamestown town courts.

Matches will be for men's doubles, women's doubles and mixed doubles.

The entry deadline is Wednesday, June 4 and participants may register for the tournament at Jamestown Fitness Center, 36 Southwest Ave. or by calling 560-0300.

Entry blanks are available at www.jamestownri.net. The cost is \$25 per player, which includes balls,

prizes and lunch.

Proceeds will benefit the Jamestown Medical Fund and the recreation department. There will be a silent auction at the Conanicut Yacht Club courts from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the day of the event and all are welcome to bid.

For additional information, call Steve Heath at 439-0160. The tournament is held each year in memory of Roger Chase who was a friend, teacher, mentor, tennis professional, and much more to all who knew him. Roger died in 2004 after a courageous battle with pancreatic cancer.

Flanagan on Prout honor roll

Laura Flanagan was named to the honor roll at the Prout School for the third quarter. Flanagan, a senior, is member of the National Honor Society and will be attending American University in Washington D.C. in the fall.

Concerned Citizens plan garden tour

The Conanicut Concerned Citizens are having a Garden Tour on Sunday, June 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine.

The tour will feature Susan Little and Bruce Turner's magnificent landscaped grounds in a park-like setting on Narragansett Bay with gardens, koi pond, and waterfalls.

Tickets at \$15 are limited. Tickets may be purchased at Baker's Pharmacy, Jamestown Design and Secret Garden.



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