

Planning Commission reviews recommended SmartCode

By Sam Bari

Town Planner Lisa Bryer intended for the June 18 Planning Commission meeting to be a roundtable discussion focusing on how recently approved projects related to the proposed SmartCode zoning ordinances.

The interactive meeting was attended by a handful of interested parties. The discussion however, revealed that many, including some of the commissioners, did not fully understand the meaning and intention of the proposed legislation. Nonetheless, Bryer and Sandy Sorlien, one of the consultants contracted to work on the Jamestown Vision project, easily fielded the many questions asked by both commissioners and attendees.

Commissioner Nancy Bennett questioned the regulation for all buildings in the commercial district on Narragansett Avenue to be closer to the road. Sorlien said that the suggested plan offered a comfortable range, calling for setbacks from 12- to 24- feet. This would make the entire street feel "more like a room" with contours and exits that are pleasing to the eye. It would eliminate large gaps created by buildings set so far back that they appeared to be apart from the surrounding businesses.

Throughout the meeting Bryer emphasized that all questions were welcome and valid. "Nothing is engraved in stone here," Bryer said. The proposed codes and ordinances are guidelines that were generated from comments and suggestions made by people who walked the town together during the charrette last fall. Any of the codes and proposed ordinances are subject to change. "That's why we're here to discuss them," Bryer added. "We want to know what you want, and we're going to vote on every suggested regulation."

Commission Chairman Gary Girard said repeatedly, "If this project is to be a success, people have to come to the meetings and be a part of the process." He re-

mindful everyone, "We are using the input of all who are present to write these ordinances. Anyone who has a better idea should tell us now. At the next few meetings we're going to review the recommendations and draft ordinances. So if you, or anyone you know, is interested in preserving the charm of Jamestown as we understand it, then attend these meetings and let us hear your suggestions."

Realtor Bob Bailey said that he thought the charrette was limited to the downtown commercial zone and suggested that the ordinances appeared to apply to residential areas as well. Bryer said that the village development district went from Hamilton Avenue on the south end to the northeast corner of the golf course near the toll plaza at the north end. She added that nothing was added to the original plans.

Bailey also said that more emphasis was put on the compatible uses of Narragansett Avenue and more restrictions were being imposed in residential areas. "Where else has this worked?" he asked. "Has this kind of a plan ever been successfully applied to another 300-year old town?"

Sorlien said that this is the first time they had applied the SmartCode to a municipality as old as Jamestown. Bryer said that the age of the town has nothing to do with the success of the zoning method. "We have to make zoning regulations. This is just another method that makes it easier for us to define what we want and give residents

an opportunity to be involved in the process," she said.

"Why are two people trying to push this on us?" Bailey asked. "What makes Donald Powers and Sandy Sorlien the experts?"

Bryer said that Powers and Sorlien are just two of the consultants involved in drafting the plans. Powers is the architect and Sorlien is the SmartCode editor. "They are not pushing anything on us," Bryer said. "Their suggestions came from input by the commissioners and other people who voiced their opinions at the charrette. These are suggestions that we are here to discuss. They are all subject to change," she added.

In other business, town councilman Robert Sutton talked to the commissioners about a letter he sent to the Planning Commission concerning regulations for private roads.

Sutton said that he was concerned as a resident, and that although he was a member of the Town Council, he was not addressing the commission as a representative of the council.

The letter said that Sutton has been concerned about the provision in the subdivision regulations that allows the planning commission to waive requirements relative to both the construction specifications and dimensional requirements for private roads.

Specifically he said, "Substandard, narrow, gravel roads are much less expensive to construct and much more expensive to maintain than a paved road. By allow-

ing the developer of a subdivision to construct a less than standard subdivision road, his development costs are reduced and transferred to the future homeowner, and more than likely, to taxpayers."

He said that the purpose of the letter was to ask the Planning Commission to consider revising the

subdivision regulations to eliminate any waiver from the requirement for all new subdivision roads to meet all town road standards.

Chairman Girard thanked Sutton for his input and said that the commission would seriously consider his suggestions.

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For lovers of professional baseball and its rich history, the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Flood v. Kuhm* is a must read. Of course, the game has never been the same since that decision on the player's now-recognized right of free agency.

A cause of death for Babe Ruth was throat and oral cancer. That there are still players, coaches, and managers in baseball who regularly use tobacco boggles the mind, and is a testament to the addictive quality of tobacco.

Much of what is written about the inner workings of the U.S. Supreme Court has been less-than-reliable, and/or uncheckable. The Court remains the least known of the three branches of our national government.

For a debunking of a presumed-to-be-reliable book on the Supremes, read "A Tall Tale of *The Brethran*", a very interesting recent article by Ross E. Davies. Send us an e-mail if you want a copy.

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