

# More input sought on zoning changes

By Sam Bari

Planning Commission Chairman Gary Girard wasted no time steering the Aug. 6 meeting to a discussion of the zoning ordinance update for the Jamestown Village Special Development District.

The discussions have been ongoing since October of last year, after the downtown charrette was completed. The Planning Commission would like to conclude the discussions with recommendations endorsed by Jamestown residents that can be submitted to the Town Council for consideration. If accepted by the council, the recommendations would be presented to residents through a public hearing. After the recommendations are approved at the public hearing, they will be drafted into law.

However, the commissioners have been frustrated in their efforts because of lack of input from property owners and residents. The only guidelines the commission has to make recommendations are suggestions from contracted consultants based on resident input from those who attended the charrette.

"That's what the charrette was about," Town Planner Lisa Bryer said. "The whole idea is to give property owners and residents an opportunity to voice their opinions on the design of the town for the Comprehensive Community Plan."

"This means changes in the planning process and zoning ordinances, and we can't make significant changes like this without resident input," she said.

Girard and the other commissioners agreed. "We see the same faces at these meetings week after week," Girard said to the small audience. "I can't believe that nobody cares about what we are trying to accomplish."

Jack Brittain, owner of Jack's Electric on Clinton Avenue, has attended most of the meetings. "All of the owners of the CL and CD districts should be notified about what's happening here because they have no clue. They need to be notified of what your intentions are. It's too bad we don't have a better turnout, but since they aren't here, they should be notified," he said.

Bill Munger, president and owner of Conanicut Marine has also been present at most, if not all, of the commission's meetings concerning zoning ordinances. He said, "It's absurd that nobody is here. The Jamestown Press does a wonderful job but they aren't the mouthpiece of the town." He suggested that a letter be sent to all property owners informing them that their property could be rezoned.

Brittain agreed. "I worked very hard to have my property designated as a T5, and T4 is going to be a significant change. If

you're going to do that you have to tell the business owners. These changes could affect their property values," he said.

Bryer said that Brittain's concerns were not necessarily valid. "We have no intention of devaluing anybody's property by rezoning the districts," Bryer said. She explained that the new Smart Code is adding designations. The commercial district that uses a CD designation is now a T4. "The T stands for transect," she said.

She defined transect as moving from one designation to the next. She said that the Smart Code would define open space as T1, then the next section closer to town would transect to a rural designation of T2, followed by residential areas designated as T3, and commercial areas would be given T4 and T5 designations.

"The present designation of CD is more akin to T4, which does not change its use at all," she said. "T5 is a new designation for commercial that is intended to intensify the commercial district."

Brittain responded by saying, "I thought my land was CD. It was the last piece of land that I knew about that was for sale in the area. CD is definitely a lot different than CL. And now it's CL. It's going to alter property values tremendously."

Commissioner Nancy Bennett said that unless people come to these meetings, they're not go-

ing to understand any of this. "People have to know what we're discussing and when we're discussing it. Whether it be a letter to every household or an insert in the Jamestown Press with a color map, I don't want to just legislate this without having people know."

Commissioner Jean Brown concurred with Bennett and said, "I don't want to make decisions and then have reactionary consequences."

The commissioners then discussed at length the definition of every zoning designation, and the requirements for property owners to be in compliance with the regulations. They talked about what is good for the town as it exists now while allowing enough flexibility to accommodate changes in the future, particularly if the population density increases.

Commissioner Richard Ventrone then suggested making a decision to tell people what the panel came up with, and then ask for people to give their input.

Brittain agreed with the suggestion and asked, "Why not decide a base of what you want to do, so people have something to look at?"

Ventrone said, "We have to offer a basic understanding of what we think we should do."

Girard advised the commissioners to go home and study the changes to the Smart Code and

familiarize themselves with the suggested possibilities so they could be further discussed. "If all goes well, we will have enough public input to turn suggestions and ideas into drafted recommendations," he said.

The Planning Commission meets the first and third Wednesday of the month. "We will usually allow the zoning discussions to be the focus of the meeting at the first meeting of the month," Girard said. "If we can get that word out, maybe we can get more people to show up. This is not just for commercial property owners. It is for everybody who is interested in the design of the town for now and for the future," he added.

## BIRTH

### Dourado

A daughter, Tessa Marie Dourado, was born June 26, 2008 at Women and Infants Hospital, to Stacey (Desaulniers) and John Dourado III of Jamestown. Grandparents are John and Beverly Dourado, of Jamestown, Pamela Grundy of Cranston and Tom Desaulniers of Connecticut.



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