

Planning Commission sends new zoning ordinance proposal to Town Council

By Tyler Will

The Jamestown Planning Commission voted 6-1 at its Sept. 16 meeting to send a new zoning ordinance proposal to the Town Council for review and public comment.

Commissioner Michael Smith abstained in the final vote. After the meeting, Smith said he has not been on the Planning Commission long enough "to know the ins and outs of that ordinance."

No members of the public attended the meeting, which was the last one of the commission's preliminary work. Town Planner Lisa Bryer informed the commission that although the ordinance would be sent to the Town Council, the commission still has work to do.

"When we forward something to Town Council...the Planning Commission reviews all proposed amendments to the zoning ordinance and then makes a recommendation," Bryer said.

The Town Council must advertise public hearings on the ordinance for three consecutive weeks, Bryer said. The three weeks began as of the Town Council's Sept. 21 meeting, and a public hearing will be held sometime in October. A workshop will be held Sept. 30 or Oct. 1, Bryer said.

The ordinance includes lot dimension restrictions in the Commercial Downtown district, which some view as controversial. Some business owners also allege that the Planning Commission added the restrictions after the initial proposal was released.

In response to the controversy, Chairman Michael Swistak previously said the restrictions were in the original proposal, adding that the document is dense and complicated. Town residents did not have enough time to look through it thoroughly, he said.

Town Solicitor Peter Ruggiero, who was at the meeting, said the ordinance also prohibits helicopter landings except for Coast Guard or military use, or during aviation emergencies.

The commission spent most

of the meeting discussing small changes made to the ordinance during previous revision sessions, but no significant changes were made to the ordinance during the meeting.

A motion to further restrict signs on temporary storage bins on residential property failed 4-2. Commissioners Richard Ventrone and Duncan Pendlebury said signs on storage bins were offensive to neighbors.

"You are basically allowing someone to have a bill board in your yard for 180 days," Pendlebury said.

Commissioners who favored letting sign restrictions remain said the bins are temporary and could cause problems among neighbors.

"As far as giving ammunition for neighbors to fight with neighbors, I do not see why we should be increasing this sign ordinance," Smith said. Commission Vice Chairman Gary Girard was not included in the vote because he arrived later in the meeting.

The commission voted 4-3 to remove some smart code from the ordinance, terminology meant to streamline the language. Bryer said some smart code was adopted from a model ordinance, but it takes away the customized quality that zoning ordinances usually have.

"A lot of the smart code is jargon, and I do not think jargon should be in a public document," Smith said.

The proposal will save time for some residents who apply for variances or other relief.

"If they are doing something where no other requirement is necessary...then that can be reviewed by the Technical Review Committee," Bryer said.

Development in the Bay View Condominiums on the east side of Narragansett Avenue would warrant a special review by the Planning Commission.

Earlier in the meeting, the commission approved an extension of a preliminary approval. The applicant, Evelyn Furtado, was not pres-

ent, and Kenneth Littman spoke in her place. He said the implementation of a plan approved about three years ago was delayed for many reasons, most recently the nationwide economic crunch.

"This is getting close to the last time unless there is a really good reason [to extend it again]," said Commissioner Barry Holland. The extension passed 5-1, with Girard absent at the vote.


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- the case in which Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall wrote a unanimous opinion approving the presence of armed police officers in a courtroom during a criminal trial; and
- the judicial hearing in which a Rhode Island State Trooper testified about seeing ACI inmates cooking lobster and dining on catered meals.

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Library book groups announce upcoming picks

The book discussion groups at the Jamestown Philomenian Library will discuss "A History of Love" by Nicole Krauss on Monday, Oct. 19, at 7 p.m. and Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 1 p.m.

On Nov. 16-17, the groups will discuss "Stoner" by John Edward Williams.


The evening book discussion

group meets on the third Monday of the month at 7 p.m.; the afternoon group meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m.

Both groups, free and open to the public, are facilitated by Library Director Judy Bell.

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