

# Planning panel discusses proposed projects under new code

By Iain Wilson

Complex terminology and emerging loopholes in the recently passed zoning amendments provided ample conversation for the Planning Commission during last Wednesday's meeting as the group worked to provide additional clarity on the document.

When the amendments were approved, little attention was given to a loophole that allowed duplexes and multi-family homes to be built on single-family lots. During the meeting, the commission was concerned that developers might see this as an opportunity to create multi-family complexes on land that should be reserved for single-family use.

"Under the old zoning ordinance, we had some minimum lot size requirements for duplex-

es and multi-family," said Planning Commission Chair Michael Swistak. "When the new lot sizes were approved, nothing was done to change the original size requirements."

The commission voted unanimously to include minimum lot sizes in table 3-2 of the amendment.

The commission also agreed on duplex lot sizes of 40,000 sq. ft. in R20, 15,000 sq. ft. in R8, 8,000 sq. ft. in the CL district and 5,000 sq. ft. in the CD.

In the R20 district, which spans a large portion of the downtown area, excluding Narragansett Avenue, the minimum lot size requirement for multi-family units is 200,000 sq. ft. But only one or two lots in the area have this much square footage.

While the commission considered lot size alterations, Town Planner Lisa Bryer warned that

*"I'm not quite ready to say that it's reasonable to disrupt the nature of the neighborhood yet"*  
 —Nancy Bennett

major changes could potentially alter the amendment beyond its original shape.

"I'm not quite ready to say

that it's reasonable to disrupt the nature of the neighborhood yet," said commissioner Nancy Bennett, adding that she didn't feel comfortable making major amendments to the ordinance without the public's consent.

Talk during the meeting swirled around "little A" and "big A" housing – terms relating to state mandates.

The state mandates a 10 percent affordable housing requirement, Bryer said, and all efforts made to reach this goal fall under "big A."

"When we adopted our affordable housing strategy...it was to meet the state criteria of 10 percent affordable housing and to try to increase the number we have right now," she said.

"Little A" refers to the town's

efforts to create multi-family dwellings and encourage affordable housing aside from state mandates.

Bryer said that currently, approximately four percent of Jamestown's housing is considered affordable.

Looking forward, Jamestown will need to balance a strong single-family dwelling community with the state mandates for affordable housing, Bryer said.

"Right now, we're in an economic downturn, and when this thing turns around, Jamestown real estate is going to be very, very high, and I would think we want these things in place to take advantage of that," said Commissioner Michael Smith.

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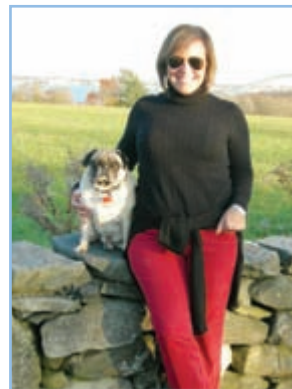
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