

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program  
**STATE PLANNING COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES**

**Thursday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005**  
William E. Powers Building  
One Capitol Hill, Providence, Rhode Island

**Members Present**

Dr. Robert Griffith, Chair	Representing Beverly Najarian, Director RI Department of Administration
Mr. George Johnson, Acting Secretary	Representing Mr. John O'Brien, Secretary Statewide Planning
Ms. Susan Baxter	RI Housing Resources Commission
Mr. Daniel Beardsley	RI League of Cities and Towns
Ms. Jeanne Boyle	Representing Mr. William J. Fuzzily, City of East Providence
Mr. Kevin Flynn	Representing Mayor Stephen Laffey, City of Cranston
Ms. Lucy Garliauskas (Advisory Member)	Federal Highway Administration
Ms. Anna Prager	Public Member
Mr. Peder Schaefer	Representing Ms. Rosemary Booth Gallogly, Budget Office
Mr. William Sequino	Public Member
Mr. Robert Shawver	Representing Mr. James Capaldi, RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Representing Mr. Steven Cardi, Public Member
Ms. Janet White Raymond	Public Member

**Members Absent**

Jeffrey Grybowski, Vice Chair	Governor's Policy Office
Mr. Thomas Deller	Department of Planning & Development City of Providence
Mr. Joseph Newsome	South Providence Development Corporation

### Guests

Mr. Clarke Greene	Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff
Ms. Harriet Holbrook	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority
Mr. Mark Therrien	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

### Staff--Statewide Planning Program

Ms. Blanche Higgins	Supervising Planner, Land Use
Ms. Katherine Trapani	Supervising Planner, Transportation
Ms. Nancy Hess	Principal Environmental Planner
Mr. Kevin Nelson	Principal Planner, Land Use
Ms. Christina Delage	GIS Technician
Mr. Benny Bergantino	Senior Planner, Land Use
Ms. Patricia Greene	Customer Service Specialist I

### Staff—DOA Information Services

Mr. John Stachelhaus	Geographic Information Systems Manager
Ms. Carrie Kelly	GIS Intern

## **AGENDA ITEMS**

### **1. Call to Order**

Dr. Griffith called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed Ms. Anna Prager as a new member of the Council.

### **2. Approval of January 13<sup>th</sup> minutes**

Ms. Raymond and Mr. Shawver noted corrections were needed in the Attendance section of the Minutes relative to their affiliations.

Mr. Sequino moved that:

### **THE MINUTES BE APPROVED, AS CORRECTED.**

The motion was seconded by Ms. Raymond and carried unanimously. Dr. Griffith indicated that the changes would be made.

### **3. Chief's Progress Report**

Mr. Johnson reported that at its January 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Council accepted the Forestry Resources Management Plan for a public hearing. He noted that the hearing has been scheduled for Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup> at DEM.

Mr. Johnson stated that work is proceeding on the review of the local affordable housing plans. Staff is scheduled to have initial comments from RI Housing and Statewide Planning to all of the communities by next week. Staff has had numerous meetings with communities to discuss comments in detail, and those communities are busy preparing revisions. As most communities are including some type of inclusionary zoning as part of their affordable housing plans, staff is working with a training coalition led by Grow Smart RI to offer a session on this technique.

The Housing Resources Commission has formed a committee to assist in the preparation of the new State Strategic Housing Plan. Staff provided the committee with a briefing on population projections as well as the housing need projections that have been prepared for the land use plan. Staff will update them on the work being done in land use at their next meeting. The Commission has also issued an RFP for consultant services to assist in the development of the plan. Staff will be involved in the selection process.

The land use staff has met with staffs from the Department of Health and the Department of Environmental Management to discuss comments regarding objectives and strategies for natural resources protection. Staff is working to synchronize the Land Use Plan with plans and programs of those departments as well as the Water Resources Board.

Mr. Johnson noted that the Resource Recovery Corporation is finalizing its draft update of the Solid Waste Management Plan. The advisory committee is reviewing it, and staff expects it to be forwarded for Statewide Planning Program's consideration in April or May. Staff has also heard from the Airport Corporation that the Airport Systems Plan is being finalized. Statewide Planning is also represented on the Rhode Island Bay, Rivers and Watersheds Coordinating Team established last year by the General Assembly. The General Assembly set a very ambitious agenda for the Coordinating Team that includes development of a systems level plan for the Bay and its watersheds that will likely be forwarded for adoption as an element of the State Guide Plan. Staff has been assisting in developing the scope of work for this plan.

As the State Point of Contact for intergovernmental review, the agency reviewed and commented on the DEIS for the proposed Keyspan LNG (liquid natural gas) project at Fields Point with regard to consistency with the State Guide Plan. Staff found that a number of issues were not addressed and recommended preparation of a supplemental EIS. In Statewide Planning's capacity as the SPOC, staff forwarded comments from a number of communities as well as the CRMC.

Mr. Johnson stated that four public hearings to accept projects for the update of the Transportation Improvement Program were conducted last week. As of last Friday's deadline, staff received 132 proposals from 40 applicants, including 31 communities and 3 state agencies. The numbers are lower than from the last solicitation three years ago. Mr. Johnson stated that this may reflect a number of factors, including better communication on staff's part that projects currently in the TIP would be carried forward, and the fact that some communities have experienced staff changes as a result of the recent elections.

Mr. Johnson stated that "Certificate of Engagement" forms were recently mailed out to all State Planning Council members. He noted that the forms are required to be completed, notarized and returned to the Secretary of State's Office. He also noted that Pat Greene of the staff is a notary, and would be able to assist any member who has the form to be notarized.

Mr. Johnson concluded by noting that last week, Governor Carcieri announced the formation of a Division of Planning within the Department of Administration, to include Statewide Planning and a new Office of Housing and Community Development. He referred to the organization chart depicting the new organization is in members' handouts. Mr. Johnson introduced Mr. Clarke Greene, who currently heads up the Governor's Fiscal Fitness Program to discuss the initiative as it may pertain to Statewide Planning.

Mr. Greene provided an updated handout addressing the initiative. He indicated that this initiative restores a Division of Planning within DOA that was created some time ago, but dissolved in the 1990s. This new unit will combine Statewide Planning, Strategic Planning and selected functions of the Office of Municipal Affairs with new resources to create an Office of Housing and Community Development. Mr. Greene stated that a new Chief of Housing and Community Development will both oversee that Office and serve as the Executive Director of the Housing Resources Commission. He also noted that a new Associate Director for the Division will be appointed. This will raise the profile for housing within the Administration. Statewide Planning and Strategic Planning's missions will continue, but greater linkages between them should be possible.

Mr. Beardsley inquired as to the impact on the Municipal Assistance Program, - if this would be shifted to the Budget Office, and if that would affect the preparation of Fiscal Notes. Mr. Greene indicated that the Office of Municipal Affairs' functions to be shifted to the Budget Office are those involving fiscal matters, such as property taxation. Ms. Schaefer added that the preparation of Fiscal Notes is done now in two locations – Budget assesses impacts on the State and the Office of Municipal Affairs assesses impacts on municipalities. Mr. Beardsley asked if the Chief of the Office of Municipal Affairs position would be filled. Mr. Greene indicated that it would not, as the functions of that Office were being split; however, a new Chief of Housing and Community Development would be appointed. He added that details are still being worked on, and that the next iteration will provide more specifics.

Ms. Garliasukas asked if the reorganization would result in a net gain of FTEs. She also inquired if the Administration had identified any means for measuring the effectiveness of the changes. Mr. Greene indicated that there would probably be a modest staff increase – perhaps one or two, and a small increase in spending. He noted that the impetus for this reorganization came from the Fiscal Fitness review, but that the original idea to transfer functions to EDC had been dropped. An earlier study by RIPEC also indicated a need to give planning a higher profile and to create better linkages between policy and implementation via the budget and the work of agencies. On housing, the idea is to fill a gap in the system. Mr. Greene noted that there is a strong community advocacy, the General Assembly is involved, but the State government did not have a permanent housing office. The new Office is intended to address that gap.

Ms. Garliauskas also asked if Mr. Greene could explain the FTE situation at DOT. Mr. Greene indicated that, since 2004, there has been some streamlining and reorganization in FTEs at DOT, but that, in the next phase-- as the GARVEE construction gets underway--there should be some increases. Ms. Garliauskas stressed that RIDOT needs sufficient workforce to carry out the expanded work under the GARVEE.

Ms. Raymond asked if there are projected savings. Mr. Greene replied that there could be a modest increase in overall spending—about \$100,000. While the overall objective of Fiscal Fitness is to save on State expenses, he noted that the Governor has committed to increased investments in certain priority areas, such as elevating the planning function, where improved effectiveness could result.

Mr. Flynn noted that details still had to be worked out, but stated his appreciation that the elevation of planning is being proposed. He recalled that the original Planning Division had been placed under Library Services – a move that did not make sense to many; and complimented the Governor on raising the planning function closer to the Cabinet-level function. With regard to housing, he felt the Housing Resources Commission was created as a foot in the door. There is a need for a permanent Housing

Department like other states have to address this important issue. He credited Ms. Baxter's volunteer leadership as Chair of the Housing Resources Commission with making great strides, but noted that the time has come for full time staffing to help.

Ms. Baxter agreed, adding that since the Housing Resources Commission was created over six years ago, her goal has been to get a full time Executive Director and Office of Housing and Community Development in place to assist the Commission.

There being no further questions, Dr. Griffith thanked Messrs. Greene and Johnson for their reports.

#### **4. FY 03-05 Transportation Improvement Program: Amendment #12**

Mr. Johnson introduced Ms. Trapani to present this item.

Ms. Trapani noted that the amendment request from RIPTA was received in December, advertised, and a public hearing was held by the Transportation Advisory Committee on January 27<sup>th</sup>. She noted that no comments were received on the draft amendment, and the TAC recommended its approval.

Mr. Therrien of RIPTA explained the amendment as involving three changes: 1) changes to meet federal requirements such as Security Enhancement; 2) changes to reflect actual federal appropriations for FY 05 – RIPTA got \$1.3 million in Jobs Access Funds, and \$2.5 million more than expected for the Elmwood Facilities; and 3) moving an additional \$4.5 million to Preventative Maintenance to help meet the operating budget through the end of the fiscal year. He noted that this will raise Preventative Maintenance to \$9.5 million. Other capital categories are being reduced to shift the funds. Mr. Therrien noted that one other area of increase is to add \$450,000 to the Farebox item to provide the federal share for automated farebox technology; however, the State match is still required before the project can proceed.

#### **Discussion**

Dr. Griffith asked if members had any questions. There were none.

#### **ACTION:**

Ms. Prager moved to:

#### **APPROVE THE AMENDMENT AS PRESENTED.**

Mr. Shawver seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

#### **5. Update: Land Use Policies and Plan - 2025**

Mr. Johnson reported that since the introduction of this item in December, staff has continued to work with the Technical Committee on the analysis and narrative aspects of the plan. He noted that the next major task is to complete the geographic analysis for the plan update, and introduced Blanche Higgins and Nancy Hess of the Land Use staff to provide an overview of this process.

Ms. Higgins indicated that this phase of the project will push the RIGIS capabilities as far as possible. Mapping of existing conditions has been underway. Twenty-five to thirty maps will be generated, and will be made available as a CD at the end of the project. Ms. Higgins noted that, at present, the best data available for land use is 1995 vintage, the date of the last statewide aerial survey. A composite of Future Land Use Plans from the Local Comprehensive Plans has also been prepared. Ms. Higgins stated that it is

important to keep in mind that the mapping generated is not site specific due to the variety of data sources and scales used in the source data. She reviewed three background maps with the Council:

- (1) Map of Developed, Protected, and Undeveloped/Unprotected Lands. Ms. Higgins noted that this map represents staff's best effort to define available land for future development. She stated that the data on developed lands is limited, and therefore, redevelopment potential cannot be assessed quantitatively. This map shows approximately 30% of the state as developed; 30% as protected; and 40% as undeveloped, unprotected. She noted the potential for development or protection in the future. DEM is working on an update to the protected land data and indicates that a slightly higher percentage may be protected.
- (2) Map of Public Water and Sewer Infrastructure Areas . Ms. Higgins stated that approximately 50% of the state's land is served by public water systems and that about 25% is serviced by public sewer systems.
- (3) Land Suitability Analysis. Ms. Higgins stated that this map shows the results of initial GIS analysis to determine which land areas are affected by the occurrence of different factors that have natural resource value or otherwise place constraints on development potential. She introduced Ms. Hess to explain this map, and discuss the methodology for further work on the geographic analysis.

Ms. Hess provided the Council with an overview of the geographic analysis work completed for the update of the Plan. She reviewed the land suitability geographic analysis work and outlined an eight-step procedure developed by staff and the Technical Committee to produce a future land use plan map for Part V of the Plan.

Ms. Hess first outlined the methodology used in the land suitability geographic analysis work, which is the foundation for the eight-step procedure. This analysis is based primarily on the 1995 Land Use Land Cover data from RIGIS. It is a statewide overlay analysis of the co-occurrence of eight selected natural resource features identified by staff and the Technical Committee.

A handout describing the Land Use Scenario methodology was referenced. Ms. Hess outlined the eight-step procedure to the Council and explained how the land suitability analysis results would be used in proposing land development intensity categories for Step 1. The land development categories resulting from Step 1 would be used in future steps to produce various land use scenarios. Potential land use scenarios proposed are projections of current land use trends, concentrating on future growth in centers and corridors, as well as in infill areas of already developed areas, and a composite scenario of all three scenarios for future growth. An optimum composite will be selected for the future land use maps and will be compared with the maps of municipal comprehensive plans resulting in a future land use map upon completing Step 8. Staff is currently at work completing Step 1.

Ms. Hess concluded by outlining the other work accomplished by the land use staff for the update of the plan as posted on the Program's worldwide web page. She noted that currently the first four draft chapters of the Plan as commented on by the Technical Committee have been posted to the worldwide web page. She invited the Council to comment on the drafts.

Mr. Johnson noted he expects that this effort will push the capabilities of the GIS technology to its limits. He credited both the Land Use staff and Ms. Delage of the GIS unit with ingenuity and hard work to find solutions. He cautioned that some aspects of the proposed methodology may need to be adjusted if insurmountable problems are encountered as analysis continues.

## Discussion:

Ms. Garliauskas supported staff's efforts and noted that this could help Rhode Island by providing a platform and parameters for the analysis of cumulative and secondary impacts of transportation projects that many states get involved with via EPA on an individual project level. She encouraged this possibility to be explored and acknowledged in the land use planning process and plan documentation.

Mr. Flynn asked what parcel size would be used in the analysis. Ms. Hess replied that the RIGIS 95 Land Use data is 20,000 square feet minimum resolution. Mr. Johnson added that for future steps in the methodology, the vector data will have to be generalized to a grid cell, possibly of 10 acres minimum size, to allow for processing.

Mr. Flynn stated that since the State has new aerial photography, he wondered why the analysis could not be held up until new land use data is derived from these. Mr. Stachelhaus stated that the State has not accepted the statewide photography that was flown in 2003 and 2004 from the vendor. Quality control issues remain between DOT, which is handling the contract, and the vendor. Once this product is accepted, additional work would be required to analyze land use patterns. Mr. Johnson stated that the original schedule was to have the Land Use Plan Update done by this spring. The information to be provided from the analysis will serve as the basis for the Strategic Housing Plan that the General Assembly mandated be adopted as a State Guide Plan element by July 2006. He felt that delaying the Land Use Plan project until new data is available is not advisable. Dr. Griffith stated that it would be possible to complete the project with existing data, and then prepare an update when new data becomes available. This would also allow trends to be discerned.

Ms. Boyle asked if the data and analysis will be made available to municipalities for use in comprehensive plans and other planning. Mr. Johnson stated that when the project is completed, the final data and analyses could be distributed via RIGIS. Ms. Higgins stated that staff is also discussing working with the APA RI Chapter to get more municipal input as the project progresses. She also noted that interim products are being published on the website.

Mr. Schaefer asked if the GIS system had advanced to the state of providing survey quality accuracy. This goal was promoted in the past as a cost-saving advantage for municipalities. Mr. Johnson stated that the RIGIS data being used in the Land Use Plan project includes large, mostly 1:24000 scale, data. This cannot be used for site analysis such as survey work. Mr. Stachelhaus stated that some communities have pursued survey-quality GIS data, but that this is very expensive, and therefore, most communities have not. A GIS data analysis is limited by the lowest common denominator in terms of scale or accuracy of the input data.

Ms. Prager asked, relative to the protected open space data, if municipalities are being asked to update the dataset. She is aware of considerable activity by towns and land trusts to add protected open space. Ms. Higgins replied that DEM is making an effort to update the protected land database by including land trust and municipal information. Mr. Stachelhaus added that the effort is being led by a RIGIS Subcommittee that includes DEM, and The Nature Conservancy. Ms. Hess noted that, if this database becomes available within the timeframe of the project, it could be included.

Mr. Shawver asked if the methodology took transportation infrastructure into account early in the analysis. He felt that this is as important a factor as water and sewer infrastructure in determining development potential. Mr. Johnson noted that Step 1B of the analysis included assessment of proximity to major highways and transit routes. Mr. Shawver suggested differentiating by type of major highway. Mr. Flynn suggested that future rail transit also be included. Ms. Trapani noted that a transit network is being added to the State's Travel Demand Model - which is involved in Step 7 of the methodology.

Dr. Griffith made the following observations to conclude the discussion. He noted that this project will highlight State and local government interaction. Land use policy impinges on many issues – including water allocation, and local property taxes. Will State policies trump local communities' prerogatives? This Council will have to guide the staff in regards to how far it is willing to go. He noted that Technical Committee meetings are also open to Council members.

**6. Other Business**

There was no other business.

**7. Adjourn**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

George W. Johnson, Acting Secretary