

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program
STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
MINUTES

Thursday, March 9th, 2006
William E. Powers Building
One Capitol Hill, Providence, Rhode Island

Members Present

Mr. Kevin Flynn, Acting Chair	Representing Ms. Beverly Najarian, RI Department of Administration
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. Fazioli, City of East Providence
Mr. William Campos	Representing Ms. Lucy Garliauskas (Advisory Member) Federal Highway Administration
Mr. Thomas Deller	Department of Planning & Development, City of Providence
Ms. Anna Prager	Public Member
Mr. B. Michael Rauh	Environmental Advocate
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
Mr. John Trevor	Environmental Advocate

Members Absent

Mr. Timothy M. Costa, Vice Chair	Governor's Policy Office
Mr. Joseph Newsome	South Providence Development Corporation
Ms. Janet White Raymond	Public Member

Guests

Ms. Annette Bourne	Rhode Island Housing
Mr. Randall Edgar	The Providence Journal
Mr. Robert Griffith	Chief, Strategic Planning
Ms. Kelly Mahoney	Senate Policy Office
Ms. Carrie Nielson	Brown University
Mr. Jared Rhodes	City of Cranston
Ms. Noreen Shawcross	Chief, Office of Housing and Community Development
Mr. Richard Youngken	Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition

Staff--Statewide Planning Program

Mr. George Johnson	Assistant Chief, Statewide Planning
Ms. Blanche Higgins	Supervising Planner, Land Use
Ms. Katherine Trapani	Supervising Planner, Transportation
Ms. Nancy Hess	Principal Environmental Planner, Land Use
Ms. Derwent Riding	Principal Planner, Comprehensive Plans
Mr. Kevin Nelson	Principal Planner, Land Use
Ms. Patricia Greene	Customer Service Specialist I

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Mr. Flynn called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m.

2. Approval of January 12th Minutes

Mr. Sequino moved that:

THE MINUTES BE APPROVED.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Deller and carried unanimously.

3. Chief's Progress Report

Mr. O'Brien reported that three of the four scheduled hearings and workshops on Land Use 2025 were held throughout the state last week. He noted that the one scheduled for last Thursday night was postponed due to the weather. Mr. O'Brien stated that attendance was good with over 40 individuals

attending. Comments were generally favorable, and the staff is in the process of putting together the public hearing report for the State Planning Council. Staff has received comments requesting more time to review the plan, and that will be accommodated by the rescheduling of the final workshop and hearing.

Mr. O'Brien reported that the response to the RFP for Challenge Grants and Corridor Studies was encouraging. He noted that staff held a workshop of prospective applicants in January, which was well attended. In response, staff has received three proposals for Corridor Studies and 19 proposals for challenge grants. Mr. O'Brien stated that the proposals are briefly described in the handout. The Selection Committee will be reviewing and scoring the proposals this month and recommendations will be made to the Associate Director. The Selection Committee includes staff from Statewide Planning, RIDOT, RIPTA, RIEDC, and a member of the TAC.

The public hearing on TIP amendment 1A scheduled for last week was also postponed. It will be rescheduled for March 23rd. An interagency consultation for air quality was held on February 28th with DEM and EPA, and staff will be updating the air quality analysis based on the new projects proposed for the TIP.

In addition, an administrative adjustment to the TIP was requested by RIDOT to carry forward FY 05 funds in the Fixed Guideway portion of the Transit Program. Mr. O'Brien stated that this was processed and approved by staff. Similarly, a TIP Administrative Adjustment was requested by RIDOT and RIPTA to carry forward FY 05 funds in the CMAQ.

Staff has approved the five-year updates of the comprehensive plans for the City of Pawtucket and the Town of Narragansett. Also approved was the last of the required 29 affordable housing plans which was submitted and amended by the Town of Foster.

A Request For Proposals was released for the update of the State's land use/land cover GIS database. The 2003/2004 air photos will be used for this update. Staff anticipates awarding of the contract later this month and work beginning as early as April.

Mr. O'Brien reported that the Economic Development Section, as part of the EDA planning grant, has just entered into a Cooperative Agreement with the Bureau of Government Research and Services at Rhode Island College to provide technical assistance and research capability to local and regional planners as needed to support their own economic development objectives, as well as update their comprehensive plans and assemble CEDS projects. He noted that those outreach efforts have already begun. The 2006 CEDS project solicitation will begin this month with a Request for Interest to more than 100 communities, state agencies, academic institutions and nonprofits. Those responding in the affirmative will receive a CEDS application package with all the materials needed to present a project proposal. The application package for this year is the same as last year's, including the scoring criteria and point allotments. The proposals will be due in May. The schedule will give applicants at least 45 days to submit them.

Mr. O'Brien announced that he would be retiring from State service at the end of June, and he thanked the Council for all their hard work and support over the past eight years.

4. Transportation Improvement Program: FFY 2006-2007 – Amendment #1A

Mr. O'Brien noted that this amendment was tabled at the January meeting as there was a question regarding the availability of the required state match. He noted that the issue of State match had been resolved, however, a reduction in the anticipated amount of federal funds has required another amendment to the TIP.

The public hearing scheduled for March 2nd had to be postponed due to the weather. The TAC has rescheduled the hearing for March 23rd and will report back to the Council at the April meeting.

Discussion:

Mr. Schaefer noted that the issue of state match has been resolved by agreement to place an \$80 million dollar bond issue on the November ballot. Mr. O'Brien stated that, as noted in the Ground Transportation Plan, the bigger issue of how the State funds transportation has not been addressed.

5. Land Use 2005: State Land Use Policies and Plan – State Guide Plan Element 121

Mr. O'Brien noted that the draft plan docketed for the public hearings included changes recommended by the Council at the January meeting. He referred to the report on the public hearings that was distributed to the Council, noting that most of the comments were favorable although there was a call for more time. As a result of the postponement of the last scheduled hearing, the comment period has been extended to March 23rd. Mr. O'Brien noted that the primary issue that concerned the public had to do with how the future land use map would be used. Many viewed it as a zoning map that identifies areas for a certain intensity of development. Staff has attempted to clarify that the map is a graphic portrayal of land use policy and it is not a statewide zoning map.

Discussion:

Ms. Boyle suggested that planners be advised that hard copies of the plan are available upon request.

Ms. Prager suggested that the staff continue its efforts to reach out to communities and also advise them of the deadline for comments.

Mr. Rauh inquired as to how much time the communities have had to review the plan. Mr. O'Brien noted that notices were mailed out for the hearing on January 27th. Mr. Rauh suggested that hard copies be sent to those planners upon request. He noted the planner in Exeter.

Ms. Boyle suggested that planners be advised of recent revisions.

6. Strategic Housing Plan: State Guide Plan Element 423

Mr. Flynn gave the Council an overview of the draft plan. He noted that it was required by the Housing Act of 2004 that set a specific date for adoption as July 1, 2006. In addition to setting five-year production goals for affordable housing, the plan includes strategies and actions to achieve the goals. The plan also includes development guidelines for affordable housing and inclusionary zoning as specified by the Act.

Action:

Ms. Prager moved to:

ACCEPT THE STRATEGIC HOUSING PLAN FOR A PUBLIC HEARING

The motion was seconded by Mr. Deller.

Discussion:

Mr. Sequino, noting that his planner had only received the plan on Friday, suggested that action on the plan be delayed until the towns had an opportunity to review the plan. Mr. O'Brien responded that the plan cannot be released for comment until the Council takes action to start that process. Mr. Sequino noted that the affordable housing plans represented unfounded mandates.

Mr. Deller stated that the plan was not bold enough and that communities that fail to achieve goals should be penalized. He also noted that the discussion of barriers needs to note issues related to State law and planning requirements. He also cited the costs of development in Providence as making inclusionary zoning more difficult to implement.

Ms. Prager said that affordable housing will be a hotly contested issue with all local councils but this plan is needed.

Ms. Boyle noted that there is a lot of confusion as to what counts as an affordable unit and the plan needs to provide some clarification on that issue. She also noted that there is a false presumption that urban communities have infrastructure capacity to accommodate more development. She noted that in many cases the only areas remaining for development are brownfields and these are costly to develop.

Ms. Baxter, speaking as chair of the Housing Resources Commission, applauded the clarifications that the Technical Committee made in the report. She did state that given the outstanding need for affordable housing, the Commission will believe that the tone of the report has been softened too much.

Mr. Rauh inquired as to the basis of the 10% requirement, and he stated that the real needs were not provided in the plan. Mr. O'Brien provided the Council with some Census figures that documented the need to greatly exceed 10%, and he offered to include this discussion in the report. Mr. Flynn also suggested that the Council may want to consider an action item calling for the reconsideration of the 10% threshold.

Mr. Beardsley took exception to some of the comments regarding the legislation, noting that he had never witnessed the passion and universal interest in a bill at the General Assembly as was the case with the 2004 Act.

Action:

The Chair called the question and it carried unanimously.

Ms. Prager reported to the Council that regrettably the CRMC is moving on amendments that will pit affordable housing advocates against environmentalists.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Adjourn

Mr. Flynn adjourned the meeting at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

John P. O'Brien, Secretary

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