

**RHODE ISLAND STATEWIDE PLANNING PROGRAM
STATE PLANNING COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday, August 10, 2006
R.I. Department of Administration
Conference Room A
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI**

MINUTES

I. ATTENDANCE

1. Members Present:

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| Mr. Jacob McGuigan (Vice Chair) | Representing Mr. Clarke Greene, Governor's Policy Office |
| Ms. Diane Badorek | Representing Mr. James Capaldi, P.E. Director, RIDOT |
| Ms. Susan Baxter | R.I. Housing Resources Commission |
| Mr. Daniel Beardsley | R.I. League of Cities and Towns |
| Ms. Jeanne Boyle | City of East Providence Planning Department |
| Mr. George Johnson (Acting Secretary) | Statewide Planning Program |
| Ms. Anna Prager | Public Member |
| Mr. Michael Rauh | Environmental Advocate |
| Ms. Janet White Raymond | Public Member |
| Mr. Jared Rhodes | City of Cranston Planning Department |
| Mr. Ralph Rizzo | Representing Ms. Lucy Garliauskus, Federal Highway Administration |
| Mr. Pedar Schaefer | Representing Ms. Rosemary Booth Gallogly R.I. Budget Office |
| Mr. Henry Sherlock | Representing Mr. Stephen Cardi, Esq., Public Member |
| Mr. John Trevor | Environmental Advocate |

2. Members Absent

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| Mr. Thomas Deller | City of Providence Planning Department |
| Mr. Kevin Flynn | Division of Planning (Chair) |
| Mr. William Sequino | Public Member |

3. Guests Present

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| Mr. Peter Lacouture, Esq. | National Grid, LLC |
| Mr. David Berron | National Grid, LLC |
| Ms. Kelly Mahony | R.I. Senate Policy Office |

4. Staff Present:

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| Mr. Robert Griffith | Chief, Strategic Planning, Division of Planning |
| Mr. Bruce Vild | Supervising Planner, Economic Development |
| Ms. Blanche Higgins | Supervising Planner, Land Use |
| Ms. Katherine Trapani | Supervising Planner, Transportation |
| Ms. Joyce Karger | Review Coordinator |
| Ms. Nancy Hess | Principal Environmental Planner |
| Mr. Kevin Nelson | Principal Planner |
| Mr. Benny Bergantino | Senior Planner |
| Mr. Paul Gonsalves | Senior Planner |

II. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Mr. McGuigan, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:10 A.M, and noted that he was sitting in for Mr. Flynn, who, as a member of the Energy Facilities Siting Board, could not, under the Council's regulations, participate in today's meeting.

2. Approve June 8th Minutes

Ms. Prager moved:

THE MINUTES OF JUNE 8, 2006 BE APPROVED.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Rauh, and carried unanimously.

3. Chief's Progress Report

Mr. Johnson reported on the following items:

- FY 07 Work Program: The Program, including RIPTA's and RIDOT's planning programs which you approved in June as the Unified Planning Work Program has now been reviewed and approved by the federal transportation agencies and the final version is in the packet today.
- TIP: We processed an Administrative Adjustment for RIPTA to the Transit Program to carry forward transit enhancement funds from FY 04 and 05. There was also a change to the CMAQ program that was handled as an Administrative Adjustment, and a correction to a page to repair a typo in an earlier Amendment. These revised pages were mailed to you with the agenda.
- Land Use and Housing Plans: We are continuing to work on getting implementation of the recently-adopted Land Use and Strategic Housing Plans. On the Land Use Plan, staff is working to get the plan printed and also expect to have a glossy popular Summary within the next month or so. Staff are also working to define performance measures for the various objectives and strategies in the plan, and, later in the agenda we are asking you to appoint an implementation subcommittee to work with the staff. On the Housing Plan, we are working with Rhode Island Housing and the Housing Resources Commission staff in assessing the status

of local efforts to implement their affordable housing plans, and are planning some targeted technical assistance efforts, in the areas of growth centers and mixed use development.

- Land Use data: The contract to digitize land use and land cover data from the 2004/05 aerial photography has been awarded to the Sanborn mapping company, and is getting underway with an initial coordination meeting. The effort, expected to take approximately one year, will produce statewide GIS mapping of land use and land use data that can be compared with past surveys dating back to 1960s, although a new computerized interpretation methodology is being used this time, so cross comparisons in some categories may not be exact. Our intention is to bring URI's Environmental Data Center into the effort via a smaller contract to provide quality assurance review of the prime contractors work.
- Planning Challenge Grants: Statewide Planning is using federal transportation planning funds to support 11 local planning projects which advance objectives of the transportation and land use elements. Cooperative Agreements have been executed with all of the grantees, and several of the projects have gone through a RFP process to bring consultants on board and get work underway. Staff are monitoring RFP's to ensure that they are reflective of the scope specified in the agreements. We have also asked key state agencies to designate one or more liaisons to work with our staff and with the project sponsors on their projects.
- Hurricane Evacuation Routes: have been developed and posted on EMA's website (as recommended in our 2004 Transportation Plan), and we continue to work with DOT on modeling the routes and fleshing out an evacuation plan. DOT's consultant presented some preliminary results to the Technical Committee last week. It appears from the initial model results that an evacuation of 250,000 can be accomplished safely within a 12 hour window, with traffic congestion no worse than a normal rush hour. .
- Airport Systems Plan: Statewide Planning has accepted the State Airport System Plan Update for review. The first task is to condense more than 800 pages of material into something that is reviewable. Much of the material for the 5 general aviation airports has been reviewed once before. The existing plan has been around since 1984, and we are at the end of the planning horizon for that, and the Technical Committee and State Planning Council will be looking at a new document and a very different aviation industry. We anticipate introducing a draft to the Technical Committee in the Fall.
- Transit: Staff presented information on the new land use plan, TIP, and Transportation Plan to the Transit 2020 Commission working group. A group consisting of public and private sector from the Providence Metro area, along with at least one hospital and university. This effort may make its way back to the Special Legislative Commission that met last spring and will probably reconvene this year. We are seeing some energy around transit that we haven't seen in a while and some of the work may feed into this year's long range transportation plan update.
- CEDS: The EDA announced eight grants across the country during the period July 10-14, totaling nearly \$12 million. Of that, \$2 million was awarded to the City of East Providence and RIDOT to fund construction of a connector road to link the waterfront area with the Interstate. The EDA praised the project as helping create 350 jobs and generating \$74 million in private investments. This project originated as a proposal in the Rhode Island CEDS and made the state's Priority Project List with the assistance and endorsement of the Technical Committee and State Planning Council.
- On the administrative front: the Division of Planning has been participating with other agencies in the Dept. of Administration to assemble a Department-wide Business Continuity Plan, to be activated in the event of an emergency that prevents access to this building. This involves training staff on computer backup procedures so that operations could resume off-site should such an emergency occur, and assessing the

Division's core responsibilities and assess potential damage should there be an interruption, for inclusion in the Department's Business Continuity Plan.

- Finally, several staff have been involved with training and coordination related to the state's transition to a new RIFANS financial management system, which was rolled out on July 1st. This system is intended to decentralize and better integrate the state's procurement and payment systems, For agencies like Statewide Planning, which has long depended on the services of the Department's central business office, this will mean having more direct control over our business transactions, but also more staff time devoted to those functions, at least initially as we gain experience with the new system.

4. Advisory Opinion to the Energy Facility Siting Board: Southern Rhode Island 115 kV Transmission Line Project

Mr. Johnson introduced this item by reviewing the Council's responsibilities in this area. The Energy Facility Siting Act provides for all new energy facilities meeting certain criteria to be reviewed and approved by an Energy Facility Siting Board consisting of the Chairman of the PUC, the Director of DEM, and the Associate Director of the Division of Planning. Section 9 of the statute directs the Statewide Planning Program to provide the Board with an advisory opinion on pending applications that addresses the proposal's socio-economic impact and consistency with the State Guide Plan. The pending application was received by the Board in November, 2005 and an advisory opinion from the Program requested on March 3, 2006. The schedule calls for Advisory Opinions to be filed with the Board by September 5th. He noted that members had been mailed a draft Advisory Opinion that finds the project to be supportive of the socio-economic fabric of the state, and consistent with the Guide Plan. He noted that the Board will conduct 9 Public Hearings on the proposal and that this public meeting is a venue for the Council to review and take action on the draft advisory opinion, but is not a public hearing. He introduced Joyce Karger, who has coordinated the Program's review of the proposal to provide an overview of the proposal.

Ms. Karger provided an overview of the Draft Advisory Opinion to the Energy Facility Siting Board regarding the Narragansett Electric Company's Southern Rhode Island 115 kV Transmission Line Project. The Advisory Opinion addresses State Guide Plan consistency and socioeconomic impact of the proposed facility. The Opinion has three parts: Part One provides background information, Part Two discusses the socioeconomic impact of the proposed facility and Part Three evaluates the project's consistency with the State Guide Plan.

The purpose and need for the proposed project, which is designed to improve reliability of the electric supply as the demand for electricity increases, were summarized. The location and project components with the respective costs were illustrated. Alternatives considered by the applicant and the reasons why they were found unacceptable were mentioned. Environmental impacts and social impacts were delineated and mitigation measures to be followed were highlighted.

The socioeconomic impacts addressed in the opinion were summarized. The finding that the project would be beneficial to the socioeconomic fabric of the state concluded Part Two of the presentation. The project's overall consistency with the State Guide Plan was then presented after which the staff recommendations were read.

Discussion:

Mr. Beardsley asked why there was no analysis in Part 2 of costs for Warwick and Charlestown. Mr. Johnson explained that for these communities, the proposal is only to re-conductor existing lines, so the staff review did not identify any incoming costs attributable to the project. Mr. Johnson noted that the staff review relies upon a standard methodology to compute costs and revenues, but that this methodology does not exactly fit projects such as power lines. Mr. Vild pointed out that the method is more predictive when typically applied to new power plants and similar facilities that generate employment.

Mr. Beardsley also asked what is meant by “re-conductoring”. Mr. Johnson stated the staff’s understanding that this means placing new power lines on existing structures. Mr. Berron of National Grid confirmed that this was the meaning, but clarified that in some cases, replacement structures will be required to handle the increased weight of the new lines. In these cases, the replacement structures will match the existing.

Ms. Prager asked what the definition of an “incoming cost” was. Mr. Johnson explained that this means an estimated “new cost” to the community related to the project. Mr. Vild added that, as explained in Appendix A, the methodology also generates estimates of incoming (or “new”) revenues attributable to the project.

Mr. Beardsley asked if the application assessed alternatives to the standard structures, such as towers that are painted or configured to look like trees so as to be camouflaged. Mr. Johnson indicated that the application indicated that two types of alternative structures were investigated. These were the double circuit davit structures and wooden H-frame structures. Illustrations of these alternatives were displayed for Council members. Mr. Berron commented that he has only seen camouflaged, tree-like structures used as antenna structures, not power transmission. The H-frame structures require a wider clearing of right-of-way, and this would create more impacts.

Mr. Rauh asked why the existing line was being left in place. Mr. Berron replied that the need is for additional capacity, and the existing line is still needed and serviceable.

Mr. Trevor asked if steel poles were being used throughout. He noted that steel is considered an environmentally-preferable, since it can be recycled readily. Mr. Berron replied that the new line will be all steel poles, but for re-conducted segments, poles that are replaced will be in-kind with the existing. The steel poles to be used will be self-weathering to a rust-brown color.

Mr. Beardsley asked the width of the ROW. Mr. Berron replied that it ranged from 300 ft. between Warwick and the North Kingstown Tap point, narrowing to 200 ft. from there south to the West Kingston Station, and to 125 ft. west of there to the Wood River station. Mr. Beardsley asked for confirmation that no new ROW was needed for the project, and Mr. Berron confirmed that this was correct.

Mr. Schaefer asked if the old and new lines could be combined on a single pole. Mr. Berron stated that this could not be done on the existing structures, but that the double circuit davit structure

alternative would provide for both lines to be carried on single structures. (Slides of the appearance of these structure types were reviewed.) He pointed out, however, that this option was not recommended since a major purpose of the project was to increase reliability. Combining the two lines on one structure makes the failure of both lines more likely in the event of an event such as a lightning strike.

Ms. Baxter asked if the H-Frame structures can only be made of wood. Mr. Berron replied that steel H-frame structures can be fabricated. She asked what the life expectancy of steel structures would be, versus wooden structures. Mr. Berron replied that wood structures have a life expectancy of 40-50 years, while steel is on the order of 75 years.

Mr. Trevor asked how the wooden poles to be replaced as part of the project would be disposed of. Mr. Berron stated that he was unsure of the current disposal method, but that in the past, poles have been shipped to Maine for chipping and disposal, or cut-up and landfilled. Mr. Trevor stated that they should not be sent to RI's Landfill since it has capacity issues.

Ms. Boyle asked what the cost differential is between the single and the double circuit structures. Mr. Berron responded that the double circuit system would cost \$8.2 million or 37% more.

Mr. Rauh asked what the height of the existing structures is, and what the new structures would be. Mr. Berron stated that the existing poles vary, but are in the 60-80 ft. range. The proposed new structures would be about 5-10 ft. taller than the existing structures. He noted that the double circuit structures would not reduce the need for vegetation clearing since the new structures and lines would have to be constructed parallel to the existing structures and lines before they could be removed.

Mr. Rauh stated that he thought the recommendation on recreation should be stronger. Mr. Johnson clarified that this recommendation was based on policies in the Guide Plan which encourage linear recreation, but staff recognized that there are practical difficulties in effecting such systems. Therefore, the recommendation is for the Board to encourage the applicant to investigate the possibilities for recreation. Mr. Lacouture stated that a practical issue is that the applicant does not own the ROW outright in many places – but rather has only easements. The applicant generally encourages passive activities such as gardening and hiking on the ROWs it controls, but motorized recreation presents an activity that most neighboring property owners dislike. For these reasons, developing an ORV trail or bikeway as part of the facility could present issues.

Ms. Prager asked about potential health effects of the facility. Mr. Lacouture responded that an extensive review of this is provided in the Application. Mr. Berron noted that the prevailing viewpoint in the health community now appears to be that there is no conclusive evidence of health effects from electro-magnetic fields. He also noted that along the segment where the new line is proposed, magnetic fields will actually be reduced from current levels due to a cancellation effect of having two parallel lines.

Mr. Rauh asked if the facility would increase capacity for new growth in the region, and if it had been sized to support the growth that communities such as Hopkinton, Richmond, and Exeter are proposing in their local comprehensive plans. Mr. Berron replied that the facility is planned for an estimated 13 year supply adequacy, and should be able to handle the region's growth for a 10 to 15 year period. Mr. Lacouture noted that the facility was designed based on extensive studies of demand

in the region, which are included as Appendices A & B in the Application. He is not sure if local comprehensive plans were consulted as part of these studies, but he does believe that the company's Business Service representatives' knowledge of the communities and their growth was integrated into facility planning.

Ms. Boyle indicated that consistency with the local plans is an important consideration that the Council should address. Mr. Johnson noted that in the past the policy has been for the Council to focus its consistency review solely on the State Guide Plan, and not venture into determinations on whether proposed projects are consistent with local plans. He indicated that the Siting Board's process allows each affected municipality to provide its own advisory opinion directly to the Board, and that these offer the best opportunity for communities to comment on the proposal's consistency with local plans and zoning. Mr. Griffith interjected that each municipality has intervener status in proceedings before the Board. Public hearings are also held in each affected community.

Ms. Prager stated that she hoped that the applicant would work with residents and the communities to minimize visual impacts of the project, especially where it crosses roads or adjoins residences. Mr. Berron stated that community outreach has been a major part of project planning, and that landowners had been contacted individually, and open houses held.

Mr. Beardsley asked Mr. Griffith, as a former Board member, if he felt that the Board would be responsive to a community's objections or concerns relative to visibility issues in a particular locale. He again recommended that the applicant look into means to camouflage the new towers, as he has seen done in Florida. Mr. Griffith stated his opinion that the Board generally goes to great lengths to resolve community concerns and objections. It can reject an application, or modify a project via stipulations to the license, he noted.

Action:

Mr. Rauh moved to:

APPROVE THE DRAFT ADVISORY OPINION FOR TRANSMITTAL TO THE RHODE ENERGY FACILITIES SITING BOARD WITH THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONS:

- 1) **Add, in recommendation #2, language recommending that the Board require the applicant to make every reasonable effort to improve the facility's aesthetic character and to work to address the concerns of affected municipalities in this regard.**
- 2) **Add a recommendation, that the Board stipulate that wooden poles to be replaced as part of the project be disposed of in an environmentally-responsible fashion in accordance with applicable regulations.**
- 3) **Add a recommendation, that the Board consider life-cycle costs and benefits in assessing the steel shaft, double circuit davit arm alternative.**

The motion was seconded Ms. Prager.

In discussion, Mr. Berron, stated that relative to the use of double-circuit structures, the Council should be aware that, as proposed, the facility would be considered a "pooled transmission facility"

meaning its cost would be eligible for sharing by all ratepayers in the New England Independent System Operator (ISO) pool. He cautioned that ISO-NE likely would not pay for project options that add to the project cost but do not improve system reliability. These alternatives would likely have to be paid for solely by local ratepayers.

The motion carried unanimously.

5. Nominations for Land Use Plan Implementation Committee

Mr. Johnson stated that at the June meeting the possibility of appointing a Committee to work with the staff on implementation of the new Land Use Plan was discussed. At that time, two members expressed interest in participating. Staff has also had some ideas on membership and has begun to contact individuals relative to their willingness to serve. He noted a handout in members' packets lists the nominations at the present time. Council rules require nominations to committees to be taken under advisement for a month prior to action. The Council is welcome to suggest additional names, or to make other recommendations on the composition of the Committee, in anticipation of taking action on the appointments at the September meeting.

Discussion:

Members offered the following suggestions relative to additional nominees:

- Mr. Rhodes offered to serve on the Committee to represent a Planning Director of an urban community.
- Mr. Rauh suggested including a representative of a watershed organization such as Save The Bay or a local watershed council.
- Ms. Boyle suggested including a representative of the RI Chapter of the American Planning Association.
- Ms. Prager suggested insuring a diverse geographic representation overall in appointments to the group.

Action:

Mr. Trevor moved to:

TAKE THE NOMINATIONS FOR THE LAND USE PLAN IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE UNDER ADVISEMENT FOR A ONE MONTH PERIOD.

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

Mr. Johnson noted that he would discuss the Council's suggestions with the Associate Director and return with a revised list for action at the next meeting.

6. Other Business

Mr. Schaefer inquired concerning the breakout of funding for Earmarked Projects shown on the TIP Amendment sheets that were distributed. Mr. Johnson stated that this information was available and Ms. Trapani offered to obtain copies for him.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

George W. Johnson
Acting Secretary