

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

**Thursday, December 11, 2008**

William E. Powers Building  
Conference Room A  
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

**I. ATTENDANCE**

**Members Present**

Mr. Kevin Flynn	Representing Mr. Jerome Williams, Chair, RI Department of Administration
Mr. Christopher Long	Representing Mr. Timothy Costa, Vice Chair Governor's Policy Office
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, II, Secretary	Statewide Planning Program
Ms. Susan Baxter	Rhode Island Housing Commission
Mr. Daniel Berman	Representing Mr. Peter Osborn, Federal Highway Administration (Advisory Member)
Ms. Jeanne Boyle	City of East Providence, Planning Department
Ms. Carmela Corte	Representing Ms. Rosemary Booth Gallogly, RI DOA, Budget Office
Mr. L. Vincent Murray	Town of South Kingstown Planning Department
Ms. Linda Painter	Representing Mr. Thomas Deller, City of Providence Department of Planning & Development
Ms. Anna Prager	Public Member
Mr. William Sequino	Public Member
Mr. Bob Shawver	Representing Mr. Michael Lewis, Rhode Island Department of Transportation
Mr. Henry Sherlock	Representing Mr. Steven Cardi, Public Member
Mr. John Trevor	Environmental Advocate
Ms. Janet White-Raymond	Public Member

**Members Absent**

Mr. Daniel Beardsley	RI League of Cities and Towns
Ms. Sharon Conard-Wells	West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation
Mr. B. Michael Rauh	Environmental Advocate

**Guests**

Ms. Kelly Mahoney	RI Senate Policy Office
-------------------	-------------------------

**Staff--Statewide Planning Program**

Ms. Maria Costa	Executive Assistant, Division of Planning
Mr. Paul Gonsalves	Senior Planner, Statewide
Mr. Bob Griffith, Ph.D.	Chief, Strategic Planning
Ms. Nancy Hess	Supervising Planner, Statewide

**II. AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Flynn called the meeting to order at 9:10 A.M. He informed the Council that several members including himself needed to leave early due to other commitments and as such he would take those agenda items that required action first.

**2. Approval of October 16, 2008 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Sequino moved to approve the Minutes of October 16, 2008, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Prager and carried unanimously.

**5. Committee Membership Expirations/Nominating Process**

Mr. Rhodes introduced the “slate of names” for 2009 Committee nominations that the Council had authorized him to prepare at their last meeting. In reviewing the nominees he explained that 25 of the 29 candidates are current members of the various committees. He stated that the four new members would all serve on the Technical Committee and include Mr. Ames Colt, representing RIDEM; Mr. Jeff Broadhead, representing the Washington County Regional Planning Council; Ms. Lisa Bourbannais, representing the Town of East Greenwich; and Ms. Kathy Crawley, Representing the RIWRB. In concluding he recommended that the Council adopt the “Slate of Names for 2009 Committee Appointments” and approve the initiation of the required one month consideration period.

Mr. Berman then inquired if it would be possible to get a freight representative to serve on the Transportation Advisory Committee. Mr. Rhodes noted that he would ask the Program’s Transportation Supervisor to contact Mr. Berman so that they may identify some potential representatives and follow-up accordingly.

There being no further discussion Mr. Sequino moved to adopt the “Slate of Names for 2009 Committee Appointments” and approve the initiation of the required one month consideration period. This motion was seconded by Ms. Raymond and carried unanimously.

**6. 2009 Meeting Schedule**

Mr. Rhodes presented the Council with a proposed meeting schedule for the upcoming calendar year. He noted that for the most part it adheres to the standard scheduling convention of second Thursday of every month with July off. He pointed out two exceptions. These included rescheduling of the January meeting from the 8th to the 15th to accommodate a rescheduling of

the Technical Committee meeting and a rescheduling of the April meeting to accommodate Passover.

Ms. Prager moved to approve the proposed 2009 meeting schedule. This motion was seconded by Ms. Raymond and carried unanimously.

### **3. RI Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Revised Scoring Criteria (CEDS)**

Mr. Flynn called upon Mr. Bob Griffith, Chief of Strategic Planning to present the revised CEDS scoring criteria. Mr. Flynn emphasized that the revisions were being driven by the concerns raised during last year's process and that the focus has been on clarifying the scoring to better rank projects in a true priority order. He noted that the proposal has been presented to both the CEDS Subcommittee and to the Technical Committee. Discussion at each was vibrant, the criteria were revised as a result of the input from each and what is being presented today carries recommendations for approval from both.

Mr. Griffith started the presentation by noting that the proposal had also been reviewed by Mr. Tyrone Beach from the Philadelphia regional office of the United States Economic Development Administration. He then overviewed the three focus areas of the revised system and the proposed scoring. These include: 1, Job Creation and Workforce Development (35 points); 2, Environmental Land Use and Socioeconomic Factors (35 points); and 3, Partnering Funding and Permits (30 Points).

Mr. Griffith next presented the threshold criteria in detail and opened the floor to discussion on those items. Ms. Painter stated that the language requiring matching funds to be "committed" concerns her since securing the EDA funds is generally the first step in project financing and other funders many times are not willing to commit their dollars until the EDA component is in place. She then requested further clarification as to the intent of the word "committed".

Mr. Griffith responded by stating that a letter of commitment from a funding source such as CDBG, private foundations or redevelopment authorities, for example, would be sufficient to meet the threshold. Mr. Flynn added by giving a specific example using CDBG monies as a source. Ms. Painter responded noting that she appreciated Mr. Flynn's explanation but was concerned about the potential ramifications of encumbering such funds when there is no guarantee of a future EDA award. Ms. Boyle echoed Ms. Painter's concern noting that although CDBG funds could once be set aside for long periods of time there are now stricter requirements that force recipients to spend them in a timely manner or face losing them.

At this point Ms. Baxter raised the potential for private foundations and other funders to provide applicants with letters of commitment or intent. Mr. Flynn noted this as a worthy suggestion and went on to point out that what the Council was reviewing was an internal scoring sheet only and that the actual applications would include a detailed narrative. This narrative he explained could further clarify that, although it is preferable for the matching resources to be in place at the time of application, documentation confirming that they have at least been applied for would suffice.

Ms. Raymond next asked if EDA will confirm funding eligibility in a timely fashion. Mr. Griffith responded noting conversations with our EDA representative confirming that they will.

Ms. Painter followed up with a question regarding whether or not the applications will have to demonstrate consistency with the local comprehensive plans. Mr. Flynn responded that they will not and that the process will only look at whether they are consistent with the State Guide Plan.

Mr. Griffith then proceeded to overview the proposed criteria related to job creation and workforce development. Ms. Painter inquired on items (a) and (b) asking whether the criteria and scoring related to “number of jobs” and “average salary” balance or cancel out each other out. Mr. Flynn responded by stating that this issue was in fact a dilemma in structuring the criteria. Which criterion is more important than the other, he asked. Is it the number of jobs or the quality of jobs? He indicated that the long term goal is to get the higher paying jobs that raise the ability for workers to pay a mortgage etc, but sometimes a high number of jobs even if they are low skill low wage can also be beneficial. Given this, he noted that staff and the Subcommittee didn’t feel that they were in the position to pick one over the other and that allowing each to achieve similar points was a compromise that allows applications which do well on both to score the highest, those which do poorly on both to score the lowest and the rest to fall somewhere in the middle.

Mr. Griffith next presented the criteria related to “Environmental, Land Use and Socio-Economic Factors”. Ms. Painter suggested that differing scoring criteria be established for rehabilitation projects which are purely commercial or industrial in nature as opposed to those that include a housing component. In response and citing the recent example of the Mercantile Building in Providence, Mr. Griffith noted that residential project components are not eligible for EDA funding and therefore are completely segregated from the review and scoring.

Following this discussion, Ms. Boyle recommended replacing the word “rehabilitated” with “remediated” when referring to brownfield sites. In addition she also commented that the awarding of additional points to projects that rehabilitate historic structures only was too narrow and that any project that re uses or better utilizes existing structures as opposed to building new should receive the same benefit. Several others agreed and staff noted the required changes.

Mr. Griffith next presented the “Partnering, Funding and Permits” section of the proposed scoring sheet. In regards to matching funds, Mr. Berman stated that he thought that EDA dollars were the only federal funding source that could be used to match other federal grants. Mr. Griffith answered by stating his belief that it’s the other way around and that CDBG funds are the only ones that can be used to match other federal grants. He went on to explain however that staff would clarify this point and make note of any pertinent findings in the detailed application narrative mentioned earlier.

Ms. Raymond next asked why the award of additional points for partnering activities was limited to two or more “eligible applicants” only. In response Mr. Rhodes stated that he thought Ms. Raymond struck on something that should be revised. He noted that the intent of the criteria should be to award the additional points in any instance where an eligible applicant partners with another entity, whether eligible themselves or not, who commits to contributing matching resources to the associated project.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Rhodes noted that he has tracked the desired revisions and would be happy to recount them for the Council if desired but would otherwise request that Council adopt the proposed scoring criteria as revised by preceding discussion.

In response Ms. Boyle motioned to approve the revised scoring criteria as amended above. The motion was seconded by Ms. Raymond and carried unanimously.

**4. RI Comprehensive Community Planning System Assessment and Recommendations**

Nancy Hess, Supervising Planner, gave an informational presentation on the draft report. She reminded the Council that the project was being done with assistance from the advisory Implementation Committee that the Council appointed in 2006. She then outlined the history of the project, how data and background materials were gathered for the report, the various methodologies used for soliciting public comments, the analysis and findings of issues within, and the draft recommendations presented.

Highlights of the detail covered included the fact that the current comprehensive planning system dates back to the adoption of the *1988 Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act*, R.I. General Law 45-22.2. She noted that preliminary system issues were identified in the preparatory work for *Land Use 2025* and from the ongoing work of the Division of Planning. The 2008 General Survey and the 3 Focus Group Discussions (both done earlier this year) refined these issues for the draft. The report identifies issues in 3 functional areas; system-level considerations, process considerations, and implementation considerations. The analysis is based on 5 issues: the Act itself, the State Guide Plan, the role of the DOP, the role of other state agencies, and plan implementation considerations. The recommendations are numbered / lettered by issue number. Each has an action description, a category for the type of action to occur, the appropriate responsible parties are identified to carry out the action and a timeframe has been assigned to the actions. Ms. Hess concluded her presentation with a request for discussion and feedback on the ideas in the report.

Mr. Murray subsequently asked for clarification on timeframes. In particular he asked what was meant by short-term and long-term? Ms. Hess indicated that this is still being worked out right now. The initial thought by staff was that short-term items were ones that could be done administratively vs. long-term items which would require General Assembly action.

Ms. Boyle then expressed her support for the recommendation to change the plan update requirement from every five years to every ten. She noted that it takes a lot of staff time to update the plans once every 5 years and because of this it seems that once they have completed their 5 year update it's time to prepare for the next 5 year update. Ms. Boyle then went on to add that the specific time frames for ten year update should be coordinated with the release of decennial census data so as to ensure that the plans are based on current data sources.

Discussion next turned to the recommendation to require local Planning Boards to do annual implementation reports. The Town of South Kingstown and their Annual Growth Program reports were held up as an exemplary model. Mr. Murray responded by explaining the Town's Program in detail. He also explained that the system has recently been changed in recognition that the annual reporting requirements were simply too onerous because they took away from the time available to actually do the planning that they were to be reporting on. Discussion on this topic ensued but in the end there appeared to be consensus that implementation reports should only be required at the half way point between the recommended ten year updates.

Mr. Berman next asked how issues such as climate change and sea-level rise could be addressed. Staff responded by noting that the current system allows for municipalities to incorporate such content into their plans but does not require it to be specifically addressed. Staff then acknowledged the concern and committed to putting more thought into subject prior to it coming back before the Technical Committee and the State Planning Council.

In concluding this portion of the discussion Mr. Rhodes explained to the Council that this was an informational presentation, that formal action of the Council was not required at this time, that staff would greatly appreciate any written comments or additional thoughts that members would like to share offline, and that at least one if not two or more entire meetings would be dedicated to review and approval of this draft document at some point in the near future. Mr. Rhodes thanked Ms. Hess for her presentation and moved on to deliver the Chief's Report.

**7. Chief's Report**

Mr. Rhodes began his Chief's Report by focusing on Personnel Issues. He was pleased this time around to be bringing the council good news on this front. He announced that on October 31, the Associate Director appeared before the Governor's Executive Hiring Committee and received approval to fill six positions. These included: a new Chief's position for the proposed office of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning; a Principal Accountant position to oversee the Program's finances; refilling of the RIGIS Coordinator position vacated by John Stackelhouse; two Supervising Planner positions; and a Principle Planner position.

Mr. Rhodes went on to inform the Council that the hiring processes for the Accountant, RIGIS, one of the Supervising Planner and the Principal planner positions were underway. He explained that the application deadline for all but the RIGIS position was yesterday and that the deadline for the RIGIS position is the 18<sup>th</sup>. He noted that there were still a few issues that staff was trying to resolve relating to the other two positions and that in the meantime they would be doing all that they could to formally complete as many hires as possible while they still have the opportunity to do so.

In addition Mr. Rhodes also noted that the Program was in the process of reviewing and scoring 23 Open Space Grant applications; that the challenge grant quarterly reporting requirements had been streamlined with respect to required financial documentation; and that only one response to the Division's Air Quality and Travel Demand Modeling RFP had been received and that a new contract should be in place by January 1, 2009.

Mr. Rhodes next asked if Mr. Shawver would be willing to give the Council a brief update on the recent activities of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Panel on Transportation Funding. Mr. Shawver obliged by highlighting the process that was undertaken, and the content of the draft report which is available online. In concluding his comment Mr. Shawver was very appreciative of the assistance provided by Statewide Planning's Supervising Planner Katherine Trapani. He added that Katherine helped tremendously and is to be applauded for her efforts.

**8. Other Business**

Under other business Mr. Flynn acknowledged and congratulated Mr. Sequino who was recently presented with the Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council's award for Local Official of the Year.

9. **Adjourn**

There being no other business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 11:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared L. Rhodes, II  
Secretary