

FINAL MINUTES

**The Charlestown Planning Commission Held a
Special Meeting on Wednesday January 10, 2018 @ 7:00 PM
Charlestown Town Hall, 4540 South County Trail, Charlestown, RI 02813**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was CALLED TO ORDER by Chair, Ruth Platner.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ruth Platner	Chairwoman	Present	
Barbara A. Heavers	Commissioner	Present	
Lewis E. Johnson	Vice- Chair	Present	
Sherry D. Krupka	Commissioner	Present	
Erin P. Russell	Commissioner	Present	
Frances M. Topping	Alternate #1	Present	

Also present was Ms. Weidman; Town Planner, Ms. VanSlyke; Town Council Liaisons, and Mr. Petrarca; Town Solicitor.

2. Roll Call

3. Minutes Approval

A. Discussion and/or Potential Action and/or Vote(S) Concerning: Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes for December 20, 2017 @7:00 PM

Motion

A motion was made by Ms. Russell, seconded by Ms. Heavers to approve the minutes as amended.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Erin P. Russell
SECONDER:	Barbara A. Heavers, Commissioner
AYES:	Platner, Heavers, Johnson, Krupka, Russell
EXCUSED:	Topping

4. Advisories

A. Discussion and/or Potential Action and/or Vote(S) Concerning: Clear River Energy Center Proposed Water Use from the Lower Wood Watershed report by ESS Group, Inc. dated October 23, 2017; Review, Discuss and Vote on Advisory Opinion to the RI Energy Facility Siting Board.

Ms. Weidman stated to the Planning Commission that the Proposed Water Use from the Lower Wood Water shed report is the document that is submitted into the public record justifying the contract with the Indian Tribe to take water and ship it to Burrillville. Ms. Weidman made an analysis of the inadequacy of the material as to how the water withdrawal would actually affect the aquifer, land use impacts, traffic, and other things of that nature. She said the memo that she put together addresses site plan issues, traffic, wetlands, hydrology, wildlife habitat, consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, consistency with the State Guide Plan, and use of the tribal conservation lands in general. Ms. Weidman then welcomed any thoughts from the Planning Commission.

The purpose of the hearing, with the Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB) she said, is to specifically determine whether the supplemental water plan (which is the document) has sufficient detail for the board to determine whether or not this supplemental water supply plan should be dismissed. The hearing is scheduled for January 30th.

Discussion ensued and then the group began to go through the document. Dr. Johnson had documented some concerns he had and went through the following pages for the Commission:

Page 1-

"reduces the overall water consumption of the Facility by more than 90 percent of that required to cool electric generating plants using more traditional wet cooling tower systems."

Dr. Johnson's Comment - "This is a distraction from the issue. Right now Charlestown water to cool electric generating systems is zero."

"The Town of Johnston water supply will fully meet the water requirements of the Facility under all conditions of operation."

Dr. Johnson's Comment - "Not true, or no back up would be needed"

Page 2-

"A modern energy efficient gas fired combined cycle electric generating facility is not the classical power plant of the past" " water used and wastewater produced have been significantly reduced, compared to older generation technologies."

Dr. Johnson's Comment- "This is a distraction. Large amounts of water permanently removed from the watershed, traffic with noise and diesel exhaust, and wear and tear on the roads and possible water spillage on the roads are the issue, not bragging rights of power plant efficiency."

Page 3-

"CREC has significant on-site water storage in two tanks, the Fire Water/Service Water storage tank whose capacity is 1,050,000. gallons and the Demineralized Water storage tank whose capacity is 1,850,000 gallons."

"the Facility could run on natural gas for more than 3 months without any water deliveries"

Dr. Johnson's Comment-"This is a distraction from the potential 15,000 gallons plus per day of water permanently removed from the Lower Wood Aquifer Watershed. These tanks aren't a water source in place of Charlestown; they are tanks Charlestown could potentially have to replenish.

"Operation of the evaporative coolers requires an additional water use of up to approximately 4,600 gallons per hour"

Dr. Johnson's Comment - 4-6 hours a day is 18, 400.-27,600. gallons more per day. 24 hrs = 110,400 per day.

Page 4-

CREC's Projected Water Draw from its Water Source - Total Gallons: 11, 556,800

Dr. Johnson's Comment "The report is a distraction after misdirection by not drawing more attention to the bottom line: a yearly water depletion of 11, 556.800 gallons (and that is if "projections" are accurate)."

Page 5-

*"Table one presents a conservative estimate of the total annual water use by the Facility through a typical operating year..." "It is possible that the water required to meet this re-fill event could be sourced from the Narragansett Tribe's proposed water well..." "is approximately 2.2 million gallons plus the normal daily requirements of the Facility over the approximately 25 to 30- day event." From **Table 1** and the above analysis CREC's daily draw on the NIT well to support plant operations is 15,840 gpd in the spring, fall and winter months, 18,720 gpd in the summer months (mid-June to mid- September), increases to a maximum total of 55,520 gpd in the summer months if the Facility utilizes its evaporative coolers and rises to a maximum of 104,000 gpd during a winter/spring replenishment event if and only the CREC Facility was required to operate on distillate oil."*

Dr. Johnson's Comment "A balanced report would provide both a conservative estimate and a maximum possible water estimate so the reader can analyze "real" numbers rather than a conservative estimate. " The report misleads when it presents 15-19,000 gpd as the withdrawal, but after admitting in the previous paragraph that 2.2 million gallons may be needed to refill storage tanks, it divides this number to end up with a less obvious sounding number, 104,000 gpd is "huge". "

Page 9-

"The USGS Water Use and Availability Report notes that 85% of water used by domestic populations on septic systems (i.e., OWTS) was returned to groundwater,

Dr. Johnson's Comment- "An important reason why massive water withdrawal from the watershed is not sustainable."

Page 11- " Population projections by the state of Rhode Island Statewide Planning Office (2013) for the three towns that currently obtain water from this sub-watershed (**Table 2** summarizes this information)

Dr. Johnson's Comment- " The report has no contingency plan in case these projections prove to be wrong, or the available water supply changes, such as by prolonged drought, or this NIT aquifer withdrawal.

Page 13-

"The commercial, industrial and agricultural water usage was assumed to remain constant. This assumption is supported by the Town of Charlestown 1991 Comprehensive Plan which states "to reflect a desire to conserve open space and rural resources and to protect community character..."

Dr. Johnson's Comment- "A wrong assumption leads to a wrong conclusion. The comp plan does not require the 3 mentioned water uses to remain constant. What it does state is a desire to conserve rural resources. The proposed removal of huge amounts of water from the watershed does not conserve rural resources; it depletes them. For this reason the proposed is not supported by the Comp Plan, but is against the stated goals of the Comp Plan."

Page 15- "Information is consistent with the statement in Natural Recourses section of the Town of Charlestown's 1991 Comprehensive Plan that "the reservoirs could support a population of 20,000 people, supplying 2 to 3 million gallons per day"."

Dr. Johnson's Comment- Here the report is particularly misleading because it neglects to point out that we have significantly more than 20,000 people in Charlestown every summer. In addition, the Water Resources Board saw the need to buy a water supply because sea level rise is causing salt water infiltration into drinking water wells.

Page 17- "Groundwater flow on the Kenyon Piece Landfill site is anticipated to be towards the northwest and the Pawcatuck River."

Dr. Johnson's Comment- "The anticipated groundwater flow direction is an assumption. If you can't prove groundwater flow direction then it is misleading to draw a conclusion without a basis in fact."

Page 19- " a simple analysis of the potential capture zone, in particular the downgradient stagnation point of the capture zone, was performed using conventional capture zone analysis" "as assumed groundwater flow gradient of 0.02 feet/foot and a withdrawal rate of 104,000 gpd..." "Ground-water development in the Wood River Junction area would be influenced by the contaminated ground water but **probably** not enough to preclude development. **If** pumping rates of new water-supply wells were limited to about 0.25 Mgal/d, **excessive** intake of contamination ground water could be avoided."

Dr. Johnson's Comment- "I don't do much analysis of the downgradient stagnation point of the capture zone... but we have an assumed withdrawal of 104,000 gpd. There is no control over, no monitoring of, or guarantee of the upper limit of water withdrawal being 104,000 gpd. 3 key words in the sentence "Probably", "if" and "excessive ". Public health, safety, and welfare is best protected by having no nuclear contamination, so the word excessive is meaningless. Also there is no control over the limit of water withdrawal, so the number of 0.25 m/gol/d is an arbitrary number. The real number is unknown. "

Page 20- "These estimates were developed with the Cooper-Jacob Approximation of the Theis equation using the Groundwater software.com on-line calculator."

Dr. Johnson Comment- " In a drought year in the 1990's, the Westerly Sun reported that the Town of Westerly implemented an outdoor watering ban after water levels in several town wells dropped 5 feet over the course of a summer weekend. The ESS group writes a complex sounding sentence to mislead the reader from a simple truth: continued large withdrawals of water from wells can dramatically lower groundwater levels, and much more, when the water withdrawn is trucked out of the watershed."

Page 21- Conclusions.

Dr. Johnson Comment- "The last 5 bullet points have been shown to not necessarily be accurate conclusion based on the 16 points outlined.

Ms. Platner then talked about the impact on wells and that past applicants would hire a hydrologist to refute what the neighbors' concerns were. She said there is so much water that's falling on Charlestown in the form of precipitation every year and a hydrologist never proves anything, but their arguments are so convincing that the neighbors never succeed with the arguments because there is nothing they can prove, so she does not feel they should put a lot of their focus on the wells. When that is brought up, those are good arguments as peoples' wells do get impacted, but no one really knows how the water is moving and there are disputes between the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) and others that the water that's falling on the moraine is going under the coastal ponds and so they can't solve those arguments. She said you can't get the hydrologist to prove the concern. Ms. Platner stated that water levels on wetlands are very important and it doesn't take much to make a difference.

Discussion ensued and Mr. Petrarca noted to the Planning Commission that they should consider what they need to know about the proposal to make any kind of determination or conclusion. He said they have what has been presented publicly as the plan and they have heard what is lacking. Mr. Petrarca stated that Ms. Weidman's memo sets a good foundation and this is the opportunity to include some thoughts they have.

Ms. Platner replied that the Energy Facility Siting Board (EFSB) has total jurisdiction anyway, so it doesn't matter that it's tribal land.

Ms. Weidman noted that she feels they should include some of Dr. Johnson's comments in the advisory, such as the quality of the study and that the efficiency of the plant does not negate the impact of the water withdrawal.

Ms. Platner replied that the Census data for year round population and the summer population is greater than they say the maximum is ever going to be.

Ms. Weidman noted that the town hired a hydrologist and asked Mr. Petrarca if they have responded with any review or conclusions.

Mr. Petrarca replied that they do not have the final conclusions yet.

Ms. Topping stated that the hydrological estimate should not be just on whether there is currently sufficient water, it should also be on the impact of any draw down.

The Planning Commission then discussed their final conclusions regarding the site, traffic, wetlands, hydrology, and wildlife habitat.

Motion

Motion was made by Ms. Krupka to delegate to the Planner to finish the advisory based on what they have seen and the comments that have been made during the meeting, and using information from Dr. Johnson and qualifying it with something, so they know that it is not an analysis and to authorize the Chair to sign it on the behalf of the Commission.

Motion made by Ms. Krupka, seconded by Ms. Heavers. All in favor. Vote was unanimous

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Sherry D. Krupka
SECONDER:	Barbara A. Heavers, Commissioner
AYES:	Platner, Heavers, Johnson, Krupka, Russell
EXCUSED:	Topping

5. Comprehensive Plan Update

A. Review and Discussion of Comprehensive Plan Draft Chapters

Ms. Weidman noted that the last thing they are doing on the Natural Resources chapter is a table with all of the conservation lands and creating a new map called "Conservation Lands". She said that Ms. Platner, Ms. VanSlyke, Mr. McCandless; GIS Manager and herself discussed this last week. The table and map will include an actual inventory of the Federal, State and town owned protected lands, privately protected lands, such as those owned by The Nature Conservancy, Audubon and Charlestown Land Trust, and all conservation easements on private land.

The Planning Commission then went through all the pages of the Natural Resources Final Draft; December 29, 2017 chapter and made some minor edits.

6. Adjournment

Motion

A motion was made by Ms. Krupka, seconded by Ms. Russell to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. Vote was unanimous.

Adjournment took place at 9:56 p.m.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Sherry D. Krupka
SECONDER:	Erin P. Russell
AYES:	Platner, Heavers, Johnson, Krupka, Russell
EXCUSED:	Topping

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Beauchaine, Planning Commission Clerk