

DRAFT MINUTES

The Charlestown Planning Commission Held a Special Meeting on Wednesday March 14, 2018 @ 7:00 PM Charlestown Town Hall, 4540 South County Trail, Charlestown, RI 02813

1. Call to Order

The meeting was CALLED TO ORDER 7:10 p.m. by Chair, Ruth Platner.

1. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Kathryn M. O'Connor	Alternate #2	Present	
Ruth Platner	Chairwoman	Present	
Barbara A. Heavers	Commissioner	Absent	
Lewis E. Johnson	Vice- Chair	Present	
Sherry D. Krupka	Commissioner	Present	
Erin P. Russell	Commissioner	Present	
Frances M. Topping	Alternate #1	Present	

Also in attendance was Ms. Weidman, Town Planner, Mr. Murray, former Town Planner for South Kingstown and Mr. Tremblay, Town Councillor.

Ms. Van Slyke was absent.

2. Minutes Approval

A. Discussion and/or potential action and/or vote (s) concerning: Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes for January 24, 2018 @7:00 PM

Motion

A motion was made by Ms. Krupka, seconded by Ms. Russell to approve the minutes of January 24, 2018. Ms. Platner, Dr. Johnson, Ms. Krupka, Ms. Russell, and Ms. Topping were all in favor. Dr. O'Connor abstained. The motion passed with five (5) concurring votes and one (1) abstention.

RESULT:	APPROVED [5 TO 0]
MOVER:	Sherry D. Krupka, Commissioner
SECONDER:	Erin P. Russell, Commissioner
AYES:	Platner, Johnson, Krupka, Russell, Topping
ABSTAIN:	O'Connor
ABSENT:	Heavers

3. Comprehensive Plan Update

A. Review and Discussion of Comprehensive Plan draft chapters.

Ms. Weidman introduced Mr. Vin Murray who will assist with the Comprehensive Plan a couple of days per week on a temporary basis. Mr. Murray began with the Draft Housing Choice Chapter.

Mr. Murray stated that he was the previous Town Planner for the Town of South Kingstown and has begun with a little study of the community and the differences of the neighboring communities. Some of his general thoughts about what he would kind of see as an approach. Some of the things that

would be important to discuss is the local philosophy and desires about housing and some of the limitations that might be present for good reason such as environment, lack of infrastructure and the legacy of how land use evolved in the community. He noted that he noticed that seasonal housing is about a third of the housing stock and it is interesting there seems to be a lot of conversion from seasonal to full time and every time one of those becomes a full time housing, it counts against the 10%. Mr. Murray stated that he feels that the housing element should also talk about the successes about the community and Charlestown's commitment to housing. He said he feels Charlestown is unique for a small community such as with the bond issue as he feels that is a big thing for a small town. An example Mr. Murray gave was the "Churchwoods" major land development project and that it was a tremendous success shows the tenacity and persistence on the part of the community. He feels that should be showcased in the housing element in a section that talks about affordable housing.

Mr. Murray then brought up growth management and Ms. Weidman wondered if they could find out where the tear downs are happening.

Mr. Murray replied that it might be interesting to look at to see if it yields anything profound.

Ms. Platner noted that the state looks at the percentage of who are paying more than 30% but they have some housing that are million dollar homes and if they are paying more than 30% income. She said if one is making half a million dollars a year, there is no problem paying 40 % of their income on housing.

Ms. Topping wondered about the housing that is in the affordable range which does not count as affordable housing and is that percentage cost burdened.

Mr. Murray replied that there is practical affordability that doesn't meet the legal definition.

Mr. Murray talked about the housing stock in the community and that it is mostly single family and that it seems unlikely to change over the years in any dramatic fashion. He then noted some of the interesting things the town has done such as the traditional village district (TVD) and planned development district (gravel bank).

Ms. Weidman noted that they talked about eliminating the planned development district.

Mr. Murray stated that there are some good things in the draft that could be incorporated, but to some degree would be to try an approach it with a simpler message and not have too much data as it needs to be assessable for people to look at it and also useful for its purposes. He said he spent a bit of time gathering some of the data sources that would be necessary for the planning document and also looking at the population chapter as some of that needs to be refreshed as well. Some things should be stated specifically in the housing element beyond what the state is looking for but for the community purposes as well.

Discussion ensued about affordable housing and Mr. Murray suggested not using the terminology "Growth Centers".

Ms. Platner replied that they have been calling them villages.

Mr. Murray replied that villages are good building blocks for the Comprehensive plan as they tend to be a little more concentrated. In those areas there is some value for new use to some degree and Folks tend to value that for living arrangements as opposed to being kind of isolated.

Ms. Krupka brought up the mobile homes and wondered if it would be a creative way to meet the 10%.

Ms. Platner said they converted two and made them affordable units.

Ms. Weidman replied that they have discussed identifying them and coming up with a way to provide a subsidy to upgrade the units and then put the deed restriction on it.

Ms. Krupka wondered why they can't count those as affordable housing.

Ms. Weidman replied that they don't have subsidy and are not deed restricted as that is the two criteria for being counted as affordable housing.

Ms. Topping replied that once it is deed restricted it stays at that level, whereas if it's not, and the prices go up, it can potentially become a non-affordable house.

Ms. Weidman replied that you would need a monitoring agency to track it, so that when somebody moves out the next person who moves in is income qualified but it's doable.

Mr. Murray replied that it seems like it would be an opportunity because creativity is a necessity for Charlestown in terms of preservation of communities and accommodation of housing.

The group talked about the summer housing and Ms. Platner stated that summer housing is more commercial than it is residential as it is their economic engine.

The group also talked about inclusionary zoning and Ms. Platner stated that the percentage they had was very small.

Ms. Platner stated that she does not like the density but she likes the idea that if you are building a new subdivision that they are contributing to our debt because if they build ten houses, the affordable goes up by one percent because they have to have 10% and she feels having them rehab a house off site is a good idea. So what about mandatory inclusionary zoning that if they have to do 10 houses, they have to do the conversion of 1 somewhere in town of an existing house.

Mr. Murray suggested a fee-in-lieu of for affordable.

Ms. Weidman supported that idea. This way there is a program for where that money is directed.

Ms. Platner replied that this could be part of the housing plan.

Ms. Krupka inquired about "rent to own"

Ms. Topping replied that although you can have rent subsidy it is privately owned.

Discussion ensued and Ms. Platner stated that in 2011 a lot of the focus was on finding ways of converting existing housing to affordable housing.

Mr. Murray replied that it would be a two for one benefit if they could do it as you would not be moving the locals further away.

Ms. Topping wondered how many people are in houses that could be rehabbed as they would have to be purchased.

Ms. Platner replied that another option is that they would have to lose their house.

Ms. Topping asked about the possibility of duplexes.

Ms. Weidman replied that it might be driven by the density of space with family. She said you might have to have an oversized lot.

Ms. Platner replied that you don't have to subtract out the constraints.

Ms. Platner stated that when they did the part on accessory apartments the language got changed.

Ms. Krupka inquired about some of the older cottages that are being torn down.

Mr. Murray wondered if they had thought about cottage zoning. He stated that this could be a link to develop a property kind of to Churchwoods in a sense, but they may have a community center to provide some of the space amenities they won't get in the home. He said there is a movement towards that, they would have a limitation to the size of the home such as the number of bedrooms to the home and the occupancy number, and senior population.

Ms. Topping wondered if they had spoken to the tribe.

Ms. Weidman replied they are waiting to get all of the different components together.

Mr. Murray wondered if the tribal housing that they have a part of the inventory.

Ms. Platner replied that in the 90's zoning and the state agreed that the tribal housing would be counted toward the affordable housing but they never completed building them.

Ms. Weidman replied that it was HUD money.

The Commission then talked about refreshing the section on Data Resources and population.

Ms. Topping suggested revising Goal 3 on page 16 to not reference the state mandated ten percent as they do not see this as a realistic goal.

Ms. Weidman talked about opening up the traditional village district (TVD) to residential such as encourage mixed use and not just houses over commercial businesses.

The Planning Commission then moved on to review the goals, objectives, policies and actions section of the Housing Choice Chapter.

Ms. Platner passed out the second Energy Draft: (March 12, 2018) of the Charlestown Comprehensive Plan. She said they do not have enough time to go through the whole document during this meeting so she would be brief.

Ms. Platner stated that she and Ms. Van Slyke have been attending the Energy Siting Stakeholders meetings sponsored by the Office of Energy Resources. One of the documents that she will email the Planning Commission at a later date is a statement of principles that they have

come up with. She said the Office of Energy Resources is looking to do legislation and it is meant to force solar installation everywhere which would require all the forest to be cleared. Ms. Platner stated that they have to respond to that. She referred the Planning Commission to page 12 and 13, *Utility Scale Solar Energy*. She said that have proposed this before, so they have to have something and a lot of towns don't allow it on residential land at all, but that is all they have, so they couldn't limit it to industrial or commercial because they don't have any and that would be kind of the same as prohibiting it. What is proposed here is that Charlestown should issue as Vermont does, a certificate of public good, but essentially those are criteria of a special use permit. Ms. Platner said that things that they would support, if they think this is a good idea are reuse, which is landfill, gravel banks, or other degraded land would be prioritized. She said there may not be any of that, but if there was would you want to see a big solar installation there. The other one would be for a subdivision. Instead of having a piece of land subdivided, you would allow solar instead of that, near equivalent to the area of disturbance. She said for instance if a landowner had 50 acres of land, instead of selling it to the solar developer, they could lease part of it to the solar developer, saying intensity that would have been allowed for a subdivision. The Planning Commission agreed to review the Energy draft and make some comments.

4. Adjournment

Motion

A motion was made by Ms. Krupka and seconded by Ms. Russell, and approved unanimously to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. Vote was unanimous The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Sherry D. Krupka, Commissioner
SECONDER:	Erin P. Russell, Commissioner
AYES:	O'Connor, Platner, Johnson, Krupka, Russell, Topping
ABSENT:	Heavers

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Beauchaine, Planning Commission Clerk