

FINAL 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 were Ms. Weidman, Town Planner, Mr. Murray, Comprehensive plan consultant 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. All in favor. Vote was unanimous.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Sherry D. Krupka, Commissioner
SECONDER:	Erin P. Russell, Commissioner
AYES:	Platner, Johnson, Krupka, Russell, Topping
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 study of Charlestown and the differences with the neighboring communities. Some of the things that would be important to discuss are the local philosophy and desires regarding housing, and some of the limitations such as environment, lack of infrastructure and the legacy of how land use evolved in the community. He noticed that seasonal housing is about a third of the housing stock and there seems to be a lot of conversion from seasonal to full time housing and every time one of

those becomes full time housing, it counts against the 10% requirement for LMI housing. Mr. Murray feels that the housing element should also talk about the successes that Charlestown has had in providing affordable housing. He feels Charlestown is unique for a small community, for example, the Churchwoods major land development project which was a tremendous success for the community. He feels that should be showcased in the section that covers affordable housing.

Mr. Murray then brought up the trend of replacing summer homes with larger year round homes and Ms. Weidman wondered if they could find out where the tear downs are happening (mostly on Route 1?).

Mr. Murray replied that it might be something worth looking into.

Ms. Platner replied that the state looks at the percentage of people who are paying more than 30% of their income on housing, but if they are making a half a million dollars a year, there is no problem paying 40 % of their income on housing in the million dollar range (not cost burdened).

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

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 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 Mason draft that could be incorporated in the housing element, but it needs a simpler message and not too much data as it needs to be accessible to its readers. He said he also gathered some of the data sources. He also feels the population chapter needs to be refreshed. He said some things should be stated specifically in the housing element beyond what the state is looking for that identify 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 future development consistent with the Comprehensive Plan as they are more concentrated, allow new uses, and provide alternate living arrangements.

Ms. Krupka brought up the mobile homes in town and wondered if that would be a creative way to meet the 10% LMI units.

Ms. Platner said that they did convert two into 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 a deed restriction on them.

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

Ms. Weidman replied that if they don't have a subsidy and they are not deed restricted, they do not meet two of the criteria for being counted as LMI units.

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 a doable option.

Mr. Murray replied that it seems like an opportunity because creativity is a necessity for Charlestown in terms of achieving its housing goals while preserving the community character.

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

The group also talked about inclusionary zoning and how the town studied it, but never adopted it as a requirement.

Ms. Platner stated that she does not like the density of additional lots or units, but if a developer is building a new subdivision that contributes to the affordable housing deficit having them rehab a house off site is a good idea. She wondered about mandatory inclusionary zoning that would require a 10 house development to also convert an existing house in town to an affordable unit.

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

Ms. Weidman supported that idea as a way to provide money for affordable units.

Ms. Platner replied that this could be part of the affordable 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 that as you would be keeping locals in their homes.

Ms. Topping asked about the possibility of duplexes.

Ms. Weidman replied that it depends on the density requirement. She said an oversized lot might be necessary.

Ms. Platner replied that under the current regulations, constraints don't have to be subtracted.

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 is similar to Churchwoods in that residents 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 on the size of the home such as the number of bedrooms and the occupancy.

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

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

Mr. Murray wondered if tribal housing is part of the inventory.

Ms. Platner replied that in the 90's the state agreed that the tribal housing under construction off Kings Factory Road would be counted toward the affordable housing for Charlestown, but they never completed building them.

Ms. Weidman replied that it was HUD money so the subsidy criteria was met.

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

Ms. Topping suggested revising goal 3 on page 16 to not reference the state mandated 10% as they do not see this as a realistic goal.

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

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 supporting legislation that would require all municipalities to adopt ordinances to allow solar installations. 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 because Charlestown does not have industrial and commercial land capable of supporting commercial solar they can't do what a lot of towns do and prohibit it on residential land because that would be the same as prohibiting it altogether. She suggested that if the Planning Commission thinks it's a good idea they would prioritize the reuse of landfill's, gravel banks and other degraded land. Another thought is if solar is allowed instead of a subdivision that it have the near equivalent 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, at the same intensity that would have been allowed for a subdivision.

Ms. Weidman asked about the same intensity.

Mr. Platner said that for subdivisions there is about a half-acre per lot for limit of disturbance, something they are seeing on a consistent basis. For example a ten lot subdivision might have about 6 or 7 acres disturbed. Ms. Platner noted that they would expect different areas of disturbance depending on the zoning district. She said for instance we sometimes see people who buy a piece of land they want to preserve and to finance it, they sell off a few lots, and so solar installation would be an alternative to that. Ms. Platner stated that they would put a temporary conservation easement

on it for the life of the project and the other one is land acquisition for conservation, the land trust, or the town could use this as a way to preserve land. The main focus is on preserving forest.

The Planning Commission agreed to review the Energy draft and make some comments at a later date.

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. The meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Beauchaine, Planning Commission Clerk