

FINAL MINUTES

The Charlestown Planning Commission Held a Regular Meeting on Wednesday March 28, 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.

2. Roll Call

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
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	
Kathryn M. O'Connor	Alternate #2	Present	
Frances M. Topping	Alternate #1	Present	

Also present was Ms. Weidman, Town Planner; Mr. Petrarca, Town Solicitor; and Ms. Van Slyke, Town Council Liaison.

3. Minutes Approval

A. Wednesday, March 14, 2018

Motion

A motion was made to approve the March 14, 2018 Minutes as amended by Ms. Topping, seconded by Ms. Russell. All in favor. Vote was unanimous.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Frances M. Topping, Alternate #1
SECONDER:	Erin P. Russell, Commissioner
AYES:	Platner, Johnson, Krupka, Russell, Topping
ABSENT:	Heavers

4. Planning Commission Comments

No Comments

5. Public Comments

No Comments

6. APPLICATIONS

A. Discussion and/or Potential Action and/or Vote(S) Concerning: Quonnie Farm Stand Brewery;

Ms. Platner began the discussion by stating that this involves three different issues, which is the use, the particular lot /farm at this location, and the zoning ordinance change which is a town wide change. She stated that she would like to have discussion regarding the zoning ordinance change first, so as to help people better understand what is being proposed as these are the steps that they would have to follow.

Ms. Megan Moynihan with Oyster Works LLC introduced herself along with the owner of Quonnie Farms LLC, Stephen Peete. She also introduced Tony Nenna, Civil Engineer, present for any questions that one might have regarding the proposal. Ms. Moynihan stated that they are present to describe their vision for Quonnie Farms. They would like to expand the farm stand to include a craft brewery with a tasting room. This would involve a change to the Town of Charlestown's zoning ordinance.

Ms. Moynihan stated that they had developed a working definition of a "Farm Brewery", which would be a small craft brewery that uses hops grown on a working farm that has a limited production and will brew and sell beer as well as a menu of farm related products.

Ms. Moynihan stated that they are interested in feedback from the Planning Commission as they develop the text amendment, which includes land use standards and conditions.

Ms. Moynihan provided a summary of the site:

Quonnie Farms is located on the corner of West Beach Road and Post Road.

It is at the edge of a commercial district.

Adjacent to Quonnie Farms on the south side of Route 1 are the East West Market, the Shell Station, Michael's Grange, the Natural Salon, the Quonochontaug grange and Dunn's Corner Fire Department.

Directly opposite the farm is the Wilcox Tavern.

To the West is Dave's Coffee, Galapagos Boutique and the Purple Shell.

Ms. Moynihan pointed out the following on a large diagram which was on display:

The existing entrance to the farm stand.

The existing house.

A garage which has an office.

Farm area.

Wooded area.

Wetland areas on the site.

New farm building would include the brewery, tasting room and the expanded farm stand.

Along West Beach Road there would be an additional parking area for overflow parking, green houses, more farm area and a small dirt road for pedestrian access (bicycles and farm vehicles).

The farm stand is adjacent to some Audubon land.

Ms. Moynihan pointed out that there is a traffic light at the corner of West Beach Road and there is also a small access road, so that people are not turning left directly from Old Post Road to cross Route 1. She said there won't be traffic backed up along the road waiting to get into the farm stand and brewery.

Stephen Peete began to provide a brief history of the farm, how it would operate, what people can expect when they visit, and what the neighbors and the community can expect.

The farm stand is not a sustainable year round business.

He brought up the Tilted Barn in Exeter as an example of being a family farm that had started as a farm stand. A zoning ordinance amendment allowed them to have a farm brewery.

Mr. Peete stated that he wants his farm to stay a farm forever. They want to raise chickens for eggs, they want ovens for fresh bread in the morning. He wants it to be an authentic farm experience. He then went on to say that customers can take some beer home, and while they are there, he hopes they pick up corn, tomatoes, and send the children out to look at the chickens. He hopes the garden club would come and spend the afternoon to get an idea of how they grow their hops and brew their beer. The brewery is small scale in one building that will look like a barn. Mr. Peete would like to extend the season with the brewery being open year round if they can sustain it.

Mr. Peete said that beer is a water wasteful product and it take 4 gallons of water to make 1 gallon of beer. He estimated they would brew 15 hundred barrels per year (31 gallons per barrel) for a successful operation. The waste in beer would be 2 to 3 gallons per one gallon of water. If they brew 1500 gallons per year, that would equate to about 500 gallons of water per day of usage for the beer operation.

To mitigate the impact on traffic, on the south end of the property they would like to create a pedestrian path that goes through the back of the property down to the farm stand.

The facility would handle approximately 125 people on-site.

Ms. Platner asked about the waste products.

Mr. Peete replied that the spent grains would probably go to a farmer so they can feed offsite cattle and pigs. The waste water would be processed by an approved system onsite or they could ship it off site.

Ms. Topping wondered about the size of the farm vehicles crossing the wetlands.

Mr. Peete replied that the largest vehicle would be the size of his tractor as pictured in the brochure.

Ms. Topping noted that travel across the wetlands would be an issue that they would need to look at carefully.

Ms. Topping wondered about pesticides for the hops. She said those are some of the questions they will raise. Other issues would be the effects of drawing out the water and a traffic survey. She said it is in a natural heritage area and she is at the moment uncertain what is encompassed in that.

Ms. Platner noted that water use and waste water are other issues for consideration and that the craft brewery would use around 1.1 million gallons of water and discharge 700 gallons of waste water.

Ms. Moynihan replied that it would be using the initial 5000 gallons that was in the original farm brewery. She feels that the actual production would be lower as it would be in the range of 1500 barrels a year. She said that these are the issues that they will be addressing as they move forward with developing the standards and that is why the special use process is important.

Ms. Topping wondered if the amount of farm land available would affect the farm forest and open space designation.

Ms. Platner replied that it affects the town's definition of protected farms.

Ms. Krupka noted that a concern of hers would be the definite impact on the wetlands.

Dr. Johnson expressed his concern about the safety of the intersections.

Public comments were as follows:

-Steve Williams, former town councilor stated that he feels it is a zoning issue. His other thought is that this is not a working farm as it grows cut flowers and peaches.

- Charlotte Britland stated that she is an abutter to the Audubon land and has an issue with strangers who could possibly cut through her property via the walking trails. She said unless Audubon is willing to put up a fence or a border along the perimeter of the land, she has an issue with that.

-Jennifer Young stated that it's a great idea. She is excited by the concept. She urged the Planning Commission to not limit their approach to farms based on size, as small farms are every bit as important as the big farms are.

- Ron Meneo stated that the big idea is exciting, but a problem would be how he would implement it. He feels the farm issue is a little bit confused with the brewery issue in terms of size and what is allowed. He stated that another issue that has not be raised is the nitrate load from the fertilizer that will be used on the hops and that is something he would like to know about.

- George Prior talked about growth and an increase in traffic. He said, wouldn't any growth cause some increase in traffic? We say we want to increase tourism and we bring in a lot of traffic for events and they could make the case about more traffic as a by-product of any growth, or new idea that someone may propose, so that might be something we could learn to live with as we increase some growth in Charlestown. Mr. Prior thinks it is a great idea and the details could be handled.

Fred Newton stated that he thinks it is a great idea but we have to be prudent on how we approach this from a zoning standpoint and any controls that we would put on the business to insure that we could maintain what it is that they are trying to accomplish. He said as far as the traffic goes, he agrees with Mr. Prior and from his observations, as he jogs on both East Beach Road and West Beach on a regular basis with has no problems. Mr. Newton also noted that he views the business as an artisan type of approach similar to that of Dave's Coffee.

Steve Williams stated that the Planning Commission does not approve a text amendment, they submit an advisory to the Town Council and the text amendment will not go through the Zoning Board. He told the public that the Planning Commission will highlight all the pros and cons.

Ms. Platner noted that the Commission has also received four letters of opposition. The issues brought up were traffic, wetlands, the trees that would be taken down that are currently protecting the aquifer and concerns about it being a brewery.

Ms. Weidman noted a few issues:

- Road access
- Size of the parcel
- How water is used
- How wastewater is managed
- Traffic study

She said they would also have to further refine the definition of a farm brewery and come up with some limitations and where it could be applied and what types of standards would be applied. The ordinance needs a clear definition of what we call a working farm and how this type of use would be developed.

B. Discussion and/or Potential Action and/or Vote(S) Concerning: Doghouse Acquisitions; Pre-Application

Mr. Jeff Marlowe, of Doghouse Acquisitions described his proposal for the former Shannock volunteer fire department building, its most recent use has been a contractor's yard septic service for Tom Burdick and Sons. He said they are involved in another planning project down the street from this property, so he thought the highest and best use of this property was some sort of village based local scale commercial presence. He sees that both buildings could somehow be integrated in a way to develop and promote local food, beer and perhaps arts.

Mr. Marlowe briefly went over the history of the parcel. Mr. Burdick was granted a zone change from Residential 40 to a Commercial 2 to allow him to operate his septic service on that lot, but it would have to revert back to residential if he abandoned the use, but if he sold his business it can be maintained at current operations. He wants to bring something into that parcel that would allow Shannock village to prosper. Mr. Marlowe stated that a microbrewery is being considered so to create some energy in the village. He said he can see some overlap from the restaurant that is being developed down the street.

Ms. Russell asked about Richmond and how they are involved in this proposal.

Ms. Platner replied that an abutter opposed it because they did not want to have a septic business at that location in Shannock and it also needed a zone change. The Town of Richmond then took it to court to stop the zone change because it was not consistent with Charlestown's Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Marlowe stated that taking it back to a commercial 1, takes it back to a village scale operation and still allows for things like studio space and even retail space. He said they would like to see the trucks out of there. He owns the property immediately across the street and it is also part of the commercial 1 property and there is still existing commercial 1 in that part of the village.

Ms. Russell noted that there would be a water issue with this microbrewery and there were also concerns with the Shannock Water District.

Ms. Platner replied by telling Mr. Marlowe that he would have the same issue that she previously brought up about a water treatment system as she does not think this can go in a regular septic system.

That was Mr. Marlowe's understanding as well. He stated that he and Mr. Burdick talked about the field across the street from the property. They might be able to do things to mitigate the leaching in order to get it further away from the river.

Ms. Platner wondered if they would use the Shannock water.

Mr. Marlowe replied that they would like to use the potable water to the Shannock Water District.

Ms. Platner reviewed some of the zoning uses that would and would not allowed in that Shannock Village area.

7. PLANNING PROJECTS and DISCUSSION

The Planning Commission scheduled a site walk for April 4th at 6:30 pm for AP 23, Lot 11, South County Trail, proposed to be acquired by the town for recreation and open space.

A. Discussion and/or potential action concerning: Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Weidman provided the Planning Commission with some handouts of the draft Housing Choice chapter for review and discussion at the next special meeting on April 4th.

8. PLANNING ISSUES and CONCERNS

A. Planner Comments

Ms. Weidman informed the Planning Commission that she had prepared a memo to update the Town Council on what is going on with legislation impacting municipalities in terms of planning and land development. She then provided a brief summary for the Commission on the recent bills submitted.

B. Solicitor Comments

No comments

9. Adjournment

Motion

A motion was made Ms. Krupka by and seconded by Ms. Russell to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. Vote was unanimous. Adjournment took place at 9:22 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