



## Town of Middletown Planning Department

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### PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES

**SEPTEMBER 2, 2016**

Town Hall, Town Council Chambers, 350 East Main Rd., Middletown, RI

#### **Board members present:**

Art Weber, Chair

John Ciummo, Vice Chair

Paul Croce

Bill Nash

Ron Wolanski, Planning Director

Drew Pflaumer, Principal Planner

Peter Regan, Town Solicitor

*The meeting was called to order by Mr. Weber at 1:00pm.*

#### **1. Discussion with town staff of potential amendments to the Middletown Zoning Ordinance regarding floor area ratio (FAR) and other options to limit building size for construction in residential zoning districts.**

Mr. Weber introduced the topic, and stated that public input would not be received during this meeting, but that a public forum will be scheduled for a later date.

Mr. Wolanski provided a summary of the discussion from the August 25, 2016 subcommittee meeting, and reviewed the process going forward.

Mr. Pflaumer described the revisions that were made to the draft FAR ordinance, including revision to the way that basements are addressed. He also discussed an ordinance from Jamestown, RI which limits the number of stories in a residential building.

Mr. Regan noted the importance of crafting definitions for terms used in the ordinance, such as "walk-out basement" and "ceiling height".

Mr. Wolanski stated that once a decision is made as to the direction that the board wishes to go with an ordinance, additional work would go into crafting the language, including definitions.

Mr. Croce and Mr. Nash stated that they are not in favor of the FAR ordinance concept. This approach is overly restrictive. Regulation of building height might be a better option. Mr. Ciummo stated that he was also not in favor of the FAR option. He noted that primary concern seems to be for protecting views.

There was discussion that since the area of concern is regarding small lots, which are mostly located in the R-10 zoning district, any new regulations regarding building size or height should be limited to the R-10 district.

The consensus of the subcommittee was to not proceed with the FAR concept. Staff was thanked for their efforts in creating the draft. The recommendation to the full Planning Board will be to not proceed with the FAR concept, but to consider possible reduction in

building height limit in the R-10 district, perhaps to 30 feet. There was additional conversation that the ordinance should not promote development of flat-roofed structures as a way to maximize living space under a more stringent height limit. This might be addressed by requiring a pitched roof or limiting the number of stories.

Mr. Wolanski stated that he would draft a memo to the full Planning Board relaying the subcommittee's recommendations, and will provide additional information for the board to consider during its September 14, 2016 meeting.

**2. Discussion with town staff to identify potential updates and revisions to various sections of the Middletown Zoning Ordinance and the Rules and Regulations Regarding the Subdivision and Development of Land.**

Mr. Wolanski stated that during the last meeting of the subcommittee considering potential revisions to various sections of the zoning ordinance the committee received information from a local commercial real estate agent, Steve Kirby, regarding provisions that may unnecessarily limit flexibility for businesses wanting to locate or expand in Middletown. During that meeting Mr. Wolanski was asked to contact Mr. Kirby and request that he present his highest priority concerns.

Mr. Kirby was present and was invited to address the committee. He stated that his primary concern is the limitations on the types of uses in the Aquidneck Corporate Park. He distributed copies of the zoning ordinance use table identifying areas of concern, such as uses that he believes should be permitted by right, which are currently prohibited or require a special use permit. These were discussed.

There was discussion of the possibility of implementing an administrative review process based on performance standards as an alternative to the special use permit process. Mr. Kirby noted that the Aquidneck Corporate Park is not his only area of concern.

The subcommittee thanked Mr. Kirby for his input and indicated that the concerns will be considered as review of the zoning ordinance continues. Staff was asked to look into review procedures used at Quonset Business Park as a potential alternative to consider.

*Meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.*

Respectfully submitted:  
Ronald Wolanski  
Planning Director