



## Town of Middletown Planning Department

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350 East Main Rd., Middletown RI 02842 (401) 849-4027

### PLANNING BOARD MINUTES SPECIAL MEETING ON MIXED-USE ZONING

**JUNE 7, 2017**

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

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

Paul Croce, Chairperson  
Bill Nash, Secretary  
Liz Drayton  
Terri Flynn  
Jim Williams

Ron Wolanski, Planning Director  
Peter Regan, Town Solicitor  
Rita Lavoie, Principal Planner

*The meeting was called to order by Mr. Croce at 6:00pm.*

#### **1. Public Workshop - Present and accept public comment on proposed zoning ordinance amendments to allow for mixed-use development in the general business (GB) and limited business (LB) zoning districts.**

Mr. Croce stated that the purpose of this meeting is to present the proposed zoning amendment to allow for mixed use development in the GB and LB zoning districts and accept public input on the proposal. He indicated that Mr. Wolanski will give a presentation on the subject and then the public will be able to provide input.

Mr. Wolanski began a PowerPoint presentation that outlined the mixed-use zoning concept, provided examples of mixed-use zoning in Rhode Island and elsewhere, and gave background on why the town is considering mixed-use zoning at this time. His presentation mentioned that mixed-use zoning allows for the possibility of residential and commercial uses in one development project and is an alternative to strip development deemed undesirable by the town. This proposed amendment pertains to larger developments and, if passed, would be an additional option for development or redevelopment of parcels, indicated Mr. Wolanski.

Mr. Wolanski concluded his presentation by explaining that the impetus for this proposed zoning amendment comes from the town's comprehensive plan, which indicates that the town should adopt a mixed-use ordinance for all business districts.

Mr. Croce asked the planning board members for their questions.

Ms. Flynn and others asked for clarification on whether the proposal pertains to new development or redevelopment. Mr. Wolanski answered that it would be an option for both. It was further explained that if a developer chooses a mixed-use development he or she would have to comply with the proposed ordinance. It was mentioned that the mixed-use ordinance is similar to an

overlay district in the sense that it is not changing the underlying LB or GB zone but adding additional development options.

Ms. Flynn asked how the town determines what quantity of mixed-used development the existing infrastructure can accommodate. Mr. Wolanski answered that development engineers must address sewer, water, landscaping, and parking design and engineering standards for mixed-use development.

A question was posed asking other board members if anyone had experience living or working in a mixed-use development. Mr. Croce indicated that he had.

There was discussion regarding the maximum building height allowable in the ordinance and if it should be reduced below the current zoning standard of 40 feet.

**The meeting was opened for public comment.**

**Mr. Howard Hall of 151 Atlantic Drive** provided a narrative and comments on specific items in the proposed amendment. Mr. Hall identified permitted uses (in section E.2. and Item 5) he felt were not compatible with residential areas. He specifically mentioned animal boarding, research and development offices, amusements, colleges, cemeteries, clubs and lodges, and large scale shopping centers and supermarkets.

Mr. Hall raised a concern with item E.3.B. regarding the requirement for mixed-use development. There was discussion clarifying that mixed-used is being presented as an option in the LB and GB districts but not a requirement for development or redevelopment in those zones.

Design standards and density calculation questions were raised by Mr. Hall and noted by Mr. Croce. There was discussion regarding the number of principal structures required or allowed in the ordinance.

Mr. Hall voiced a desire to tighten language regarding negative circulation impacts and to increase setback requirements for mixed-use development from residential areas from 50 feet to 100 feet. He also encouraged language prohibiting boxed-shaped buildings and felt that breaking the LB and GB uses into two sections would help to clarify the ordinance and provide more compatibility of uses. Mr. Hall added later that he supported the mixed-use concept but would like the language in the amendment considered more closely and some uses removed.

**Ms. Darcy Roland of 639 Aquidneck Avenue** asked if any developers have been asked to provide input on the proposal. Mr. Wolanski indicated that no specific developer input was sought but all property owners in the general business and limited business area were notified and those within 200 feet of such districts. The board indicated that developer feedback could be sought.

Ms. Roland suggested that the uses in the LB and GB districts be split into two lists in the proposed ordinance. She also mentioned a desire to remove some uses from the list namely cemeteries, hotels, motels, and large shopping areas. Ms. Roland indicated her support for the proposal but indicated that she would like some uses removed from the ordinance. A discussion regarding micro-apartments as allowable uses occurred.

**Claudia Gorman of 180 Vernon Avenue** asked if big-box development would be allowable. Clarification was provided indicating large “big box” stores are not allowable for future development.

**Tom Gorman of 180 Vernon Avenue** expressed a concern with the allowable uses in the proposed ordinance including hotels, motels, and large-scale shopping centers. He noted a desire to preserve agricultural land, and include permeable pavement in the mixed-use designs. Mr. Gorman referred to the proposal's language allowing access driveways to be counted as open space and encouraged the board to remove that allowance. Mr. Gorman indicated his support for the amendment but encouraged the board to make it "watertight."

Mr. Croce closed the public hearing and the board thanked the public for their comments.

The board discussed the list of uses in the ordinance and indicated a desire for another working session with the full board to revise the list. Seeking input from developers was suggested. Mr. Wolanski was asked to schedule a follow-up meeting.

***Motion*** by Ms. Flynn, seconded by Mr. Nash to adjourn. **Vote:** 7-0-0.

*Meeting adjourned at 7:25 pm.*

Respectfully submitted:

Rita Lavoie  
Principal Planner