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City Planning Director



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Vice-President

Thomas Barbieri  
David Exter  
Steven Frias  
Kathleen Lanphear  
Lisa Mancini

Justin Mateus P.E.  
Public Works Director

Thomas Zidelis  
Finance Director

## CITY PLAN COMMISSION

City Hall – 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Room 309  
869 Park Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island 02910

### **SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES CITY HALL – 3<sup>rd</sup> FLOOR, COUNCIL CHAMBER 5:00PM – TUESDAY, AUGUST 29, 2024**

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#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Vice-Chairman Robert Coupe called the meeting to order at 5:07p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

The following Commissioners were in attendance for the meeting: Vice-Chair Robert Coupe, Thomas Barbieri, Kathleen Lanphear, Steven Frias, Justin Mateus, Thomas Zidelis, and Lisa Mancini. Chairman Michael Smith was absent.

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director; Beth Ashman, AICP, Asst. Planning Director, Brianna Valcourt, Senior Planner; Jonas Bruggeman, Senior Planner; and Grace Brownell, Planner Technician.

Also in attendance: Stephen Marsella, Assistant City Solicitor.

#### **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE –PUBLIC HEARING**

Planning Director Jason Pezzullo noted that the Draft Comprehensive Plan with the Commission's integrated amendments is under review tonight. Once approved, Plan will go to the City Council for their adoption.

Ashley Sweet with Weston and Sampson was present. Ms. Sampson noted the Commission tonight will be reviewing the initial draft for phase one, which is primarily a data update, due to changes in state law. The Planning Commission previously held a workshop in which initial feedback was collected. During phase two, public outreach will be continued in which goals, policies, and actions will be the focus. Topics of energy, natural hazards, and climate change need to be added with new data.

Vice-Chairman Coupe invited members of the Commission to present the proposed amendments on the draft plan.

- Steven Frias - Add "as appropriate" to H-1 for Chp. 3 goals, to read "Enact inclusionary zoning to increase affordable housing in most new subdivisions and development projects, as appropriate through incentives and bonuses". The reasoning is that the language exists within the current Comprehensive Plan on Pg. 37. Further proposed to add "some" to E-12 to read, "Transition some municipal fleet vehicles to electric or hybrid models". The reasoning is that some of DPW equipment is not conducive for electric options.
- Thomas Zidelis – For Energy Element Section 9.4.2 under Energy Efficiency in Municipal Buildings, replace "participate" with "review" to read, "Review the participation in state-level incentive programs for renewable energy adoption." Further noted the proposed amendment to

replace “align” with “review” to read, “review the possibility of aligning its local policies with the State’s Renewable Energy Standard. Under Workforce Development, replace “offering” with “review the possibility of offering” to read, “review the possibility of offering incentives for green job creation.” Lastly, under Resilience Through Microgrids, replace “integrating” with “review the possibility of integrating” to read “Review the possibility of integrating energy systems to support grid stability.” The reasoning is that it is important to leave the opportunities open-ended as there are unknowns as to what they will entail.

- Kathleen Lanphear- Proposed amendment under Sec. 13.9 Land Use to replace “small lots” with “substandard lots of record, as appropriate,” to read, “Eastern Cranston is largely built-out, but may attract new investment in the form of adaptive reuse, the development of existing substandard lots of record, mixed-use, and redevelopment proposals”. Reasoning is the language preserves any discretion the Planning Commission may have under state law. Under mention of Land Use Policy 9.3 of the 2012 Comprehensive Plan, replace “existing” with “existing” to read “Policy 9.3 (and Land Use Policy 18 in 2024 Plan) further call for preserving the existing density of established neighborhoods”. The listed Section numbers on Pg.12.1 are incorrect.
- Steven Frias- Proposed amendment on Pg. 208 to remove three addresses on Alpine Estates property: Plat 35 Lot 2 0 Sage Dr., Plat 35 Lot 3 0 Pippin Orchard Rd., and Plat 35 Lot 13 0 Peppermill Ln. Therefore, the three parcels would remain A-80. The reason is the City Council has not accepted making zone changes on these three properties. Furthermore, there is a school capacity issue by Orchard Farms. School Committee minutes of October 10, 2023, read that Orchard Farms and Oak Lawn School is at capacity and there is a need for turning Hope Highlands into an Elementary School, and therefore build a new middle school. Further noted that redistricting is detrimental to elementary school aged children and that these parcels have been A-80 for years.
- Thomas Barbieri- School system will always evolve. Question to City Solicitor- What impact would these zone changes have on the city? Stephen Marsella (City Solicitor)- Noted that Mr. Frias’s amendment would be to remove the proposed zoning amendments. Each parcel stands on its own merit. Both landowner and Planning Department have ability to submit changes to the Comprehensive Plan up to four times a year. There is no litigation to the Town that would be impacted by the Commission’s decision to address the issue.
- Vice-Chairman Coupe- Inquired rationale for the change. Jason Pezzullo- The idea of school capacity issue is a provision the Commission does not address, because the School Committee is comprehensive themselves.

Vice-Chairman Coupe invited members of the public, both in-person and online to provide comments on docketed matters.

- Peter Skwirz– Noted he is a representative of a group of homeowners at Alpine Estates and has been asked to speak in favor of the amendment proposed by Commissioner Frias. State Law regarding Accessory Dwelling Units is calling for greater density increases, so density will increase regardless. This is something that has gone before the City Council several times. However, there was no will of the policy makers to make the zoning changes. Requested that the Commission make the amendment request presented by to remove the three properties from the Land Classification Chart.
- Janice Cataldo (Sage Dr.)- In support of the amendment proposed by Commissioner Frias. Most of those who live in single residential districts are not aware of the changes that would impact them. There is an increasing influx of new development in this area, so there is no need for these zone changes. The Comprehensive Plan states “the preservation of existing undeveloped land capacity and traffic are Western Cranston’s largest concern.” There are existing A-80 lots in Alpine and those properties sell right away. Further expressed concern for issues of traffic and stormwater. Proposed notifying the neighbors prior to zone changes.
- Mike Crystal (65 Sage Dr.) In support of the amendment proposed by Commissioner Frias. Residential Zoning changes should not be done in a Comprehensive Plan. Most residents are not

aware of what is happening and the impact it will have on them. Proposed removing all residential zoning changes out of the Comprehensive Plan until the abutters are notified.

- Sam Brusco- 11 Alhambra Cr.- Noted Chp. 9 focuses on solar farms and inquired about the inclusion of roofs on city properties. RIPTA has large changes under way, which should be included in the Plan. Cranston needs a bus system which offers regional city services as well as protected bicycle lanes. Snow and ice removal from sidewalks needs to be addressed. Rhode Island Energy does not allow for community solar. If a homeowner wants to install panels, they must stay within the last three years of the building's usage. Chp.11 notes East Cranston is urban, which is inaccurate. Section on Transit-Oriented Development needs strengthening. Those who do not have cars in the city are not able to commute otherwise.
- Drake Patten (Online-684 Ave.)- Under Open Space, requested that provisions are amended to match the correct current use of the Farm. Farm is open to the public during programs and there is not a shop on site. City transportation needs improvements.
- Karen Rosenberg- (Online-46 Bow St.)- Draft has six places where it mentions stakeholder and resident interviews that informed the Plan. Should there be an appendix where stakeholders and residents are identified? In regards to Pgs. 15 and 111 there was never an independent assessment of the condition of the Budlong pool and the design was approved based on false and unsubstantiated assertions about its condition. There is no evidence that the pool needed replacement. The decision does not reflect the community's values and vision for city, as there was a petition which overwhelmingly represented the Community's stance on this matter. Inclusive participation was not previously provided for phase one of the Draft Comprehensive Plan. Concern that Phase Two includes greater public engagement. The website does not include any of the public engagement information included on Pg. 6.
- Douglas Doe (Online)- The Plan has several mentions of the Cranston Conservation Commission, in which Cranston does not have an active one. Proposed to correct mistakes on the Land Use Classification Chart- Plat 23 Lots 9 and 16 should be amended to be from A-80 to Open Space S-1.

Thomas Zidelis made the motion to close public comment. Justin Mateus 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion unanimously approved. (7-0)

Thomas Zidelis made the motion to adopt the amendments proposed by Frias, Zidelis, and Lanphear. David Exter 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. Motion unanimously approved. (8-0)

Vice-Chair Robert Coupe noted he is not in support of the amendment to remove the three parcels by Alpine Estates from the Land Use Classification Chart. Western Cranston has hundreds of lots of land that is zoned for development by-right; a handful of parcels is not going to change what happens to the realignment of schools when there is the potential for much more development.

Steven Frias made the motion to approve the amendment to remove the list of proposed zoning changes of A-80 to A-0 for Plat 35 Lot 2 0 Sage Dr., Plat 35 Lot 3 0 Pippin Orchard Rd, and Plat 35 Lot 13 0 Peppermill Ln. Kathleen Lanphear 2<sup>nd</sup>. Motion approved. (7-1) Coupe voted nay.

Steven Frias provided comment that Phase Two will include more public participation. He acknowledged that Cranston is a community of diverse opinions. His stated his focus in reviewing this comprehensive plan was to protect Cranston's residential neighborhoods and maintaining the existing density. He also noted that in this Plan, Cranston continues to refer to itself as a suburban community, and noted that Cranston has considered itself a suburb since the adoption of zoning a century ago.

Steven Frias made the motion to approve the comprehensive plan as amended. Justin Mateus 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. Motion unanimously approved. (8-0)

**ADJOURNMENT**

**(vote taken)**

Upon motion made by Lisa Mancini, and 2nd by Justin Mateus, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m.