

Hon. Kenneth J. Hopkins
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Michael E. Smith
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Jason M. Pezzullo, MCP, MPA, AICP
City Planning Director



Robert Coupe
Vice-President

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David Exter
Steven Frias
Kathleen Lanphear
Lisa Mancini

Justin Mateus P.E.
Public Works Director

Thomas Zidelis
Finance Director

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

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

SPECIAL WORKSHOP MINUTES CITY HALL – 3rd FLOOR, COUNCIL CHAMBER 5:00PM – TUESDAY, JULY 23, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Michael Smith called the meeting to order in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

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

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director and Jonas Bruggeman, Senior Planner.

Also attending: Steve Marsella, Esq., Assistant City Solicitor.

Ashely Sweet with Weston and Sampson provided update that the Plan is almost ready to be submitted as a Draft to the City Council. Phase one has included a general data update of all chapters, to comply with state law. Have reorganized plan to include implementation chapter that outlines the goals, policies, and actions for every goal chapter. Goals and implementation strategies for Energy and Natural Hazards and Climate Change have been added. Phase two will focus on policy updates.

Jason Pezzullo noted that the draft should be completed prior to the June 3rd regularly scheduled City Plan Commission meeting.

Kathleen Lanphear- Requested clarification for the information that was removed from the Plan.

Jason Pezzullo- Noted there was language about the Western Cranston Village. The areas that were identified in the 1992 plan were carried into the 2012 Plan, but since have been developed for low-density residential development. This makes the idea of an overlay district in this area less conducive.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WORKSHOP

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL

(no vote taken)

- Chapter 1: Introduction

Steven Frias- Noted to reserve his right to make edits once the other chapters are agreed upon.

- Chapter 2: Demographic and Community Profile

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- Chapter 3: Implementation Plan

Steven Frias- Noted to reserve his right to make edits once the other chapters are agreed upon.

- Chapter 4: Natural Resources

Chairman Michael Smith-Inquired how the current proposed language differs from the current Comprehensive Plan.

Ashley Sweet- Noted for the most part, categories that make sense remained. First there is an existing conditions summary. Then discuss whether the city is currently taking preventative measures to protect natural resources. Have added data sets to enhance existing information.

Steven Frias- Proposed edits based off minor typographical matters.

- Chapter 5: Housing

Chairman Michael Smith-Inquired how recent applicable state law has been integrated.

Ms. Sweeny noted that at the time this chapter was amended, there were no State updates on the use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Section can be added to reflect necessary changes.

Kathleen Lanphear- Requested that the listed percentages on page 5-19 be reviewed for accuracy.

Steven Frias- Proposed removing the following sentence within Section 5.7.2 on Pg. 5-20: "By providing housing options for all income levels, residents from diverse economic backgrounds can build equity". Within section 5.7.2, in alternative of the establishment of an inclusionary zoning ordinance, proposed the continuation of Plan Commission Inclusionary Affordable Housing Policy. On Pg. 5-21 remove wording of "gentle density" to final paragraph.

Kathleen Lanphear- Proposed removing the final paragraph in its entirety to replace with wording to read, "The challenge of Cranston is to increase its affordable housing across the city, while retaining the character of its unique neighborhoods. The city must be especially mindful of preserving the neighborhood qualities and character that attract residents to the city, while acknowledging the need to diversify its housing stock in a manner consistent with Cranston's suburban character."

Steven Frias- Reiterated that his intent with his proposed edit is to communicate his stance on the issue.

Chairman Michael Smith invited members of the public, both in-person and online to provide comments:

Stephanie S (44 Sage Dr.)- Inquired where infill development would go. Concern is that the city is becoming over congested.

Sam Brusco (Online-11 Amber Cr.)- Inquired about the potential of allowing for medium density around business centers. Further noted to be in favor of making Cranston more walkable. Within Eastern Cranston, three-family homes were the norm until Columbia Ave. Further spoke in favor of simplifying permitting requirements for ADUs.

Katherine Rosenberg (Online-46 Bow St.)- Proposed creating Plan which informs development within the short-term, and then conduct another process for more robust public engagement. Expressed concern for vagueness of timeline and lack of previous public engagement.

Chairman Michael Smith- Phase One is strictly an update. All public comments are recorded and will likely be part of the discussion within phase two.

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Steven Frias- There is no policy change. Noted his focus to retain the existing nature of the city. It is appropriate to make edits of our current policies and goals.

Ashley Sweet- The paragraph in discussion is to reflect that the city should look at its existing development areas and see if there is the opportunity for that infill development that would be consistent with its existing pattern of density.

Kathleen Lanphear- Noted that section states that the city may look to infill development and up zoning. What does “up zoning” refer to?

Ashley Sweet- That is a term to characterize situations where the city would match the density of a zoning district, as development patterns occur.

- Chapter 6: Economic Development

Steven Frias- Proposed adding a section within the first paragraph to read “A number of factors to be considered.” as opposed to listing each factor out.

Chairman Michael Smith invited members of the public, both in-person and online to provide comments:

Amelia Bourne (Online)- Housing is very much related to economic development. Cranston needs a more diverse housing stock. Proposed working with the Housing Task Force to bring in any developers who work across the state developing middle-housing.

Sam Brusco (Online-11 Amber Cr.)- Noted densely populated neighborhoods generate a lot of local tax revenue. Cranston needs to determine where density is needed.

- Chapter 7: Historic and Cultural Preservation
- Chapter 8: Services and Facilities
- Chapter 9: Energy

Steven Frias- Under Sec. 9.2.1 the first bullet should be edited to read, “electricity is power produced with fossil fuels, nuclear energy, hydropower, or renewable energy”. Further noted section about Rhode Island’s energy offsets which should be rewritten to refer to the electricity provided by Rhode Island’s privately owned electric distribution companies. Strike sentence that states this is the first legislation of its kind in the US. Under Sec. 9.2.3, Natick Avenue Solar Farm should be removed, as the project was denied by the City Plan Commission. Requested that the section of Clean Health Rhode Island be rewritten to strike that heat pumps are an efficient economic mechanism. The Comprehensive Plan amendments noted under 9.2.4 have been superseded by a subsequent amendment in 2020. Add language that states solar development is limited to certain locations. Under Sec. 9.3 lists Renewable Energy Standard requiring 38.5% of the retail electric sales by renewable energy sources by 2035. Should be amended to read 100% by 2033. Sec. 9.4.1 the bullet for “Inadequate Implementation” should be stricken. Under the “Land Use Conflicts”, strike the last sentence: “This highlights the need for clearer zoning and land use policies specific to renewable energy project”. Should add that according to the US Energy and Information Administration, solar energy contributed 11% to the state’s total electric generation within 2022. Under Sec. 9.4.2 strike “Diverse Land Use for Varied Energy Strategies” bullet.

Katherine Lanphear- Proposed striking Sec. 9.1.4 On Pg. 9-4. Noted that the ordinance that passed along with the Comprehensive Plan amendment was repealed by the City Council.

Chairman Michael Smith invited members of the public, both in-person and online to provide comments:

Douglas Doe (178 Hartford Ave.)- There should be reference to the 2020 Comprehensive Plan amendments.

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Sam Brusco (Online- 11 Amber Cr.)- In January 2020, the state issued an executive order for the state to be 100% renewable by 2030. Last year, the legislature pushed the ten-year period out. Inquired whether there is mention of city buildings.

- Chapter 10: Open Space and Recreation
- Chapter 11: Transportation
- Chapter 12: Natural Hazards and Climate Change

Steven Frias- In reference to the Introduction paragraph, noted not all natural hazards are more frequent due to climate change. Proposed amending language to read that some natural hazards been impacted by climate change.

Katherine Lanphear- On Pg. 12-12 Add sentence to read, "These measures take on critical importance as natural events intensify and are integral to protecting public health, welfare, and property. On Pg. 12-13 under "Opportunities", proposed including a section which discusses a city partnership with the University of Rhode Island and other non-profit institutions to seek assistance for Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Plans, and seek grant funding to generate such Plans.

- Chapter 13: Land Use

Jason Pezzullo noted that Staff will integrate all edits and finalize chapters for the next regular City Plan Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

(vote taken)

Upon motion made by Robert Coupe, and 2nd by Thomas Zidelis the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to adjourn the meeting.

Next Meeting | Tuesday, August 6, 2024, 6:30PM – **Regular Meeting**
City Hall – 3rd Floor, Council Chamber – 869 Park Avenue

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