

Kenneth J. Hopkins
Mayor

Michael E. Smith
President

Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Planning Director



Thomas Barbieri
Robert Coupe
David Exter
Steven Frias
Kathleen Lanphear
Lisa Mancini
Justin Mateus
Thomas Zidelis

CITY PLAN COMMISSION

MINUTES

Wednesday, October 25, 2023 – 6:30 PM

3rd Floor – City Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue, Cranston RI

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

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

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director; Kenneth Kirkland, Ass. Planning Director, and Gregory Guertin, Senior Planner.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(vote taken)

- 9/5/23 Regular City Plan Commission meeting

Upon motion by Mr. Zidelis, and seconded by Mr. Mateus, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to amend and approve the regular City Plan Commission meeting minutes of 9/5/23 with Ms. Lanphears' suggested edits.

- 9/20/23 City Plan Commission Workshop (Comp Plan)

Upon motion by Mr. Zidelis, and seconded by Mr. Frias, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to amend and approve the City Plan Commission Workshop meeting minutes of 9/20/23 with Mr. Frias' suggested edits.

- 10/3/23 Regular City Plan Commission meeting

Upon motion by Mr. Mateus, and seconded by Mr. Barbieri, the City Plan Commission voted (7-0) to amend and approve the regular City Plan Commission meeting minutes of 10/3/23 as presented. Mr. Zidelis abstained, as he was not present for the 10/3/23 meeting.

WORKSHOP

- Questions for Interactive Website for Comp Plan (vote may be taken)

Director Pezzullo provided an overview of the sample survey prompts, informing the Commission that these prompts may be used to inform statistically valid surveys to be employed at the following phase of the Comprehensive Plan process.

Mr. Guertin further clarified that the sample survey prompts and web-mapping exercise would not be utilized as statistically valid data at this phase of the process, per the consultant. Mr. Guertin provided a brief overview and demonstration of the web-mapping tool and the associated prompts.

Chairman Smith, Commissioners Frias and Lanphear provided comments and suggestions on the phrasing of survey prompts.

Commissioner Barbieri raised concern of select survey prompts that may lead responses. Mr. Guertin offered to alter the wording of select survey prompts.

Commissioner Zidelis asked Mr. Guertin how the survey would be implemented. Director Pezzullo stated that the typical strategy for implementation is to utilize print media, social media, television stations, social media accounts of City administration and Council, as well as ads in print media.

Commissioner Mancini suggested utilizing a QR code in printed advertisements, to which Mr. Guertin supported.

Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public for comment. Seeing no in-person comments from the public, Mr. Smith opened the discussion to online comments.

- Drake Patten, 664 Natick Avenue: Inquired about in-person community engagement activities regarding the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Guertin stated that there would be at least one opportunity for an in-person charrette at a central location in the first phase of the Comprehensive Plan update process, details forthcoming. The Planning Department anticipates more robust public engagement in the second phase of the plan update.

Mr. Mateus asked Mr. Guertin to clarify whether participants would be required to answer the exact survey questions presented. Mr. Guertin noted that the survey prompts are used mainly to engage participants. Mr. Mateus then asked Mr. Guertin if there was a sufficient character limit for survey responses. Mr. Guertin stated that participants have the opportunity to submit multiple comments on multiple topic areas.

Chairman Smith inquired about physical advertisements with the survey information to be posted at local recreational facilities, schools, or other services. Mr. Guertin stated that Planning Staff would ask the consultant about the possibility of generating printed outreach materials within the allocated budget for the plan update.

Director Pezzullo mentioned involving local students to participate in the plan update as well.

Chairman Smith asked Director Pezzullo if further comments generated by the Commission regarding the survey should be forwarded to Planning Staff. Mr. Pezzullo reminded the Commission of the constrained timeline regarding discussion of the survey. Mr. Pezzullo stated that if the Commission had no further discussion, it would be imperative to continue the process as discussed.

- Interactive public mapping exercise for Comp Plan (update) (no vote taken)
 - Demonstration and discussion

This matter was discussed in tandem with the “Questions for interactive website for Comp Plan” agenda item. No vote was taken.

- Comprehensive Plan Drafting Procedure (vote taken)

Director Pezzullo stated that Planning Staff had created a concise document of ground rules and responsibilities regarding the Comprehensive Plan update for review. Mr. Pezzullo stated that Planning Staff is responsible for managing the project and reinforced that communications between the Commission and the consultant would be communicated by Staff.

Director Pezzullo stated that the ground rules document was reviewed by Statewide Planning and the consultant prior to the meeting. Mr. Pezzullo invited the Commission to comment on the document.

Chairman Smith reminded the Commission to communicate with the City Planning Office to service all suggestions or comments regarding the Comprehensive Plan update.

Commissioner Frias distributed handouts to the Commission with proposed changes to the existing ground rules document.

Commissioner Lanphear inquired about direct communications between the Commission and the consultant. Director Pezzullo responded, stating that inquiries by commission members should be communicated through planning staff to the consultant for efficiency, per by the consultant.

Commissioner Lanphear inquired about the primary roles and responsibilities stated in the ground rules document. Ms. Lanphear shared proposed edits to the document.

Chairman Smith voiced concerns about the communication process between commissioners and the consultant regarding billable hours. Mr. Smith also shared concerns about creating a subcommittee for the Comprehensive Plan update process at the first phase of the process. Mr. Barbieri assented.

Director Pezzullo stated that chapters of the Comprehensive Plan update would not be disseminated at the meeting immediately following distribution of materials, but the meeting to follow to allow time for review.

Commissioner Barbieri stated that the Commission should be channeling all communications between the City Plan Commission and the consultant through Planning Staff.

Commissioner Frias reiterated his interest in communicating with the consultant directly. Commissioner Frias suggested continuing the discussion.

Chairman Smith suggested that the ground rules include clarity on the amendment process.

Director Pezzullo emphasized that the drafting and amendment process must keep the plan internally consistent, and consistent with state law. Director Pezzullo voiced concerns about the amendment process potentially affecting compliance with state law. Amendments require sufficient time to be reviewed and approved at the final stage of the process.

Chairman Smith suggested that the discussion be continued at the following meeting.

Commissioner Zidelis agreed that the discussion be continued. Mr. Zidelis reiterated his interest in the Commission being able to communicate with the consultant directly.

Chairman Smith suggested amending the ground rules to be reviewed and discussed at a later meeting date.

Director Pezzullo stated that Planning Staff will communicate changes with Chairman Smith for dissemination at the following meeting of the City Plan Commission.

Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public, both in-person and online. There was no public comment on the matter. No vote was taken.

- Subdivision and Land Development Regulations DISCUSSION (vote may be taken)
2023 Legislative Session required amendments.

Director Pezzullo provided background information regarding the existing subdivision regulations. Mr. Pezzullo stated that the existing subdivision regulations were outdated, having been amended over time. Staff has worked throughout the year to consolidate and alter existing

regulations to comply with contemporary state law. Mr. Pezzullo prompted Ass. Director Kirkland to present a draft of the updated regulations to the Commission.

Commissioner Lanphear inquired if the text presented included a key to differentiate sections of the revised regulations. Mr. Kirkland responded that the text was currently formatted for Staff's reference, reviewing and updating the regulations over time.

Director Pezzullo stated that the draft document is not a red-line draft due to the extensive amount of changes required to comply with state law.

Mr. Kirkland provided a presentation on the updated subdivision regulation draft.

Commissioner Frias inquired if the City solicitor would be reviewing Staff changes prior to review by the City Plan Commission. Mr. Kirkland confirmed that the City solicitor would review substantive changes.

Director Pezzullo stated that Staff would continue working on the updated subdivision regulations for adoption by January 1, 2024. Mr. Pezzullo stated that the Commission will have the ability to review and hear further changes with details to come.

Chairman Smith opened the discussion to the public, both in-person and online. There was no public comment on the matter. No vote was taken.

- Commission appointment to the Advisory Committee of Parks and Recreation (vote taken)

Chairman Smith presented a volunteer opportunity for the Advisory Committee of Parks of Recreation. Mr. Smith explained that the City Plan Commission would elect a commissioner to serve on the committee for interested commission members.

Mr. Guertin provided information regarding the committee, including the role of the board and the associated meeting schedule per City Charter.

Chairman Smith asked if any commission members would be interested. Mr. Barbieri expressed interest in joining the committee.

Seeing no other nominations, Chairman Smith accepted a motion by Commissioner Zidelis to nominate Commissioner Barbieri to the Advisory Committee of Parks and Recreation.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Zidelis, and seconded by Commissioner Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to appoint Commissioner Barbieri to the Advisory Committee of Parks of Recreation.

UPCOMING MEETINGS / ADJOURNMENT

(vote taken)

- Tuesday, November 7, 2023, 6:30PM – **Regular City Plan Commission Meeting** – City Hall Council Chambers, 869 Park Avenue

Upon motion made by Commissioner Mateus, and seconded by Commissioner Zidelis, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to adjourn the meeting at 9:02pm.