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Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP
Planning Director



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

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE: WORKSHOP #1

AGENDA

Wednesday, September 20th, 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 6:36 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 869 Park Avenue.

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

The following Planning Department members were in attendance: Jason M. Pezzullo, AICP, Planning Director, Gregory Guertin, Senior Planner and Kenneth R. Kirkland, Assistant Director/Principal Planner.

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

WORKSHOP

(no vote taken)

- Consultant presentation made by Ashley Sweet of *Weston & Sampson*
Introduction and kickoff of the update process

Director Pezzullo introduced project manager Ashley Sweet and representative Logan Leeds from the consulting firm *Weston & Sampson*.

Ms. Sweet provided the Commission with a presentation regarding the Comprehensive Plan update process and objectives. Ms. Sweet provided a brief overview of the update approach, required elements per the State of Rhode Island, required content of Comprehensive Plan, general approval process and guidelines from the State, a tentative project schedule, and an overview of public engagement initiatives to be completed over the course of the update process.

Commissioner Frias inquired about the proposed timeline for completion of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Frias requested clarification regarding the legal utility of the plan having been initially approved in 2010 and altered in 2012.

Ms. Sweet stated that she would require further information on the matter, as municipalities are allowed limited alterations to Comprehensive Plans once enacted into law. Ms. Sweet stated that she would contact Statewide Planning for further clarification.

Commissioner Frias stated his concerns regarding the proposed timeline of the update as it relates to collaborative processes with Statewide Planning.

Commissioner Frias inquired about the ability to contact project manager Sweet directly throughout the update process for clarity or context at different project phases. Mr. Frias continued, sharing his vision of the City as a primarily residential, suburban area that he would like to see maintained throughout the update process.

Ms. Sweet stated that communication between the firm and the Commission is welcome, but that all communication shall be openly shared with the planning department.

Commissioner Lanphear reiterated concerns regarding the legality of the impending Comprehensive Plan update regarding changing laws at the state level.

Ms. Sweet responded, stating that because state laws regarding Comprehensive Plan updates have not yet been implemented, specific requirements are currently unclear, and it cannot be said whether the impending submission would be considered a complete Comprehensive Plan based on existing language.

Commissioner Lanphear inquired about the Commission reviewing draft chapters at different phases of the update process. Ms. Lanphear requested that each commissioner receive direct communication through email regarding draft chapters of the Comprehensive Plan for review.

Ms. Sweet stated that draft chapters would not be posted for public viewing until distributed and reviewed by Commission members.

Commissioner Frias requested that Ms. Sweet forward him a questionnaire previously sent by the firm to planning staff.

Chairman Smith opened the meeting to public comment.

- **Annette Bourne, 51 Community Drive** – Ms. Bourne inquired about the proposed March 2024 deadline for the Comprehensive Plan update. Ms. Sweet responded that the document will be updated by March 2024 for review by the City Council but will not have complete public input at that phase. Ms. Bourne asked if the City Council would vote on the document at that time. Ms. Sweet confirmed, as an intermediary step in the process. Ms. Bourne asked if a subsequent plan would be considered an amendment to the initial plan. Ms. Sweet stated that all chapters, goals, policies, and actions will be updated to an extent, as will community input to be adopted while the public participation process continues for ultimate submission to Statewide Planning for final approval.
- **Robert Murray, 75 Debbie Drive** – Mr. Murray shared his concerns regarding the impending state regulations and laws regarding land use. Mr. Murray stated that the Comprehensive Plan update should reinforce comprehensiveness and may not prescribe itself to individual considerations and goals. Mr. Murray then asked if Staff anticipates the inclusion of an appendix of specific lots to be rezoned in the updated plan. Director Pezzullo responded, stating that it is possible that Staff will include an appendix of lots to be rezoned. Mr. Murray stated that many previous goals have not been met and that the updated plan should provide guidance for practical implementation.

Seeing no further comment, Chairman Smith opened the meeting to public comment from online viewers. No public comment from online viewers was provided.

Director Pezzullo asked Ms. Sweet if she wanted to schedule another special meeting for October to further discuss the plan update. Ms. Sweet responded, stating that a meeting in November would be useful following internal deadlines by the firm.

Mr. Pezzullo suggested to plan for a special meeting on Wednesday, November 15th.

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

(no vote taken)

Director Pezzullo stated that the re-solicitation for Planner Technician is still on-going.

Director Pezzullo stated that the next workshop will focus on state changes to the zoning code. Information will be posted to the City's website prior to the meeting date.

Mr. Pezzullo reminded the Commission about the Special Joint Sitewalk on Saturday October 21st for the *Costco* proposal.

UPCOMING MEETINGS / ADJOURNMENT

(vote taken)

- Tuesday, October 3rd, 2023, 6:30PM – **Regular City Plan Commission Meeting** – City Hall Council Chambers, 869 Park Avenue
- **Saturday, October 21st, 2023, 9:30AM** – **Special Joint Sitewalk** with the City Council and the City Plan Commission, 20 Goddard Drive (Road) – **Costco** proposal

Upon motion made by Ms. Lanphear, and seconded by Ms. Mancini, the City Plan Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to adjourn the meeting at 7:34pm.