

# **Town of Narragansett**

## **Department of Community Development & Planning Board**

### **2008 Annual Report**

#### **Overview**

The following report provides a description of the key accomplishments of the Community Development Department for the 2008 calendar year. By extension it also addresses the actions of the Planning Board, (as required under RIGL 45-22-8), along with the Zoning Board of Review which we staff, and to a lesser degree, several other boards for which this office provides administrative support. These include the Industrial Performance Commission, Conservation Commission, the Tree Board, the Land Conservancy Trust, the Affordable Housing Board and the Harbor Management Commission.

#### **Staff Responsibilities and Duties:**

Department staff primary duties were described in detail as part of the 2007 report and are omitted here since they are essentially unchanged.

#### **2008 Key Highlights**

- A. **Comprehensive Plan** - The amendments to chapters 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, & 13 drafted last year and approved by Planning Board and Town Council in late 2007 were accepted by the State of Rhode Island, Statewide Planning Department in early 2008. Printing and distribution of copies was carried out by Administrative Staff during summer and fall 2008. Distribution List included all Town Council members (sitting and newly elected), all members of Planning Board and Zoning Board and chairmen of Conservation Commission, Harbor Management Commission, Land Trust, and Tree Board as well as each Department head including the Town Solicitor and the Town Library.
  
- B. **Implementation of 2005 Affordable Housing Plan** – Director worked closely with the Affordable Housing Board and their consultant to refine the draft regulatory measures designated in the 2005 AH plan. Inclusionary zoning ordinance was approved following significant changes by the Town Council. Village District ordinance is pending before the Town Council. Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance and Lot Split ordinance have been discussed and revised by the Affordable Housing Board but not introduced yet for public hearing. Anticipate scheduling public hearings in early 2009.

In terms of AH development the Planning Board approved two developments:

- a. Narragansett Highlands – 16 LMI units (Master Plan: May, 2008, Preliminary Plan: December, 2008, Final Plan: not yet submitted)
- b. Christian Brothers – 90 LMI Units – (Master Plan: September, 2008)

In terms of AH development the Planning Board denied one development:

- a. Atlantic East – 16 LMI units – Denied June, 2008 - Appeal to SHAB pending.

One application approved in 2007 was appealed by an abutter to RI Superior Court:

- a. Fifth Avenue - 2 LMI units and 1 market rate unit, (March 7, 2007).  
APPROVAL UPHELD BY SUPERIOR COURT – NOV, 2008

- C. **Recreation & Open Space** –Director (with DPW Director) submitted and received a \$100,000 RIDEM Historic Park Preservation Grant to assist in the financing of the Casino Courtyard rehabilitation.
- D. **Canonchet Farm** – Director and staff have worked closely with the Canonchet Farm Master Plan Committee to assess the existing conditions and regulatory constraints in order to project a development plan for the site. Mapping of site conditions has been provided to support their deliberations.
- E. **Sunset Farm** – Staff has worked with the Land Trust and Abcore Restorations to garner Town Council approval of approximately \$6,000 in roofing materials for the farmhouse and garage. Jeff Farrell has agreed to provide the labor at no direct charge to the Town.
- F. **Historic Preservation Ordinance** – The draft regulation and four proposed districts were the subject of three public workshops in the summer of 2008. Public Hearing was opened in October and continued to an unspecified date after the election.
- G. **Knowles Camp** – The staff has worked closely with the owners and lessees to oversee upgrades of the cottages in Knowles Camp. In accordance with an agreement the owners have limited themselves to 5 standardized designs to which all 110 units must eventually conform. Planning Board and Zoning Board have applied the standards in review of applicant’s plans. \*
- H. **Community Development Block Grant** – Director and administrative assistant coordinated submittal for \$164,504 grant in May, 2008. Town received an award of \$62,566 in July 2008 to fund six programs, two of which will be carried out by the Town and/or Narragansett Housing Authority.

- I. **GIS Improvements** – A new server was purchased and installed to manage and store all GIS data and engineering CAD data; Chas H. Sells was contracted to complete an update of all 2001 planimetrics data using recent aerial orthophotos acquired in 2007 (expected delivery January 2009); Environmental Planning Specialist workstation upgrade and GIS license upgrade to ArcEditor; Purchase of ArcPublisher extension for map generation and distribution of GIS data to free GIS reader software; Purchase of a handheld GPS for field location of infrastructure; Rugged tablet PC and software acquired from the ESRI grant awarded to the Town in November 2008.
  
- J. **Adopt-A-Spot** – Director and Environmental Planning Specialist coordinated activities of four groups to adopt roadway access ways to the waterfront in the following locations:
  - a. Bass Rock Road
  - b. Conant Avenue
  - c. Tidewater / East Shore Road
  - d. Canonchet Farm Main Trail.
  
- K. **Pier Village** – Director conducted a lengthy parking analysis of the Pier Village Marketplace to determine if and to what extent the site suffers from parking overload. This study involved 70+ observations with the assistance of the Police Department’s Community Service Officers during the span of time between June 15<sup>th</sup> and September 15<sup>th</sup>. General conclusions transmitted to Town Manager.
  
- L. **Alternative Energy** – Department staff initiated review of current literature in order to assess the parameters necessary for any ordinance that might be considered for the future regulation of these facilities. More research and possible generation of an ordinance is anticipated in 2009.

**Statistical Highlights**

- A. Meetings Attended by Staff:
  - a. Planning Board: 19 (16 Public Hearings)
  - b. Zoning Board: 23 (67 Public Hearings)
  - c. Conservation Commission: 12 (monthly)
  - d. Tree Board: 12 (monthly)
  - e. Land Trust: 12 (monthly)
  - f. Harbor Management Commission: 12 (monthly)
  - g. Affordable Housing Board: 11
  - h. Industrial Performance Commission: 0

B. Planning Board Highlights:

- a. Major / Minor Subdivision hearings: 16
- b. Administrative Subdivisions: 9 (several not recorded by end of year)
- c. Pre-Application Reviews: 5
- d. Recommendations to Town Council: 9
- e. Site Reviews: 52
- f. Staff Reviews: 39
- g. Commercial Staff Reviews: 0
- h. Presentations: 1(CDBG)
- i. Work Sessions: 1 (with ZB)
- j. Notable Applications:
  - i. Atlantic East Comprehensive Permit (Denied)
  - ii. Narragansett Highlands Comprehensive Permit (pending)
  - iii. Christian Brothers Comprehensive Permit (pending)
  - iv. Ocean Breeze Comprehensive Permit (pending)

C. Zoning Board Highlights

- a. Approved: 65 applications.
- b. Denied: 2 applications denied.
- c. Conducted workshop with Planning Board in regard to Expert Testimony, Findings of Fact, and Board Decisions – April 17, 2008.

D. Other Boards - Miscellaneous Highlights

- a. Harbor Management Commission received approval of the updated Harbor Management Plan in 2008. Copies were printed and distributed to Board members, Town Clerk, Harbormaster, Police Department, Engineering Department.
- b. Tree Board received an America The Beautiful grant to conduct a tree survey and to remove/plant trees on public sites and rights-of-way.
- c. Affordable Housing Board reviewed and approved draft text of Village district ordinance and Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance. Forwarded both drafts to Town Council for scheduling of hearings.

**Achievements / status of activities projected in last year's Outlook.**

- A. Printing of Comprehensive Plan - Done
- B. Implementation of non-regulatory AH Recs: Little progress
- C. Seek grant funds :
  - 1. Received \$100,000 grant for Casino Courtyard
  - 2. Received CDBG grant of \$65,000
  - 3. Received ESRI grant for GIS application to sewer inventory.
- D. Expand use of GIS system: Acquired new computer server.

- E. Work with the Canonchet Farm Master Plan Committee: Ongoing – provided mapping of site for committee use in meetings and report to Town Council.
- F. Guide appropriate redevelopment of Our Lady of Peace Retreat Site: No action by Catholic Diocese.

## **2009 Outlook**

In addition to the projections of staff activity noted in the highlights above, this department anticipates initiating work on the following projects / programs:

- A. Implementation of non-regulatory Affordable Housing (AH), Recommendations:
  - 1. Pursue agreements with owners of apartment complexes to convert to affordable units through provision of tax incentives and density bonuses.
- B. Pursue acquisition of land for AH through combined efforts of Affordable Housing Board and Land Conservancy Trust.
  - 1. Work with large tract property owners to develop affordable housing targeted to a variety of LMI categories.
  - 2. Seek grant funds for AH land acquisition, special environmental projects, recreational development, roadway and pedestrian improvements and other quality of life projects.
- C. Expand use of GIS system to other departments within Town Administration.
- D. Work with the Canonchet Farm Master Plan Committee, Town Council and Recreation Advisory Board to generate a workable plan for development of Canonchet Farm as a recreation / conservation site.
- E. Work closely with the Catholic Diocese to guide appropriate redevelopment of Our Lady of Peace Retreat Site.
- F. Resolve zoning issues in Breakwater Village and in Jerusalem as they relate to height and massing of new and rehabilitated homes. Draft regulations are anticipated in winter/spring.
- G. ESRI Grant – Staff anticipates the generation of a pilot program to improve the database of sewer infrastructure to make it more easily managed and used in the field.

\* Revised – Jan 26, 2009 per PB vote 1/21/09 – unanimous.