

**Town of Narragansett
Department of Community Development
Planning Board & Zoning Board
2009 Annual Report**

Overview

The following report provides a description of the key accomplishments of the Community Development Department for the 2009 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.

2009 Key Highlights

A. Implementation of 2005 Affordable Housing Plan – Director worked closely with the Affordable Housing Board to refine the draft regulatory measures designated in the 2005 AH plan. Village District ordinance was tabled then revisited by the Town Council in a reduced area. Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance was heard and approved by Town Council in August. Lot Split ordinance was introduced and scheduled for public hearing in January 2010. Anticipate further public hearings in early 2010 on a revised Village District ordinance.

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, Re-approved w/ revisions March, 2009.
- b. Replat of Mettatuxet Beach, Section 1 – 2 LMI units (Final Approval: August , 2009) *

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

- a. Ocean Breeze – 4 LMI units – Denied June, 2009 - Appeal to SHAB pending.

B. Recreation & Open Space –

- a. Director and Environmental Planner have worked closely with owner of one acre property on Gibson Avenue formerly owned by Joseph Peace Hazard to acquire same as open space. Land Trust has been made the manager of the site for Town.

- b. Director has assisted Recreation Advisory Board in developing and finalizing text for a townwide recreation survey. Anticipate using some of the results to aid Planning Board in assessment of appropriate uses of the Canonchet Farm site.
- C. **Canonchet Farm** – Director and Planning Board received the CFMP Committee report in March. Since that time staff and the Board have conducted several hearings to garner input from Town departments, standing committees and related Townwide agencies. Anticipate public workshops in early 2010.
- D. **Sunset Farm** – Staff has worked with the Land Trust and Abcore Restorations to garner Town Council approval of approximately \$26,000 in improvements to barn including garage doors. Some of these funds authorized for construction materials to improve farmhouse. Jeff Farrell has agreed to provide labor at no direct charge to the Town.
- E. **Historic Preservation Ordinance** – Director and staff intern completed on refinements to text and mapping to address questions and concerns raised in workshops held in summer 2008. Public Hearing was held in March and June 2009. Town Council approved ordinance text and mapping of four districts in July 2009.
- F. **Historic District Commission** – Historic District Commission members solicited in October, 2009 and appointed in December, 2009 by Town Council action. Director also applied for and received an \$18,000 grant from the RI Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission to hire a consultant to aid in the development process of historic district rules and regulations. Staff will work with HDC members and a selected consultant to develop standards and guidelines workbook in the coming year. Inaugural meeting for the eight-member newly formed Historic District Commission has been scheduled for Wednesday, January 27th @ 7pm.
- G. **Community Development Block Grant** – Director and administrative assistant coordinated submittal for \$292,416 grant application in May, 2009. Town received an award of \$141,120 in July 2009 to fund ten (10) programs, three of which will be carried out by the Town and/or Narragansett Housing Authority.
- H. **GIS Improvements** – Chas H. Sells completed an update of all 2001 planimetrics data using recent aerial orthophotos acquired in 2007. Rugged tablet PC and software acquired from the ESRI grant awarded to the Town in November 2008 was used to complete baseline application for analysis of sewer system data in the field. Pilot project report submitted to ESRI.
- I. **Adopt-A-Spot** – Director and Environmental Planning Specialist coordinated with Public Works Director and Great Island Association to create a draft management plan for eight right-of-ways on Great Island.
- J. **Alternative Energy** – Director and staff intern initiated work on an alternative energy ordinance in 2009. Numerous sources of information were studied in formulating a working draft. Staff distributed rough draft for internal review and received several useful comments and suggestions. Work to revise text is ongoing. Expect further internal meetings in 2010.

- K. **No-Wake Zone** – Director and Environmental Planning specialist provided research and report on the issue of boat wake impact on shoreline erosion and public safety to the Town Council in response to concern raised by CRMC Chairman of same in Narrow River.
- L. **Breakwater Village Zoning** – Director and the Board worked closely with representatives of the Breakwater Village neighborhood to draft amendments to the height and massing regulations of the Breakwater Village Special District ordinance. Adopted in June, 2009. *
- M. **Kenyon Condominium Association** – At the direction of the Planning Board, the director has initiated discussions with the KCA to consider a special set of regulations (similar to those in Breakwater Village) to provide better guidance for development in Jerusalem. Meetings to be held in the new year. *

Statistical Highlights

A. Meetings Attended by Staff:

- a. Planning Board: 18 (17 Public Hearings)
- b. Zoning Board: 16 (50 Public Hearings)
- c. Conservation Commission:12 (monthly)
- d. Tree Board: 13 (monthly)
- e. Land Trust: 11 (monthly)
- f. Harbor Management Commission: 11 (monthly)
- g. Affordable Housing Board: 10
- h. Industrial Performance Commission: 0

B. Planning Board Highlights:

- a. Major / Minor Subdivision hearings:6
- b. Administrative Subdivisions: 8 (several not recorded by end of year)
- c. Pre-Application Reviews: 3
- d. Recommendations to Town Council: 8
- e. Site Reviews: 47 (6 - Recommended Denial)
- f. Site Visit: 1 (Canonchet Farm)
- g. Staff Reviews: 22
- h. Commercial Staff Reviews: 2
- i. Comprehensive Plan Amendment: 1 (Canonchet Farm Master Plan)
- j. Presentations: 3 (CDBG)
- k. Work Sessions: 1 (with ZB)
- l. Notable Agenda Items:
 - Breakwater Village Special District Amendments to Chapter 4.8.4
 - Lot Split Ordinance
 - Village Zoning Ordinance Chapters 2.2, 3.1,6, 6.4,7 of Zoning Ordinance
 - Section 7.1 Supplementary Zoning Regulations & Amend Urban Renewal Zoning
 - Historic District Ordinance – Amended Text

- m. Notable Comprehensive Permit Applications:
 - i. Narragansett Highlands (Amended Approval)
 - ii. De LaSalle (Extension of Approval)
 - iii. Ocean Breeze
 - iv. Furey

C. Zoning Board Highlights

- a. Public Hearings: 50
 - Public Hearings Approved with Staff conditions: 41
 - Public Hearings Approved with Planning Board conditions: 7
 - Public Hearings Denied: 2
- b. Commercial Staff Reviews: 2
- c. Applications for Extensions of Zoning Board Approval: 9
- d. Applications for Building Code Variances: 2
- e. Appeal of the Building Official Decision: 1
- f. Appeal of Planning Board Decision: 1 (reversed)

D. Other Boards - Miscellaneous Highlights

- a. 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.
- b. Affordable Housing Board considered amendments to Village District ordinance and Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance. Forwarded both revised drafts to Town Council for scheduling of hearings. AHB also reviewed and recommended updated text for the Lot split ordinance to Planning Board and Town Council.

Professional Development / Staff Training

Following is a summary list of workshops and seminars attended by Community Development staff:

- a. Attorney General’s Open Meetings Summit (MD, LG)
- b. Pictometry Training (JP)
- c. Invasive Plant Management Certification (JP)
- d. GrowsmartRI Regional Planning Workshop (MD)
- e. Home Builders Guide to Coastal Construction Workshop (JP)
- f. CDBG Workshop (MD, DB)
- g. Wind Power Presentation by URI /LA Program (MD)
- h. Land & Water Conservation Summit (JP)
- i. CDBG Workshop #2 (MD, DB)
- j. RI Historical & Preservation Commission Annual Conference (MD speaker)
- k. RI Stormwater Manual Informational Workshop (JP)
- l. CDBG Davis Bacon law – Workshop (MD, DB)
- m. FEMA/FIRM Community Outreach (JP)
- n. WCRPC / Wind Energy Workshop (MD)
- o. RIAPA ‘Ethics in Planning’ Workshop (MD speaker)
- p. Financing Water Source Protection Workshop (JP)

- q. “How to Build Affordable Homes” Workshop (MD)
- r. GrowsmartRI “Writing sound Decisions” Workshops (MD, LG)
- s. Southern New England Regional APA Conference (MD organizing committee & speaker)

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

- A. Implementation of non-regulatory affordable housing recommendations: Planning Board approved master plan for 132 unit Christian Brothers site 80 of the 132 units are multi-unit elderly rentals. An additional 10 units are for-sale condominiums.
- B. Pursue acquisition of land for Affordable Housing: Little progress
- C. Seek grant funds :
 - 1. Received \$18,000 grant for Historic Preservation consultant
 - 2. Received CDBG grant of \$141,000
- D. Expand use of GIS system: Working w/ GIS as base for implementation of reverse 911 system
- E. Work with the Canonchet Farm Master Plan Committee: Received CFMP committee report in March; PB has conducted several meetings on the plan. Continuing into 2010
- F. Guide appropriate redevelopment of Our Lady of Peace Retreat Site: Director has met with 3-4 individuals to discuss possible adaptive reuse plans. No sale consummated as yet.
- G. Resolve zoning issues in Breakwater Village and Jerusalem: Worked with residents of BWV to draft new height regulation; approved by PB. Adopted by Town Council in 2009. Jerusalem zoning issues are targeted for discussion with residents in Feb, 2010.
- H. ESRI Grant: Pilot program completed; report transmitted to ESRI in early 2009.

2010 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. Subdivision and Zoning Application Fee Analysis of Rhode Island Cities and Towns. Staff to prepare report with suggestions for fee increases.
- B. 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.\
- C. Renew effort to pursue acquisition of land for AH through combined efforts of Affordable Housing Board and Land Conservancy Trust.
- D. Complete work/revisions to Village Zone ordinance and Lot Split ordinance.
- E. Expand use of GIS system to other departments within Town Administration. (continuing).

- F. Conduct public workshops on future use of Canonchet Farm and draft new Master Plan for site. Work with Planning Board, Town Council and Recreation Advisory Board to generate a workable plan for development of Canonchet Farm as a recreation / conservation site.
- G. Work with Parks & Recreation Dept., to analyze results of townwide recreation survey.
- H. Work closely with the Catholic Diocese to guide appropriate redevelopment of Our Lady of Peace Retreat Site. (continuing)
- I. Resolve zoning issues in Jerusalem as they relate to height and massing of new and rehabilitated homes. Draft regulations are anticipated in winter/spring.
- J. Complete Great Island ROW Management Plan.
- K. Seek funds for pedestrian and bicycle related improvements on and around school properties.
- L. Initiate work on complete update of Town Comprehensive Plan

* Amended per Planning Board approval: January 26, 2010