

WASHINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

Charlestown Exeter Hopkinton Narragansett New Shoreham North Kingstown Richmond South Kingstown Westerly

Monthly Board Meeting Minutes March 15, 2006

Attendance:

WCRPC Board Members and Staff

Chris Duhamel, Westerly Town Council
Kate Waterman, Charlestown Town Council
Beverly Kenney, Hopkinton Town Council
Jim O'Neill, South Kingstown Town Council
George Tracy, Narragansett Town Council
Anthony Miccolis, North Kingstown Town Council
Robert Ellis Smith, New Shoreham Town Council
Sue Barker, WCRPC Executive Director

Advisory Members and Public

Michael Rauh, Washington Trust Company
Bob Sherman, New Shoreham Delegate
Catherine Collette, Charlestown Affordable Housing
Commission

The regular monthly meeting of the Washington County Regional Planning Council (WCRPC) held on Wednesday, March 15, 2006 at The Kettle Pond Visitors Center in Charlestown was called to order by President, Chris Duhamel at 8:41 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

B Kenney made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 2006 meeting. J O'Neill seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Executive Director's Report

The WCRPC submitted a proposal for \$113,000 to the RI Statewide Planning Program to study land use and transportation along the Route 1 corridor in Washington County. We hope to receive word of approval by the end of March.

The URI senior landscape design studio under the direction of Professor William Green is conducting a study of the Route 1 Corridor. The students gave an excellent presentation to town planners and interested stake holders on March 7 to outline their progress to date, describe those natural and cultural locations identified as most valuable, most threatened, and most important to preserve. Those present were asked to prioritize the locations on Route 1 that most require study and protection.

The WCRPC has been awarded \$1000 to present a workshop entitled "Growing Together: Consensus Building, Smart Growth and community Change" by the New England Environmental Finance Center in the Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. The WCRPC invited the WCCDC to co-sponsor the workshop with us and they voted to do so.

The WCCDC applied for 501-c-3 status in October. The IRS has not yet processed the application and do not expect it will be approved soon. A Miccolis reported that Senator Chafee's office has contacted the IRS to move the approval process along. The WCCDC is pursuing funding and must work through an organization that has a 501-c-3 tax-exempt status. The WCRPC uses the 501-c-3 status of the URI Foundation. We cannot provide the assistance they request without approval of the URI Foundation. B Kenny made a motion to table the request until the next meeting after a tax lawyer has been consulted. The motion was seconded by K Waterman and approved unanimously.

The bi-monthly planners meeting will be held next Tuesday morning at 8:30 a.m. in the Washington Trust Company conference room. Brenda Clement and Rupert Friday will attend the meeting to clarify how their organizations differ from each other and how they can assist the towns.

Patrick Durney continues to work on the public school funding study and has identified some areas where cost savings could be realized. Tentative plans are to hold the 4th Annual Congress of Councils in May during the break between the second semester and summer school.

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The semi-annual transportation committee meeting will be held next month directly after the board meeting at the Kettle Pond Visitors Center.

Town Updates

Hopkinton: B Kenny reported that Hopkinton is working on the town budget for FY 2007. The town is interviewing candidates for town manager. A committee has been formed to study and recommend zoning changes in the town.

South Kingstown: J O'Neill reported that the town has purchased a 250-acre property for 3 million dollars. This property was zoned for 160 single-family houses. The town will include a bond referendum on the ballot in November to provide funds for the land. Revenue growth cannot keep up with health insurance and retirement benefit costs in South Kingstown.

Westerly: C Duhamel reported that the hotel proposed for Westerly was rejected by the town. The issue was the location near Route 1. Town residents living south of route 1 felt the hotel would threaten their homes. The funds requested to support the WCRPC have not been reinserted into the town budget.

North Kingstown: A Miccolis reported that the North Kingstown budget is in compliance with the town budget cap resolution. The proposed school budget increase was cut from 7.5% to 5.5% to bring it into compliance with the 5.5% cap.

Narragansett: G Tracy reported that their school enrollment is declining. The Pier Village area is a major planning issue right now. They are currently reviewing the to increase awareness of its existence. Affordable housing remains an issue.

Block Island: R Smith reported that they want more children on the Island to make their school viable. They have an infrastructure but need kids. The town is searching for a finance director. The state airport may be closed in the fall for repairs. Block Island seeks Westerly's support to prevent harm to the businesses that depend on the airport. R Smith suggested that the WCRPC invite a representative from the Weather Service office in Taunton to visit with the board about hurricane preparedness.

Charlestown: K Waterman distributed a letter to the CRMC for review by the board. The purpose of the letter is to raise awareness that the towns in Washington county control most of the coastal waters of the state and that protecting our water quality and quantity are of equal concern with the need to provide affordable housing. The letter was discussed. The board decided to print the letter on WCRPC letterhead and distribute to board members for review and approval. Those who wish to sign it will respond with permission for a third party to sign and initial the letter on their behalf as board members. The letter will be mailed on Thursday. C Duhamel will not participate in this effort because has a conflict. He will pass the letter to the Westerly Town Council president for her signature.

The Charlestown budget is complete with a new fund created to support unfunded mandates related to GASPE requirements.

The town Council passed the plan for new stoplights at 5 intersections on route 1. DOT created cookie cutter designs and has reconfigured the existing jug handles.

Guest Presentation: Kevin M. Flynn, Associate Director, Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program discussed the Rhode Island State Land Use Policies and Plan that is currently being reviewed at public meetings around the state. The state developed a comprehensive plan to determine where development should occur and where land should be preserved. A discussion of the proposed plan and its effect on Washington County followed.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by K Waterman, seconded by J O'Neill, and approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 AM.

Katharine H. Waterman March 15, 2006
Board Secretary