

WASHINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

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

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

December 2002

ATTENDANCE:

WCRPC Representatives and Staff

E. Robert Corrigan, Jr., Hopkinton
Henry Oppenheimer, Richmond
Michael Cerullo, Exeter
John Hickey, Narragansett
Kate Waterman, Charlestown
Devon Preston, Executive Director

Advisory Members and Public

Ken Payne, RI Senate Policy Office
Meg Kerr, URI Coastal Resources Center/ Sea Grant
Steve Lysik, South Kingstown Planner
Tom Brillat, Wash County Adult Learning Center
Jim Lamphere, Charlestown Planner
Michael Rauh, The Washington Trust Company

The regular monthly meeting of the Washington County Regional Planning Council (WCRPC) was held on Thursday, December 12, 2002 at 8:30 a.m. at The Washington Trust Company building in Charlestown, one week earlier than previously scheduled to accommodate holiday schedules.

Approval of Minutes

Bob Corrigan of Hopkinton made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for the months of September, October and November. John Hickey of Narragansett seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved with one “abstain” from Kate Waterman, a new representative from Charlestown, who had not attended any of the previous meetings.

Executive Director’s Report

The Executive Director reported on the month’s activities, and told the board that the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission had approached the WCRPC to share a display booth at the January 30, 2003 League of Cities and Towns Convention. The board agreed that this would be worth the total cost of \$170 (a discount from the regular charge). She described her meeting with the RI Housing Network, where collaboration on the affordable housing issue in Washington County was discussed, and announced that, per a request from the board last month, the RI Housing Network and RI Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC*) would make a presentation to the board in the early part of next year. Ken Payne from the RI Senate Policy Office gave an overview of the recent “RI Convocation of Sense of Place” which proposed refocusing economic development in the state to make preserving and enhancing quality of place a priority in development strategy.

** (LISC provides grants, loans and equity investments to CDCs for neighborhood redevelopment.)*

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December 2002 Meeting Minutes Continued...

Vote to Adopt WCRPC Five-Year Action Plan

John Hickey of Narragansett made a motion to approve the WCRPC's Five-Year Action Plan. Bob Corrigan of Hopkinton seconded the motion, and the action plan was unanimously approved.

Congress of Councils and Legislative Breakfast Planning Session

Michael Rauh proposed a format and general agenda for the February 13 Congress of Councils, and stated that he sees the event as a historic opportunity, with the new Governor and leaders of the Senate and House, for bringing our issues to the forefront.

The board also reviewed the attached legislative proposals, which were written up after being discussed at the last meeting, and further refinements and comments were made. These issues will be featured at the January 17 Legislative Breakfast.

February 13 Congress of Councils Planning Session

D. Grogan, M. Cerullo and H. Oppenheimer offered to participate on a committee to plan the Congress in February. In the meantime, it was decided that it was more urgent to spend some time considering what the WCRPC would like to prioritize legislatively in the upcoming year, particularly to provide discussion topics for the January 17, 2003 Legislative Breakfast. A summary of that discussion is attached.

Administrative Business

The meeting ran late, and therefore the Administrative Business items (Personnel Policy and Advisory Committees were tabled until the next meeting.)

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Henry Oppenheimer for
Board Secretary

January 16, 2003

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Legislative Issues for 2003

Revised with December 12, 2002 Board Meeting Comments

1. INCREASE STATE AID TO EDUCATION FOR WASHINGTON COUNTY TOWNS

Washington County is the fastest growing county in New England, and one of the only regions in the state with an increasing K through 12 student base. Likewise, the local dependence on the property tax to fund education is having a dramatic negative effect on the way this unique region is being developed. For these two reasons, and those listed below, we respectfully request that the state increase funding to Washington County municipalities in order to:

- /// fully fund all vo-tech schools (as only Davies and Met are fully funded at this time);
- /// equitably distribute Special Education funding between rural, suburban and urban communities;
- /// lessen the burden of unfunded mandates on municipal budgets.

///

Also, in estimating tax capacity and effort, the state includes town and city budgets and property taxes paid to towns and cities. Yet, different towns and cities provide different services and even within a service, provide them to a different extent which creates discrepancies in the calculations from town to town. For example, most communities in WC have volunteer fire departments and independently contract for garbage pick-up, which means that these two major items, although still a cost to the towns, are not considered in the effort basis. This amounts to a penalty when compared with analyses for tax capacity in cities with these services fully funded in their budget, and leaves Washington County towns perpetually undercompensated to adequately meet their fiscal needs.

2. LEGISLATIVE GRANT OF \$100,000 TO REGIONAL PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

Dedicate line-item in budget, or set aside for a legislative grant, to provide \$200,000 funding -- \$100,000 to each group -- to increase the capacity of the state's two regional planning organizations: the Washington County Regional Planning Council and the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission.

From the Governor's Growth Council, to the Statewide Planning Office, to the recently convened "Convocation on Quality of Place" sponsored by RIPEC, RI EPC, the Coastal Resources Center at URI, and the Senate Policy Office, there is a call for regional planning in Rhode Island. Many experts and experienced professionals agree that the scale on which regional organizations approach development and preservation is ideal for maximizing outcomes and benefits.

3. OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION BOND

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Preservation of open space remains a priority for maintaining rural character and environmental quality in Washington County.

4. RESTRUCTURE THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (EDC)

Separate real estate function from EDC's other responsibilities, to avoid competition with city and town initiatives.

Make economic development a statewide initiative, unlike EDC's tendency to work solely in North and at Quonset.

Prioritize sustaining and enhancing the "quality of place" in Rhode Island in all development strategies.