

**Planning Commission**  
**Minutes of August 26, 2015 Meeting**

1670 Flat River Road  
Coventry, RI 02816

Meeting Called to order at 7:02 pm by Chairman Russell Crossman.

Members Present: Chairman Crossman, Vice-Chairman Mr. Nunes, Secretary Mr. Flynn, Mr. Crowe, Mr. Kalunian, Mr. Mattson, and Mr. Bouchard

Members Absent: Mr. Osenkowski, Ms. Fagan-Perry

Also Present: Mr. Sprague, Attorney Assalone

*Mr. Crossman reviewed the exits in the room in case of an emergency.*

Approval of Minutes:  
July 22, 2015

*Mr. Bouchard made a motion to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Flynn requested that the minutes be amended to state that Mr. Nunes was not present. Mr. Bouchard amended his motion. Mr. Nunes seconded. All members were in favor. Motion passed.*

*Mr. Crossman then recused himself from the first two items on the agenda due to conflicts which he stated on the recusal form. Vice-Chairman Nunes presided over the continuation of the meeting.*

**SITEWALK**

Sitewalk/Pre-Application: “**Dunkin Donuts**”; Dan’s Management Company  
*Proposed 2,200 s.f. Dunkin’ Donuts w/ 1,200 s.f. Retail Office*  
AP 7, Lot 16; BP  
2285 New London Turnpike

Attorney Brunero representing the applicant. Applicant would like to move his Dunkin’ Donuts business from one side of the street to the other on New London Turnpike. Attorney Brunero stated that back in 2006 the zoning in that area was changed from Industrial to Business Park and bank plans were approved for construction. The plans were similar to the construction being proposed in terms of parking spaces and drive-up area with an easement for access to the cemetery on the property. The only difference is that the facility will be selling donuts and not making cash deposits. This new site is more conducive to proper traffic flow. People traveling on Arnold Road during the morning commute are more likely to patronize the establishment. His client is not asking for zoning relief. An underground injection system for drainage has been approved. The client is also looking at an accessory building if in need of more retail space in the future.

Provisions for trash pickup and a delivery stall are included. The only change in design is side by side entry/exit. The next step is to schedule a site walk.

*A site walk was scheduled for 9am on Saturday, September 5, 2015. A rain date for the following Saturday, September 12, 2015 was also scheduled.*

Mr. Nunes stated that he would like to see the entrances widened by shifting curb lines to the 26' – 28' range. Attorney Brunero said there is plenty of room to widen the entrances. Mr. Bouchard also wanted to see the entrances enlarged to allow delivery trucks easier access. Mr. Crowe commented that wider entrances will also be needed for plowing and snow banks.

Mr. Flynn expressed a concern for the four lane traffic and customers exiting the establishment. Attorney Brunero demonstrated that exiting cars are far enough back from the queuing at the traffic light that if they were to exit the lot and take a left turn it shouldn't cause a traffic issue. He would also have the traffic analysis evaluated.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Public Hearing**

#### 2015 Community Development Block Grant Application

Public comment on proposed activities under consideration for submittal to the State of Rhode Island 2015 Community Development Block Grant Program.

Planning Commission's Ranking/Review/Recommendation to the Town Council

- . Planning Commission certification that the activities are consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan and local development ordinances/regulation;
- . Rank the activities;
- . Recommend the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to file the application

Mr. Sprague explained that annually money is made available to the State for low-moderate income families. It is then disbursed to cities and towns. The Fiscal Year begins on October 1, 2015. This public hearing has been advertised twice for applications and meeting attendance. After tonight's input is solicited, an application is submitted to HUD. Grant applications received tonight are from various applicants.

It is the Planning Commission's responsibility to determine that the applications are consistent with the Town's Community Comprehensive Plan, regulations and ordinances and to prioritize (rank) the applications for submission. The applications are then submitted to the State and favorable recommendations are made to the Town Council to authorize the Town Manager to submit the applications. The amount being sought is \$250,000.000.

Mr. Sprague also stated the federal government reduced funding to this program. Monies have been allocated to other sources so chances of receiving funding are slim. Items listed are submitted for ranking by the Planning Commission:

**Item #1. Onsite Wastewater Repairs & Cesspool Phase Out**

If a home's cesspool fails, it must be replaced by an ISDS. Recently the General Assembly passed a law that effective January 1, 2016, states within one year of conveyance of a home, the cesspool must be converted to a septic system. Cesspools harm groundwater thus polluting rivers and streams. Communities along Narragansett Bay have commenced phase outs by certain dates requiring new homeowners to install ISDS. Banks will not loan to property sales without ISDS or connection to a sewer system as condition of the sale. Mr. Nunes commented that money is escrowed until septic is installed.

Mr. Sprague noted there was a high ratio of cesspools not tied into sewers. He cited as an example, if there is a substantial quantity of ledge it could cost around \$20,000+ to install an ISDS. Mr. Nunes commented it was more likely to be around \$40,000 - \$50,000. This program is designed to assist low-moderate income homeowners install/replace a cesspool with an ISDS.

**Item #2. CHAC/Upgrade of Security Equipment for 195 units \$47,500.00**

Mr. Sprague explained that the Coventry Housing Association wanted to upgrade the security system of 195 units. This would include 24 hour video surveillance to enhance the security of their residents. He noted that this upgrade to high definition cameras would allow visibility during both daytime and evening hours and would be part of the Comprehensive Community Plan to promote safe, decent housing.

**Item #3. Demolition of 578-582 Washington Street \$40,407.45**

This property is located across from the Anthony Fire Department. It was intended to provide short term transitional housing for the Department of Human Services. Money was allocated to upgrade the fire alarm system and an interior stairway. However, the flooding of the Pawtuxet River in 2010 did such a substantial amount of structural damage the building was rendered uninhabitable and uncorrectable. The money provided will be used for demolition of the structure and to repay the Federal Government for money spent from the grants already provided.

**Item #4. Coventry Human Services/Window Replacement \$31,175.00**

The Department of Human Services is in need of replacement of windows. The new windows will be energy efficient, double hung windows.

**Item #5. CHAC/1<sup>st</sup> Time Buyer Closing Assistance \$20,000.00**

This is to assist low-moderate income people with a down payment and closing costs. This will enable them to be in a better financial position to purchase their own home. This is included in the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan to provide affordable housing opportunities to residents.

**Item #6. Cornerstone Adult Daycare Services \$5,000.00**

This service cares for adults suffering from Alzheimer's disease and related dementia who live with their families.

**Over the cap funding not to be ranked: CHA/Riverside Landing \$370,000.00**

Mr. Sprague commented that he would also like the Planning Commission to recommend to the Town Council at some point to allocate monies to convert the vacant buildings that were once part of the Harris Mill into 8, two-bedroom housing units for low – moderate income families. This type of conversion project will provide affordable housing as well as eliminate an eyesore. Rehabilitation of this structure is also consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

*Mr. Nunes stated the meeting was to be opened up to Public Hearing. Mr. Bouchard made a motion to open the meeting. Mr. Mattson seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

*No one from the audience approached for comment. A motion was made to close the meeting by Mr. Mattson. Mr. Bouchard seconded the motion. Motion passed.*

Discussion:

Gail Hardink was present in the audience to answer questions for the Planning Commission. She explained that the cap was \$250,000 but requests for affordable housing could go over that cap. She anticipated that the money for Julie's [Riverside Landing] project would be funded. She hoped that the first activity on the list [Onsite Wastewater Repairs & Cesspool Phase Out] being a new activity and being important that it would get funded and probably Cornerstone's [Adult Daycare] would be granted. Mr. Kalunian asked if any of the other projects have other sources of funding. Ms. Hardink answered that there may be funding available through the State's Clean Water funding if they can rewrite the current contract which expires in 2018.

Mr. Kalunian expressed concern that the community would not benefit if low – moderate income home buyers could not afford to maintain the property they purchased. Mr. Sprague stated that the income guideline ranges from \$42,000 - \$79,200. Mr. Kalunian felt that pride of ownership was beneficial to both the homeowner and the community as a whole by the fixing up of run-down properties but as far as ranking wondered how many could not afford to keep their homes in good repair.

Mr. Nunes questioned the circumstances of the Demolition of 578-582 Washington Street. Ms. Hardink clarified that \$26,000 of the almost \$29,000 previously awarded money had been spent in trying to provide the transitional housing for the Department of Human Services. As the project is no longer viable, that money would have had to be returned to the program since the National Objective of occupancy was not met, however approval was given to support demolition instead. Mr. Nunes questioned if the \$40,000 being requested was to repay the \$26,000 and the demolition. It was explained that the \$40,000 being requested was for the difference of the \$29,000 already awarded and the lowest bid to demolish being \$69,000. The Town will still have to spend \$29,000 towards the project. Mr. Nunes suggested it be moved up to number 2 in hopes of getting enough money to demolish the building.

In further discussion, Mr. Mattson questioned the listing of the Finding of Fact. Mr. Nunes explained it gives the Board choices in how they can vote. Mr. Kalunian inquired

about the ranking of the Cornerstone project in that it has been bumped up the ranking list in the past. Mr. Sprague answered that it was a past Councilman's request at one of the public hearings. Mr. Bouchard questioned if the Town Council could change the Planning Board's ranking. Attorney Assalone answered that the Planning Commission is making the recommendation but the Town Council has the final say. Mr. Kalunian asked how many are served at Cornerstones. Having received an answer of around 50 individuals, Mr. Kalunian felt that since it calculated to \$100.00 per person it should be moved up the list.

*Mr. Bouchard made a motion that the PY'15 Community Block Grant application by reading the Finding of Fact which states:*

*"Each of the applications for CDBG grants is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Community Plan and local regulations.*

- . The proposed activities promote safe, decent housing through code enforcement and housing rehabilitation;*
- . The Plan provides that the Town should apply for and utilize CDBG funds to stimulate housing and neighborhood revitalization in areas of low and moderate income housing;*
- . A goal of the Plan is to provide affordable housing opportunities for residents of Coventry through appropriate new housing and neighborhood revitalization.*

### **The Ranking of Responsibility**

*The Planning Commission ranks the proposed activities in the following descending order of priority (#1 being the highest priority and #6 being the lowest priority) in the following sums of grant monies:*

- 1. Onsite Wastewater Repairs & Cesspool Phase-Out*
- 2. 578 – 582 Washington Street Demolition*
- 3. CHAC/Upgrade of Security Equipment for 195 units*
- 4. Coventry Human Services Window Replacement*
- 5. Cornerstone Adult Daycare Services*
- 6. CHAC/1<sup>st</sup> Time Buyer Closing Assistance*

*Recommendation to Town Council:*

*The Planning Commission recommends that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to submit a CDBG application to the State Office of Housing and Community Development."*

*Mr. Crowe seconded the motion. (Discussion followed and resulted in leaving the ranking as the motion proposed.) All were in favor. Motion passed.*

*Mr. Crossman then resumed as Chairman of the meeting.*

Issues of Interest

Mr. Mattson inquired whether the wind turbines that went before the Town Council were approved by the Planning Commission. Mr. Sprague answered that the Planning Commission was not involved and that the turbines just went before the Zoning Board in order to avoid two different rulings. Mr. Mattson stated that he felt it should be the proper process for this matter to come before the Planning Commission matter as it affects the infrastructure of the Town. Mr. Crossman concurred that he felt it should come before the Planning Commission as well. He cited the example of cell towers and how they affect the surrounding area if they should fall.

Mr. Kalunian commented that the Harris Mill is now at 100 percent occupancy and that the only drawback has been the parking spaces available for overnight guests and this should be taken into consideration for Riverside Landing.

Public Works Director

None

Planning Director Report

None

Public Comment

Tammy Duxbury, 2 Orchid Trail, stated that she was in agreement that projects such as the wind turbines should come before the Planning Commission. She claimed there were many projects that did not come before the Planning Commission that should have as the Commission makes determinations if a project is within the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Case in point, she felt that the wind turbines and the two asphalt plants in her backyard should have come before the Commission. She said both these projects went directly to the Zoning Board.

Mr. Crossman said that the way the projects as it is currently written could have come before the Planning Commission was if they were sent over by Zoning for an advisory opinion. However, unless the Town Council sends it to the Commission, the only role it could play would be in an advisory capacity.

Ms. Duxbury suggested that if it was a Charter issue, now would be the time to bring it up. Mr. Bouchard agreed that perhaps it is time for a Charter review. Ms. Duxbury suggested that the Planning Commission make a recommendation for this issue to go before the Charter Review Committee.

*A motion was then made by Mr. Bouchard to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Nunes seconded. All members in favor. Motion passed.*

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 pm.

Minutes prepared by Susan Volpe