



Annual Report of the
Planning Board
City of Newport, Rhode Island
2020

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From the Chair

Dear Mayor Napolitano and members of the Newport City Council:

In 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated social upheaval. In Newport, Covid caused profound economic uncertainty for many who rely on tourism and hospitality for their livelihood and created great community distress. Covid also brought changes to City governance. Indeed, the Zoom digital meeting platform may have improved public access to local decision-making. This was especially true at Planning Board meetings. Meanwhile, in City Hall, the Director of Development and Planning and the City Planner established trust and capability in their roles. They worked diligently with the Planning Board (a public body with highly engaged individuals) to take action on a series of significant issues. 2020 was a banner year, the most productive year for the City of Newport Planning Board that I can remember.

Last year, the Planning Board engaged in the usual activities, including granting Demolition Permits, overseeing Major and Minor Subdivisions and providing recommendations to the Zoning Board for Special Use permits. It engaged in Development Plan Review for major parcels. It reviewed Community Development Block Grant applications for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The Board also refined our Bylaws to reflect current concerns, created Sample Meeting Procedures to guide the Board and the public, updated the Demolition Approval Application for a more streamlined process, approved the Technical Review Committee Procedures to meaningfully interact with professional staff and firmly established the role of liaisons. We now receive updates from the Technical Review Committee, the Resiliency Specialist, the Waterfront Commission the Short Term Rental Investigatory Group and the Transportation Master Plan Working Group. We have taken a most comprehensive view toward City planning, oversight and governance.

2020 was not without challenges. Prompted by racial strife and economic malaise, the Planning Board established two working groups: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Coronavirus Response. The Planning Board recently submitted a recommendation to the City Council to create a new chapter in the Comprehensive Plan at the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion working group's request, to be developed at the 5-year update. This chapter aims to promote equity, across the full spectrum of planning. Earlier in the year, the Coronavirus group made a recommendation for street closures to assist restaurants with outdoor dining. Initially this was rejected, but later accepted for the Broadway Merchant's street closure in November. A comprehensive, attractive and long-term approach to outdoor dining remains elusive. Additionally, there is little public interest in using the Planning Board to mitigate the negative effect of the pandemic on local business.

Other planning endeavors have been more productive. In late 2019, the City hired a design team, led by the Boston office of NBBJ, to develop the North End Urban Plan (NEUP). The Plan will provide guidance for future development in the North End. In the first half of the year, the pandemic lockdown afforded time for the executive committee (comprised of Planning Staff, the City Manager and Planning Board Chair) to work with the consultants to make a plan that will serve the City, now that the North End construction moratorium has expired. In order to implement the plan, the Commercial Industrial Zone will be re-zoned in 2021. A zoning document for parcels that includes deaccessioned Pell Bridge Ramp Realignment lands,

deaccessioned Navy lands, and other nearby parcels ripe for re-development has been created by the Zoning Working Group. The NEUP will work in tandem with a new zoning ordinance to create the maximum economic development potential as well as the greatest public benefit.

2021 will be another impactful year for Newport planning. The City signed an agreement with the State to conduct the city's first ever Transportation Master Plan: a consultant has been selected and the process will fully commence as soon as a the consultant is contracted. The Planning Board expects the Transportation Master Plan to fully engage the community throughout the year. Meanwhile, the City is exploring measures to protect infrastructure from rising seas. Earlier in the year, public and private city leadership attended a 4 HOUR Zoom Municipal Resiliency Workshop. The threat of sea level rise was put into sharp focus: the City should create project priority in order to secure much needed funding for resiliency infrastructure. To this end, the Planning Board will form a working group at the beginning of the year to assess planning goals, in order to better guide and protect City capital investment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kim Salerno", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kim Salerno

2020 Chair

City of Newport, Rhode Island Planning Board

Attendance

Meeting Date	Chair Kim Salerno	Vice-Chair Jeff Brooks	Secretary Liam Barry	Stephen Berlucchi	Elizabeth Fuerte	Richard Haggis	Paul Marshall	John Oliveira	Melissa Pattavina
January 13	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
February 3	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
March 2	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
CANCELLED DUE TO CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC									
April 6									
May 11	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
June 1	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
June 22	present	present	present	present	present	present	absent	absent	present
July 13	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
August 3	present	present	present	present	absent	absent	present	absent	present
August 31	Present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	absent
September 14	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present	present
October 5	present	present	present	present	absent	present	present	present	present
October 22	present	present	absent	present	present	absent	present	present	present
November 5	present	present	absent	present	present	present	present	present	present
November 16	present	present	absent	Resigned November 5	present	present	present	present	recused
November 18	present	present	absent		present	present	present	present	present
November 30	present	present	present		Present	present	present	present	present
December 7	present	present	present		Resigned November 30	present	present	present	present

Petitions Reviewed

Certification of Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan:

2019 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application; Planning Board review of the proposals contained in the application and determination if the activities proposed are not in conflict with the general policies set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. *(consistent)*

Demolition Approval:

Petition of Easton's Pond, LLC, applicant, and heirs of Elizabeth C McCarthy, owner, regarding demolition of a single-family home at 154 Eustis Avenue, Tax Assessor's Plat 23, Lot 148
Petition of Kyle and Melissa Spitzer, applicant and owner, regarding demolition of a single-family home and barn at 13 Clinton Street, Tax Assessor's Plat 39, Lot 264. *(approved with conditions)*

Petition of Kyle and Melissa Spitzer, applicants and owners, regarding demolition of a single-family home at 13 Clinton Street, Tax Assessor's Plat 39 Lot 264 *(approved with conditions)*

Development Plan review:

Petition of Howard Wharf, LP, applicant and property owner, for a special use permit for permission to construct a 21-room transient guest facility with a standard restaurant apply to the property located at 24 Lee's Wharf, aka "Howard Wharf", TAP 32, Lot 314, (WB Zone)
(recommended approval subject to applicant's continued work with the Department of Utilities on a stormwater connection)

General Finding of Consistency with the Goals and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan for the Zoning Board of Review:

Petition of Tracy Coppola, applicant and lessee, Bellevue Plaza, LLC, owner; for special use permit for permission to convert the existing 1,600 sq. ft retail store into a fast-food restaurant serving nutritional shakes, smoothies, and related goods applying to the property located at 260 Bellevue Avenue, TAP 33, Lot 57, (GB Zone) *(consistent)*

Petition of Jeff Brooks, applicant and owner, for a special use permit for permission to have 3 chickens housed on the property applying to the property located at 11-1/2 Newport Avenue, TAP 14, Lot 133, (R-10 Zone) *(consistent)*

Petition of Derek Savas, Jay DeLeon & Alvaro Viera, applicants, and Charles F. Hill Jr., property owner, regarding a special use permit to expand a multifamily use at 359 Thames Street, TAP 27, Lot 158, Unity UFG (WB Zone) *(consistent)*

Petition of Howard Wharf, LP, applicant and property owner, for a special use permit for permission to construct a 21-room transient guest facility with a standard restaurant applying to the property located at 23 Lee's Wharf, aka Howard Wharf, TAP 32, Lot 314 (WB Zone) *(consistent)*

Petition of Bruce Moniz, applicant and owner, for a special use permit and a variance to the density requirement for permission to convert the existing first floor retail space into a soft serve ice cream shop, (fast food restaurant), and provide zero additional parking spaces, applying to the property located at 489 Thames St, TAP 32, Lot 157, (WB Zone) *(consistent)*

Petition of Patrick and Deborah Donovan, applicants and owners; for special use permit and variance to the off-street parking requirements for permission to convert the 2nd dwelling unit into a three-bedroom guesthouse and to provide zero addition off-street parking spaces applying to the property located at 30 Harrison Avenue, TAP 41, Lot 66, (R-10 zone) *(consistent)*

Subdivisions:

Petition of David Bazarsky, applicant and property owner, regarding subdivisions of residential property at 59 Kay Boulevard, TAP 11, Lot 373 into two (2) residential properties, 20,573, and 62, 179 sq. feet in size. *(approved)*

Petition of David K. and Christy N. Elwell, applicants and owners; regarding subdivision of a residential lot with two dwelling structures located at 96 and 100 Harrison Ave., Assessor's Plat 41 Lot 10-4. *(approved)*

Administrative Subdivision (merger) at the request of Newport Housing Authority, applicant and owner, 375 Spring Street, AP 5 Lots 3 and 133 *(approved)*

Administrative Subdivision (lot line) at the request of Forest E. Patten, applicant and owner, 294 Ocean Ave., AP 43 Lot 41 and Jane Carey, owner, 282 Ocean Ave., AP 43, Lot 39. *(approved)*

Administrative Subdivision (lot merger) of 1 and 5 Berkeley Avenue, Assessor's Plat 33 Lots 26 and 29 *(approved)*

Zoning Amendments Finding of Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Recommendation for Approval:

Petition of the City of Newport to amend the zoning ordinance to update definitions and permitted uses for short-term rentals *(consistent, approval recommended)*

Petition of the City of Newport to amend the zoning ordinance to update definitions and amend the permitted uses in the CL, GB, LB and WB zones to prohibit retail marijuana *(not consistent, approval not recommended)*

Action Items

Bylaws & Sample Meeting Procedures

The Planning Board updated its bylaws to make its proceedings clearer to Board members and the public. Sample meeting procedures were also developed for the same reason.

Demolition Approval Application Form

The Board updated its demolition approval application form with the City Solicitor's guidance.

Transportation Master Plan

Board members worked with staff to and Statewide Planning to develop a fundable project to create the City's first-ever Transportation Master Plan.

Short-Term Rentals

The Board worked with the City Solicitor to update short-term rentals in the Code of Ordinances. Additional communications between the Board and the City Council continued throughout the year. The Board is continuing to tweak the short-term regulatory scheme to best serve operators, abutters, and the public.

North End Urban Plan

The Chair and staff, working with a team of consultants, prepared an urban plan for the North End that lays out the land use vision for the area. The Board prepared an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan to incorporate this North End Urban Plan and adopted the amendment on December 7. The Board is hopeful the Council will quickly adopt the amended Comprehensive Plan and the State does the same, so that the document can go into full effect.

Covid-19 Pandemic Response

Board members and staff were active with the "Zorro Brigade" helping to distribute face masks in heavily-trafficked areas during weekends in the summer. The Board was very supportive of efforts to assist local businesses struggling because of the pandemic, assisting merchants with closing a section of lower Broadway in the fall for expanded outdoor dining and retail and working to enhance Connect Greater Newport's business survey. The forthcoming Hazard Mitigation Plan update provides an opportunity for further pandemic planning.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Responding to calls for action, a working group of Board members investigated what the Board could promote to better achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion of traditionally marginalized populations. A report was prepared and submitted to the City Council.

Trainings

All Board members completed their mandatory sea-level rise training in accordance with RIGL 45-22-7(j).

City Planner Peter Friedrichs and Preservation Planner Helen Johnson presented to the Board about how historic properties are defined, integrated into the Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinances on February 3.

Staff

Director of Planning and Economic Development Patricia Reynolds and City Planner Peter Friedrichs attended all Planning Board meetings.

The Board received regular updates on resiliency efforts from Sarah Atkins, the City's Community Resilience Specialist, through its Resiliency Liaison, Paul Marshall.

Staff attended the League of Cities and Towns Conference, the Statewide Planning Institute, the Attorney General's Open Government Summit, as well as numerous other webinars.