

## MINUTES

### GOVERNMENT CENTER PLANNING WORKING GROUP

May 11, 2016

Present: Dr. Philip Auger; John Boscardin; Curtis Givan; Dianne Izzo; Mary King; William King; Nicole LaFontaine; Sheila McGauvran; Gary Tedeschi

Absent: Phil Bergeron

Also in attendance was Richard Welch, the Liaison of the Asset Management Commission and Liz Dolan, Town Economic Development Administrator.

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 5:03 p.m. by Chair Dianne Izzo.

II. Approve minutes of April 20, 2016 meeting: Motion by Mr. Givan, seconded by Mr. King, to approve April 20, 2016 meeting minutes approved (8-0); Mr. Boscardin was not at the April 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, therefore he did not vote on the motion.

III. Public Comment: No comments.

IV. Communications Policy and Plan:

- a) Review and vote on Communications Policy and Plan: Included in packet of information for tonight's meeting, Ms. Izzo provided Group members with copies of a proposed *Communication Plan* that she drafted, which she felt could be used by the Group in developing the scope of the report, spelling out the objectives of the Group, how data was compiled and the findings of the Group; a sort of "what we are doing and why" guide, along with a proposed outline of the report to the Town Council. Ms. Izzo asked for feedback from Group. Mr. Boscardin had objections with including "*citizens*" in the objectives of the Communication Plan; should only be addressing the Town Council. He questioned why Ms. Izzo is proposing a Communication Policy. She explained that as a result of the previous meeting's discussion regarding communication with the media, she presented this to the Group so that members when speaking to the public are cognizant of the fact that they are not speaking on behalf of the Group; there is a consistent message when information is made public and there is a procedure in place for the flow of information submitted for meetings to the Group to be made available to the Public.

Mr. Boscardin also does not agree with Item #3 of the proposed Outline ("Consolidation") or including consolidation in the Messages section (#6) of the proposed Communication Plan, stating that the topic of consolidation is out of the scope of the Charge given by the Town Council; the Group should not be making any recommendations on consolidation as Group is not qualified to make such decisions. Ms. Izzo clarified her use of the word *consolidation* to mean when both parties are occupying

the same building, there is a shared responsibility for maintenance of the space, contracted services for the building, shared facilities etc. where it may be prudent to have one combined contract for the work rather than having two separate ones; she is not recommending eliminating personnel. Ms. King stated that if the focus is on shared facilities rather than consolidation, consolidation will happen organically from there.

Motion by Mr. Boscardin to amend the section entitled Objectives of the Communication Plan by eliminating #2 and removing the word *Citizens* from #3 so that it reads the Town Council [only]; motion seconded by Mr. Tedeschi for the sake of discussion. Discussion ensued with no vote taken. Ms. Izzo said she will resubmit an amended Plan for next meeting omitting the word *consolidation* and adding the word *combined*.

- b) Review proposed report outline: Ms. Izzo asked if the Group had a chance to review the outline for the Final Report that she prepared. In her opinion, the objective of the report is to create a document that shows availability of land for constructing a new building, available commercial buildings that could accommodate use as a government center and the feasibility of rehabbing an existing building, one currently owned by the Town or a commercial property purchased/rented by the Town. Mr. Boscardin restated his objection to #3 – Consolidation – of the proposed outline.
  - c) Review proposed survey questions, approve if ready: Ms. Izzo said she found Mr. King persuasive in his argument presented at the last meeting that we need to take the pulse of the people – where should the Government Center be? It is important to know if the public consensus is that the Government Center should be in Wickford. Ms. Izzo provided draft survey information for discussion. Ms. LaFontaine noted that the survey should include questions targeting businesses located in Town, not just residents. Mr. King explained that he did a small sample survey (8 people), which elicited same comment from all participants: The question that should be asked is: Do you think the Town should have a new Government Center? Ms. McGauvran sees need for an engaged citizenry in this process. Why limit choices to circle one? Why not allow more choices, perhaps pick your top 3 site choices? Topic will be continued for discussion at a future meeting.
- V. Town and School Building Requirements: Ms. Izzo referred to the map created after the last meeting that indicates location of properties (buildings and land) owned by the Town. She noted that Mr. Bergeron had previously said the minimum space requirement is 3 acres (which would still be a tight fit) and would eliminate some properties from the map. Mr. Tedeschi said that depending on what type of building is being rehabbed the cost of new construction may be cheaper per sq. foot; cost to rehab older buildings and bring them up to current codes is astronomical. He said we need to plan for future growth [100 years from now] to ensure space is available. Twenty years ago, no one thought of the Town having a municipal court; now there is one requiring office and courtroom space, which was not readily available at the current Town Hall. Also, rising sea levels highlight the need to consider flood hazards when contemplating a site. Mr. Boscardin asked that the map be altered to show the Flood Plan to assist with eliminating properties that are susceptible to flood.

Mr. Givan noted that at the present time there are 12 commercial properties available and 0 that are suitable for this use; there is land available for sale.

Mr. Steven Soscia, a real estate developer, asked if he could address the Group as he owned the property where the Narragansett Middle School now sits and has been through a similar experience with the needs assessment process in Narragansett when the School and Town offices were combined into a single location by rehabbing a former school building. Mr. Soscia would like to make the Group aware of a 5 acre site that he owns, located on Post Road at the second entrance to Reynolds Farm. He feels that when Reynolds Farm is fully developed, having government offices adjacent to this development would be both beneficial and convenient due to its location on Post Road.

VI. Continue work on feasibility and advisability of consolidation: Ms. Izzo asked members to review material presented and bring comments to next meeting; be ready to present real data for discussion on combining/sharing facilities functions.

VII. Schedule next meeting: Next meeting set for June 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m.

VIII. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn unanimously approved at 6:15.