

Route 2 and 102 Stakeholder Visioning Process
Meeting 3
September 26, 2012 6:00-9:00 pm
Wickford Middle School, North Kingstown, RI

Meeting Summary

Next Meetings: The next meeting, a Public Workshop, is scheduled for October 4, 6:00-9:00pm at Wickford Middle School. Subsequently, there is a Neighborhood Focus Group scheduled for October 10th, location to be determined. The next meeting of the Stakeholder Group will be Thursday October 25th, from 6-9pm, location TBD.

Meeting Participants: See Appendix A.

Next Steps:

- Project Team – develop Public Workshop agenda & refine scenarios to present.
- Project Team – develop online input approach.
- Project Team – review economic impact questions raised during the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Stakeholder Group members introduced themselves. All meeting materials can be found on the North Kingstown website, <http://www.northkingstown.org/visioning-process-routes-2-and-102>. The Stakeholder Group approved the Meeting 2 summary.

Ona Ferguson, facilitator, noted that several Stakeholder Group members had expressed concern about the timeline of the Planning Commission, which is scheduled to review the Rolling Greens Master Plan Amendment request in parallel to this visioning process. She reported that Liz Dolan, Chair of the Town Council, told her that the Planning Commission is required to review the submission per state law within certain time frames, but that the Town Council is not planning to make any decisions about what happens in the study area until after it has had time to review the final recommendations of the stakeholder group. Liz will discuss this process with the rest of the Town Council members at their October 1 meeting.

Possible Impacts: Water and Economics

In response to requests at the second Stakeholder Group meeting for more information on water and economics related to any development of the study area, Nate Kelly of Horsley Witten presented some additional background on these two subjects. His detailed presentation can be found on the project website.

Water

Nate described the North Kingstown system for water collection as storage and distribution. North Kingstown has a groundwater collection system (as opposed to a surface water system) with 11 different water wells and 5 water storage tanks that provide water for those on the town system. The distribution system runs throughout most of the Town. However, the Water Service Area is more limited in geographic scope. This more limited area shows where new connections for larger development are potentially allowable.

Nate noted that there is generally adequate water through the year, and that the challenge comes in summer, when demand is at its highest as people water lawns and groundwater supply is at its lowest. He described some of the water modeling scenarios used by North Kingstown to gauge the impact of new development on current water infrastructure. These models consistently show problems in long term demand, particularly in the summer peak demand season. The study area lies within the Annaquatucket aquifer.

North Kingstown addresses water quality and quantity through regulation in three broad categories: through land use planning designation, regulation of construction practices, and regulation of post-construction water use behaviors. On the land use planning side, North Kingstown uses tools like the transfer of development rights, which preserves land for recharging the aquifers, to actively protect water quantity. It incentivizes the use of compact village development, which uses less water per person per acre than traditional development patterns. It was noted that the town is currently discussing downsizing its current Water Service Area in an attempt to focus new water system connections to areas designated for growth in the Comprehensive Plan.

With regard to construction activity, North Kingstown requires best practices during construction such as selecting and maintaining plantings through a comprehensive landscaping ordinances to minimize water usage. Erosion and sediment controls as well as the State Stormwater Manual guide site designs and are focused on encouraging water capture, storage, and recharge on site. Once a site has been developed and buildings are occupied, the town monitors water use and gives financial incentives to encourage people to minimize water use. The water billing structure works in “blocks” and the higher the usage, the higher the rate applied for each gallon of use.

On the issue of water quality, Nate gave information about nitrate loading limitations, which are used to protect water quality in North Kingstown. Groundwater can easily be tested for nitrates and modeled, and North Kingstown uses models prior to development to ensure that the planned construction and end use will result in a permissible amount of nitrate loading. Nitrogen comes from many different sources on a given site including wastewater discharge, fertilizer application and stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces. Wastewater is almost always the highest contributor. North Kingstown requires all non-residential or mixed use development within the Groundwater Overlay districts to demonstrate that the amount of nitrogen produced by the development will not create a concentration in groundwater below the site higher than 5 mg/L. This standard is half the EPA threshold for safe drinking water (10 mg/L) and is used by many jurisdictions around the country as a conservative approach.

Stakeholder Group members had a range of questions, among which key themes are highlighted here, with answers in italics from the Project Team:

- Does this study area have aquifer problems? *The aquifer is stressed now in the summer months. When water supply is low in the summer, high human water use from lawn watering and other outdoor use can impact wetlands and streams (which dry up and become more shallow). In extreme conditions, the aquifer cannot yield enough water for the system.*
- What is the difference between water usage among uses (commercial, residential, industrial, etc.)? *Single family residential uses the most water. Agricultural users tend to use their own wells or cisterns for water storage, so they have a relatively low impact on the water system. Quonset Industrial Park requires that new users and older users where possible use its non-potable groundwater for watering landscaping.*

- Why is North Kingstown thinking of decreasing the water service area? What benefits will that provide, or what impact will it have on the public water system? *The town infrastructure, the actual town wells that pump the water, do not have the capacity to supply water to all of the current areas inside the current Water Service Area at current water use amounts. The state will not let us put in more municipal wells. Limiting the Water Service Area will limit the ability for new development outside of the WSA to connect to the system, providing a disincentive to develop outside the WSA. Where developers still choose to do so, they will be required to drill their own well on-site. This will still impact the aquifer. But because the withdrawal and the recharge are on the same site, that impact is minimized. A rule of thumb number for this situation is a 15% loss of water overall.*
- Do agricultural uses draw from the same aquifer with their wells? *Yes, but because they draw water locally and because much of it goes back into the ground onsite, the impact on the aquifer is far less than that of the town system.*

Mark Hawkins handed out a document with some water and nitrate loading calculations on it for Stakeholder Group members to read.

Economics

Nate Kelly described some possible fiscal impacts related to development of the study area. One issue he and the Project Team considered is that of school children, who contribute the largest piece to the town's budget. While dividing the school budget by the number of students generates a cost of almost \$11,000 per child per year, the question of cost per student is more complex than that calculation implies. Right now North Kingstown has the capacity for more school children in the town's school system. The infrastructure needed for school children is already in place. So the incremental cost of adding a child to the system might be more like half of that number for the time being. The project team would need to spend a substantial amount of additional time on this issue, and will contribute some time in the future to attempt to clarify this information. A Stakeholder Group member said that despite the fact that North Kingstown has capacity, additional school children at this intersection will have a fiscal impact, and the goal should not be to get to capacity, but to consider impacts.

Stakeholder group members noted that Post Road is struggling economically and expressed concern that development here might harm development in other parts of town. Several people also noted that market demands have a significant role in what does or does not get developed, and that isn't something this group can determine. A few Stakeholder group members asked for more precise numbers on schools and other aspects of development. Nate and Jon Reiner said that the type of economic analysis required to quantify the impacts to Post Road from a CVD development in the study area is an enormous undertaking and could not be performed as part of this process. Jon and Nate said they would look into whether there may be other meaningful ways to get at the answer.

Study Area Scenarios for Discussion

Peter Flinker, Dodson & Flinker, presented several scenarios for possible futures of the study area. Since there are relatively few physical constraints on development in the study area, he identified the nitrate loading required as part of local regulations as the primary limiting factor on development. These scenarios were developed to provide the Stakeholder Group something somewhat precise to react to. They were also intended as straw man scenarios to possibly use at the upcoming Public Workshops and Neighborhood Focus Group. The goal eventually is for Stakeholder Group members to talk through benefits and problems with various scenarios until they jointly develop something that they can all live

with. At this meeting, members didn't have much time to give feedback, but their input shaped the scenarios presented at the Public Workshop and Neighborhood Focus Group.

Right of Way

Regardless of the future vision for the study area, there is a 165-foot right of way that belongs to the RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT) running east/west along Rt 102. This is an area that the Stakeholder Group cannot design, yet Jon Reiner said that he thought RIDOT would be open to presenting information to the group, or to hearing suggestions or input on what people would like to see in this wide area along the road. The design of the right of way could help tie the final plan for the study area together. Peter shared some drawings and ideas for the right of way, suggesting opportunities including:

- Establishing a safe and attractive walking and biking connection connecting existing neighborhoods to each other and to adjacent commercial areas.
- Preserving as many of the existing trees and other vegetation as possible to maintain the landscape character of the roadside and buffer surrounding neighborhoods from the view and sounds of the road.
- Creating a multi-purpose path along both sides of the road to allow walking and biking from Rt. 4 to Route 2, and continuing south and west to Exeter.
- Integrating paths and landscape improvements within the right of way with plans for Rolling Greens and other projects, so that a consistent level of quality and character can be maintained throughout the area.

Scenario 1: Current Buildout

This scenario begins with the amount of development that is allowed under current zoning and reduces the total based on the constraints of the 5 mg/l limit on nitrate loading. The residentially-zoned Rolling Greens parcel would thus be restricted to 54 residential units; the Shartner parcel could support approximately 60,000 s.f. of commercial/office space on a 20,000 s.f. footprint; and the Bald Hill Garden Center could support about 67,000 s.f. of commercial use. While a somewhat larger building could be built on the Corner Tavern site, it is likely that the existing restaurant – which would be impossible to build under current nitrate limitations -- would remain as grandfathered use. Peter noted that nitrate regulations in Exeter might allow for greater commercial density on the Exeter Shartner parcel. Finally, the Morris Farm, which is subject to four-acre zoning in Exeter, could be built out for about 17 house lots, including four existing homes.

Scenario 2: Conservation Development

This scenario depicts a conservation development approach. Business would continue in the same lots as it has previously, and all other development would be residential on half-acre lots following the town's existing Conservation Development ordinance. The emphasis of this approach is to protect the most important open space, including the golf course, the Morris Farm, and farm land south of the intersection – and accommodate residential development in areas that are largely hidden from routes 2 and 102. There would be little commercial other than what is already present.

Stakeholder Group members gave feedback including that this is the one that some people think fits best in the study area as it currently is, and that this is the scenario some of the neighbors have been looking for. Others noted that many of the businesses in the study area would likely object to the down-zoning of their properties from general business to residential.

Scenario 3: Village Development

This scenario shows a mix of commercial and residential development as would be allowed under the CVD ordinance. It thus includes the current plan for Rolling Greens, with 50,000 s.f. of commercial facing Rt. 102, and residential streets stretching out to the north. On the south side of 102, the plan takes the amount of commercial predicted by the buidout and rearranges it on the site to create the kind of walkable village character envisioned by the ordinance. Buildings are lined up along an internal street network, with some parking on the street and more placed in the rear of buildings. Continuous sidewalks, trees, benches, etc. would encourage people to park their cars once and walk from one building to another within the village. On the Shartner properties, in particular, uses could include a farmer's market, food processing, and other elements that could take advantage of the nearby farmland.

Stakeholder Group members asked whether this amount of commercial development would draw people away from the shops at Wickford Junction. Some said this seemed like a lot of commercial.

Generally, Stakeholder Group members commented in response to all of these scenarios that whatever the group recommends should be a net gain for the town and should give the place character as the gateway to South County and Exeter. The solution from this group needs to be something that works best for the town and for the people, not just for one group.

Upcoming Public Workshops

Participants reviewed a proposed approach to the structure of two upcoming Public Workshops, a Neighborhood Focus Group and a way to give input online. These will be structured to allow the public to share thoughts about the study area, and feedback from these different public engagement approaches will be compiled and provided for consideration by Stakeholder Group members. Stakeholder group members recommended that presenters be very clear what can and cannot be accomplished, and that the Project Team let the public have lots of time to give their input. They also acknowledged the difficulty of explaining all the relevant information to a public with a range of interest, background knowledge and capacity.

Ona said she would send around a request from Rob Goodspeed, a doctoral student at MIT, to survey pre and post meeting at one of the public workshops. [Update: she did not end up doing this due to scheduling/coordination challenges.]

Public Comment

John Revens stated that site owners today may not have plans for future development because development occurs based on market drivers of what is allowed and whether there is a willing buyer/customer with specific ideas and intentions.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

APPENDIX A: Meeting Participants

Stakeholder Group Member & Alternates Present

Alternates are noted with an asterix

Michael Abbot* (For Frank Digregorio)

Michael Baker

Ahren Cohen

Paul Dion

Mark Hawkins

Meg Kerr

Tom Kolling* (For Jeff Zucchi)

Kevin Maloney

John Nosatch

Vaughn Oatley

Colin O'Sullivan

John Patterson

Martha Pugh

Jon Reiner

Rit Schartner

David Schweid

Absent Members

Frank DiGregorio

Jeff Zucchi

Project Team & NK Planning Dept. Staff

Ona Ferguson

Peter Flinker

Nate Kelley

Becky Lamond

Jared Weaver

Also in Attendance

Jerry Duffy

Tim Cranston

Donna Hutchinson

Lori Kay

Ron Mann

Alice O'Sullivan

Skip Ponte

John Revens

David Sampson

Marin Sampson

Rich Schartner

Rick Thompson