

PLANNING, ZONING, DEVELOPMENT &
INSPECTIONS

February 2009 Monthly Report

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

There were no budget deficiencies or anomalies. Financial expenditures are on target.

Budget Balance:

- Planning Division 43%
- Zoning Division 41%
- Community Development Division 54%
- Inspection Division 41%

Permit Revenue: Building \$27,992; Plumbing \$1,737; Mechanical \$7,400; Electrical \$8,960; Late filing/re-inspection 0.

PROJECTS:

- Comprehensive Land Use Plan Update: The Planning Board has discussed the process for initiating the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) update. The Board established a standing subcommittee charged with the technical work on the CLUP and solicited participation from the Waterfront Commission, Zoning Board, Historic District Commission, and Redevelopment Agency. The Comprehensive Planning update process will be conducted during 2009.
- Historic District Ordinance Task Force: Staff met several members of the HDOTF on February 25th to discuss the group's recommendations and specific ordinance changes. Most of the recommendations were deemed to be improvements, but some modifications would be needed to the actual text proposed. Staff expressed concern over the ability to implement the new standards and streamline the process without the direct assistance of a Preservation Planner.
- Sign Ordinance Amendment: The proposed amendment was approved by the Planning Board and was forwarded to the City Council for review, public hearing and approval. The City Council has scheduled a Work Session for March with the first hearing in April.
- Scenic Roadways Application: The application is now complete. The next formal step in the application process will be to notify the 700+ Ocean Drive abutters and hold a Public Hearing on the application prior to submitting it to RIDOT. Staff has recently learned that, since the retirement of Barbara Petrarca, the position of Scenic Byway Coordinator has not been filled at RIDOT, and actions on new applications have not taken place since 2002 due to repeated lack of a quorum at Scenic Roadways Board meetings. Staff will ascertain that the State is in a position to act upon the City's application prior to expending City resources on the final steps of the application process.
- Sheffield School: Several proposals were submitted for Sheffield School and they have been reviewed by staff. City staff is discussing details and seeking additional information from the developers. Information will be provided to the City Council in March.
- U.S. Navy Hospital (West Side): An initial meeting of the Aquidneck Island Reuse Planning Authority (AIRPA) was held on February 12th to introduce key participants including appointed representatives from Middletown, Newport, Portsmouth and the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation. Future meetings will engage all members once this authority is recognized by the Federal Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA). Also, grant funding is being sought through the direct assistance of the Aquidneck Island Planning Commission from the OEA. Grant funding will be used to hire a formal Project Coordinator position, conduct the mandatory "Homeless Outreach" component of the process, conduct environmental reviews, and develop a reuse plan.

- SAMP Plan (West Side): The draft document has been released by CRMC. The plan provides a regulatory framework from which developers will work in redeveloping the West Side of Aquidneck Island. For more information, go to this website: <http://www.crmc.ri.gov/samp/aquidneck.html>
- SAMP Plan (Ocean): Staff continues to participate at ongoing meetings at URI (February 10th was the latest) for the CRMC Ocean Special Area Management Plan that will address aquaculture, fishing, boating, and alternative energy including wind farms. For more information, visit the SAMP web site at <http://seagrant.gso.uri.edu/oceansamp/>
- BankNewport Parcel: The City received its second \$80,000 lease payment for the property.
- J.T. Connell Development Parcel: Staff worked with Coastal Extreme Brewing (CEB) to finalize the "Development Plan Review" process. Also, staff has been working with CEB to gain a Physical Alteration Permit (PAP) from RIDOT for this development. Building plans are expected this spring for groundbreaking during mid-2009.
- Pell Bridge Realignment Project: The City received correspondence from RIDOT indicating that additional options would be reviewed for this ongoing, multi-year effort. Planning staff are hopeful that a third option might be possible that would lead to the removal of the "road to nowhere" while satisfying the transportation engineering "Level of Service" (LOS) standards for the project.
- Island wide Transportation Study: Rhode Island Statewide Planning and RIDOT have provided a large grant to the AIPC for this island wide consulting project. This project will study issues and multi-modal options for all state roadways on the island. Staff participated on the panel to interview three planning/engineering firms and eventually select the top firm. Discussions with this firm to address scope of work and budget are ongoing.
- Waterfront Planning: Meetings with URI and other partners are ongoing regarding waterfront planning initiatives. Grant funds have successfully been awarded for this project to URI to conduct a market analysis for the waterfront. Staff is coordinating with URI staff to accurately map waterfront parcel zones, public access ways (local and CRMC), current land uses and likely activity along the water, and to study harbor walk options.
- Harbor Shuttle Landside Improvements: Staff has been working for months with RIDOT to finalize engineering bid package materials. The one-hundred percent bid package for the construction RFP was submitted to RIDOT. The Structural Division of RIDOT has recommended final revisions to the plans and specifications. The Engineer is completing revisions for the final contract book. City staff stands ready to issue the RFP once RIDOT authorization is granted. We anticipate a letter from RIDOT in March.
- Broadway Streetscape Project: PZD&I and Public Services department staff continued coordinating on this project. Interviews were previously completed with four short-listed engineering firms. The firms were ranked and informed of their position in the ranking in accordance with the Rhode Island Qualification Based Selection (QBS) process. Discussions with the selected firm on the scope of work and budget occurred for this "Preliminary Engineering" streetscape effort. Final determinations will be made in March prior to seeking approval from the City Council.
- U.S. Census 2010: The U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census met with staff on February 24th to discuss their efforts to enumerate Newport residents. Staff has been asked to assist to ensure an accurate count of Newport residents in 2010.
- Perrotti Park Dredging: Permitting materials have been drafted for submission to Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). Slight revisions to dredging engineering plans are required.
- Deputy Zoning Officers: For February, they responded to 20 noise calls. There were 4 noise citations issued and one short-term rental posting registration violation.
- GIS: Update of plat maps continued. Interactive maps are now ready for posting to the website. This requires purchase of ArcPublisher which has been postponed due to spending freeze.

- Building/Inspection Division Number of Inspections:

❖ Building	53
❖ Electrical	41
❖ Plumbing/Mechanical	53
❖ Municipal/Minimum Housing	96

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:

Historic Preservation and Historic District Commission: Eight new applications were received in February. One regular meeting was held. A vacancy exists for a Historic Planner.

Critical Area Review Board: One application was received and approved by the Board.

Zoning Board of Review: One regular meeting was held in February. Three new petitions were received. All new applications are digitized for filing and distribution.

Planning Board: One regular Planning Board meeting was held and four dimensionally nonconforming Special Use Permits were reviewed for consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Board approved one demolition permit application. One Coastal Resources Council Commission application was found consistent with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

2009 Application Round: The kick-off meeting for the next Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application round took place on February 13, 2009. The deadline for submitting the application to RI OHCD is May 8, 2009. To accommodate this deadline, the application will need to be reviewed by the Planning Board on April 20th and reviewed/approved by the City Council on April 22nd.

In addition to the \$700,000 in requests normally included in the Newport CDBG application, there are two additional funding sources this year. Approximately \$1 million in total will be available to Small Cities CDBG communities (such as Newport) under the Economic Stimulus program. Aside from the information that projects should be of the “shovel ready” variety, communities have not received any information regarding state priorities or the application process for this funding. On the assumption that public infrastructure improvements will qualify, staff are identifying improvement projects which are likely to be eligible for these funds. Additionally, \$500K will be available for activities addressing the “Foreclosure Crisis.” Staff will be working with Church Housing Corporation to ensure that some of this money comes to Newport.

Girard Avenue Sidewalk: Project is complete and all funds expended.

Residential Rehab Loans: A total of \$21,636.37 in rehabilitation loan funds was disbursed in February.

Respectfully submitted: Paige R. Bronk, AICP, Director