

Town Council & Planning Board Joint Meeting  
January 18, 2023

The January 18, 2023 Town Council segment of the joint Town Council and Planning Board Meeting was called to order by Denise L. DiFranco, President, in Foster, RI at 7:12 p.m.

The following members were present:  
Denise L. DiFranco, President, excused  
Steve Bellucci, Vice President  
Chris Stone  
David Paolino  
Heidi Rogers

Also present:  
Joanna Achille, Solicitor

Planning Board:  
Anthony Renzi  
Mike Carpenter  
Warren Ducharme  
Susan Joyce  
David Paolissi  
Hilary Downes-Fortune  
William Gibb

**I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**II. ANNOUNCEMENTS / PUBLIC COMMENT** Steve Bellucci opened the meeting. He explained it was a joint meeting with the Planning Board.

Anthony Renzi opened the joint meeting for the Planning Board.

Roll Call: Mike Carpenter, here; David Paolissi, here; Susan Joyce, here; Warren Ducharme, here; Anthony Renzi, here; Hilary Downes-Fortune, here; and Bill Gibb, here.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS** Mr. Bellucci said this was an informational only meeting and deferred to the solicitor. Joanna Achille said the only item on the agenda was the presentation by the economic consultant who is here. It is for informational purposes only, both to provide some information and to gather information, so if there is any member of the public who is present [and would like to speak] we will call you up. The consultant will take your input but there will not be a back and forth. If you are at home and you are on Zoom, there is no opportunity to give a verbal suggestion but you can put it in the chat, and it will be printed out and there is somebody from the consultant's office at home on the Zoom who will be gathering those in real time.

Mr. Bellucci introduced Rachel Selsky, the Vice President & COO of Camion Associates who would make the presentation.

Ms. Selsky confirmed that the people on Zoom could hear her. She introduced herself and reviewed her credentials and experience. Ms. Selsky reviewed the general features of the plan (seen Exhibit A).

Ms. Selsky went on to explain the Themes and Strategy Framework (see Exhibit B).

Questions were taken from the boards.

David Paolino asked about development of the Route 6 corridor. Ms. Selsky explained strategies. Mr. Paolino asked if it was necessary to sacrifice the rural lots on Rt. 6 and Rt. 101. Ms. Selsky said she would not use the word “sacrifice” but they need to be able to take some of the burden off taxpayers and there needs to be a balance. Ms. Achille said this should be more about giving input because a plan has not yet been developed. Mr. Renzi said we’ve been looking at Rt. 6, the woods, the broken down houses and all the junk cars and everything else forever, and we need to know that by changing that from your perspective, what can happen. Will we still have a rural town if Rte. 6 is developed?

Warren Ducharme asked about the Trail Systems and coordinating with the Department of Environmental Management. Ms. Selsky said she appreciated the suggestion.

Mike Carpenter discussed the Land Trust and the Trail System. Ms. Selsky said she was aware of them.

Lynne Rider said that years ago the Planning Board spent a year on Saturdays identifying nodes on Rte. 6 to rezone. They didn’t want at that time to continue what we have on Rte. 6 which was both sides—pretty unattractive—so they identified nodes so that you could go off the road and have whatever in there but not have so much visual impact on the road. Unfortunately, some of those are now solar fields, so that’s history. There might still be another viable couple of them. Ms. Rider suggested doing that node thing on Rt. 101 which is what she thinks of if she thinks of a rural community, because it would have less of a visual impact. Heidi Rogers said she thought that was a good idea as well. George Sackal discussed building with design standards and addressing the setbacks between businesses.

Amita Rodman stated that she had a list. She hoped that she [Ms. Selsky] comes up with ideas on zoning and thinks out of the box and cut the timelines that it takes to change things. Ms. Rodman suggested reaching out to large property acre owners, over 20 acres, who may have positive movement to what has been suggested. Ms. Rodman mentioned DEM restrictions, specifically about 101 and Rt. 6, because that has always been the bugaboo. Open Space already exists without cutting down too many trees. There are ways [to build] with proper Architectural Review Committee guidelines, please speak to that. Ms. Rodman mentioned that Mr. Rogers in his capacity as

Senator last week reviewed the need to see what is coming down the pike regarding housing. Ms. Rodman thinks Foster would be a great place to retire in a wonderful retirement place. Please speak to as many actionable things that will push us a few years forward.

David Rathbun spoke regarding volunteerism in the town. He said Ms. Selsky speaks highly of developing more commercial, industrial businesses, but what kind of impact that would have on fire and med service which is underfunded and overworked, and how that would play into the big picture.

Gordon Rogers said he sees the town pigeonholed on retail. He said the town needs something bigger, and said we are losing valuable employees in the town because we can't go with full time and we should. We have capital improvements that we are not meeting. We need revenue, and it will take commerce to do it or we will continue to lose planners, we will continue to lose police officers. Grants are pushed for improving infrastructure on roads. He had property he owned on Rt. 6 changed from highway / commercial to agricultural / residential. If we don't develop them they will be sold as they currently are with houses going in there.

David Paolino asked if Ms. Selsky had models of successful small towns that have implemented a plan and seen it through to fruition that worked. Ms. Selsky said that she could include case studies. Mr. Rogers mentioned Burrillville as an example.

Anthony Renzi said people [in Burrillville] built buildings, and the town stopped them, and the brand new buildings were empty because of the pushback from the town. Finally, it changed over, and it is one of the better business corridors.

Adam Dacko spoke regarding personal difficulties with the town and his business, for example the lighting on the roadsides. His spoke about the need for a reliable electricity source.

Ms. Selsky said that the next step would be to refine a strategy, add more detail and tactics, coordinate with the town, and finalize.

## **V. ADJOURNMENT**

David Paolino moved to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Submitted by,  
Susan M. Dillon, Town Clerk