

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

June 15th, 2005

7:30 PM

Jamestown Library

**PRESENTATION OF FORT WETHERILL REUSE PLANS
BY WILLIAM WARNER ARCHITECTS AND PLANNERS**

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 p.m. and the following members were present:

Gary Girard	Andrew Kallfelz
Betty Hubbard	Victor Calabretta
Jean Macgregor Brown	William Kelly
Barry Holland	

Also present:

Lisa Bryer, AICP, Town Planner
Cynthia Reppe – Recording Clerk
William Warner – William D. Warner, Architects & Planners
Arek Galle – William D. Warner, Architects & Planners
Duncan Laurie
Dick Hutchinson
Chris Powell
Krista Regan
Joe Meideros
Richard Ventrone
Dan Lilly, Jr.
Dennis Webster
Pat Bolger
Larry Mouradjian, Acting Associate Director, DEM

Commissioner Girard thanked Commissioner Kelly for all of his service on the Planning Commission and congratulated him on his Town Council position.

Town Planner Lisa Bryer started the presentation by giving a brief history of this project. Last year the planning commission put money aside in the budget to do a reuse study for the Fort Wetherill building that the highway garage has been occupying. William Warner and his team have been looking at this for a few months now and have come up with some innovative ideas for reuse of the site and building. The Town gave them very little guidance or parameters except that it should be a use that is at least water enhanced if not water dependent, it should not be a high vehicular traffic generator on a permanent basis and it should be a use that affords the most

residents the most use of the property. This building and this site are extraordinary and should be treated as such.

Ms. Bryer said it should have a use that will pay for itself instead of being draining on the taxpayers.

William Warner and Arek Galle made the presentation.

William Warner will talk about the building. There are 3 state buildings adjacent to the Town site that have been wonderfully restored and they would suggest the same type of exterior renovation to this building. Mr. Warner went over the dimensions of the building and the materials there now. This building is wide open so a lot of things can be done to the inside. There are 3.6 acres in total area. There may be space for a septic system adjacent to the upper parking lot. Currently DEM has a force main sewer system and they pump up to and utilize the existing septic system at the Fort Wetherill State Park. Mr. Warner felt it is prudent for the town to plan to have its own system independent of RIDEM.

The building is surrounded by asphalt, bordered on 1 side by a steep bank both of which are not attractive for a building in such a pristine setting. Our shoreline should be respected and it could be made to look much better.

One of the main concerns for the building is that the community has use of it and that it is self sufficient so that the taxpayers are not burdened. The following are some of the uses proposed:

- Seasonal Shore Dinner hall.
- Meeting space for organizations and town meetings.
- Artist studio building for them to work during the year on a monthly or seasonal basis. Art show and craft exhibit 5 or 6 artists.
- Reception Hall for conferences, parties, and weddings.

Of the 4 plans perhaps the 1st plan might work and accommodate all of the uses presented, similar to the Towers in Narragansett. It is a large open, and flexible space, with a catering kitchen and one set of bathrooms. The length of the towers is just 10 feet different than our building. The town of Narragansett owns the building but it is run by the friends of the towers, which is a public/private partnership.

Let's not forget the use of the harbor by the boat owners; William Warner feels that this plan helps as a good mix for the land and water uses.

The proposal has deleted 2 of the slips and proposed a community landing for the town so water ferry and water taxi's could be accommodated. Parties could come there by boat. Lisa Bryer said it would generate traffic but sporadically. The property is currently zoned public. It could be called Fort Wetherill Community Center.

With the proposed plan there still exists slips for 38 boats for private use. This plan calls for reduction of 4-6 slips, but that is not critical to the overall plan of the building. It would be nice to have room for a transient slip or touch-and-go dock that could accommodate a local ferry during events.

As far as cost they have some great benefactors to build this. With this arrangement and uses the town can pick uses that would require the least amount of money in the beginning. The towers started out as a summer use and then when money was made they ended up making improvements and putting in heat so it is now used during the winter too.

Capital cost could be from grants, non profit organizations, etc.

Chris Powell asked, based on what the state has done what would the cost be like compared to what the state has done? About \$800,000 dollars, for the exterior maybe 250,000. Mr. Warner went over phase 1 and phase 2 plans.

The eastern side of building would drop the windows down and add doors so that there would be views out of that side of the building. The goal would be to replace to appear original.

Krista Regan comparing us to the towers what will our seating capacity be? The Towers seats 100-180 people. Maybe doing the whole package initially would be beneficial because it would be year round use. There is an increasing demand for these kinds of uses.

Neighbor Dick Hutchinson said, his recollection when the marina was redefined showed that the parking requirement was fulfilled and therefore it was filled by the demand of the DEM building. Isn't there a parking problem? Mr. Warner says yes and there is also a solution. DEM has parking lot of 36 spaces, marginally used by DEM on the weekends, which is when this proposed building will be used and also evenings, they have done the calculations but of course they need to be verified.

Mr. Hutchinson asked DEM has agreed that using their parking is OK? DEM operation was a quiet construction site. He is wondering if the parking is going to work. One of his slips was the one knocked out.

Joe Meideros said you did a nice job on this plan. A few years ago the state wanted to put a ferry in and it did not fly. If they still want a ferry he has ideas on how to accommodate it without reducing the number of slips.

Richard Ventrone, said this is a fantastic concept. It could be very successful. At the present time the residents of Jamestown have 42 slips there now. He would like to see boat trailer access and parking. The ramp at the state park is difficult.

Dan Lilly has concerns about losing his slip. Address the parking issue, alcohol and security there for vandalism too. A commendable job has been done here.

Dennis Webster likes the proposal before us, The building is in a flood zone will the floor have to be raised?

William Warner pointed out that elevated space above the proposed men and women's lavatories had been reserved for mechanical equipment in order to address this issue.

Chris Powell said the State building is on an elevated platform and yes there is a flood hazard there. He also said this use seems very interesting, although for this type of setting this is not a water dependent use. There should be some sort of public boating access.

Larry Mouradjian, Acting Associate Director, DEM said from the state park perspective there should be similar restrictions for the Town's operation since the State has restrictions.

Commissioner Holland asked a technical question, what is the blue line? A water line. He finds it hard to believe that the renovations can be done for \$800000.

Commissioner Calabretta said this is excellent, a great start.

Arek Galle said there is a lot of flexibility for the building and leaving it an open floor plan so all can be accommodated is a good plan. They can work out the seating capacity for big meetings. Commissioner Hubbard asked are The Towers booked everyday?

Lisa Bryer, Town Planner said CDBG has held meetings there the last 3 years. Ms. Bryer said as far as seasonal use maybe the winter use could be for storage. Commissioner Kelly said he has a real problem with it. He is surprised that they have not talked to the boat owners and suggests exploring the parking situation. It was a Submarine Mine storage building. Shouldn't we be thinking of a marine use and asking the boat owners association?

Commissioner Andrew Kallfelz said it puts a smile on his face this is a great use and the proposed plans seems to have such flexibility.

Commissioner Kallfelz it seems more sensible to do it all at once instead of in phases. What public monies are available for historic redevelopment. Ms. Bryer is looking into some state money and heard from someone at the state that it might fit the criteria.

Commissioner Kallfelz asked if green development could be incorporated so we can respect the area that it is in.

Commissioner Jean Brown loves it and the fact that it was a mine site makes it more provocative. She would also like to see a marine museum use: maybe this is a way to obtain some funding.

Commissioner Girard it will take time to digest this. Very nice first concept you have given us guidance and a starting point. His concern is the taxpayers of Jamestown. He is leary of where do we get the funds, with no strings attached. Excellent marine site but not all use should be for marine owners.

Duncan Laurie he is concerned that when the town was asked to evaluate the site for the state, a committee was formed that represented the town and looked at the options in a slower and more reasonable way. Feel out the community on this and get them talking about it. This is moving a little to fast and lets put it out into the community and give the public a chance to input.

Lisa Bryer asked William Warner to think outside the box and she felt it would be nice to let them make suggestions and nothing is cast in stone now.

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Commissioner Girard said this is in the Comprehensive Community Plan. This is a starting point we do have much more work to do on it.

Pat Bolger says this has been on the docket for the last 5 years and Pat Bolger pushed for the \$5000 for this study. It should not only be for boaters and should be used by the public. Joe Medeiros, Fort Wetherill boaters association, if DEM is given the option for renting so would the Fort Wetherill boaters be interested in using it for storage.

William Warner Architects & Planners appreciates all the comments and would like to attend another meeting in the future.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Calabretta and seconded by Commissioner Kelly at 9:15 p.m. So unanimously voted.

Attest:

Cynthia Reppe

This meeting was recorded on 1 micro-cassette