

June 29, 2021

Kevin Nelson, Supervising Planner
Division of Statewide Planning
235 Promenade St., Suite 230
Providence, RI 02908

Re: Charlestown - Comprehensive Plan Update ID# CHA-CP-21

Dear Mr. Nelson,

As a native of Charlestown, having been born here in 1951, I have seen this blue collar town with its friendly "help one another" attitude, turn into a white collar NIMB paradise.

The new version of the Charlestown Comprehensive Plan (CCP) is a continuing attempt by a small group of individuals to force Charlestown to become a town that they want by disregarding the opinions of others.

I hope that the following will provide you with enough information to appreciate my concerns, about this flawed process, and to return it back to the Town of Charlestown for review.

Overview - The 1991 Comprehensive Plan was started in 1990 and completed in 1992, taking about 15 months to complete. An update was done in 2006 and approved by the R. I. Department of Administration in 2008. This 5 year update expired in 2013. So, from 2013 to 2021, the Charlestown Planning Commission has been working on this new re-write. Why has it taken so long you ask? Good question.

ISSUE #1 The 1991 CCP allowed numerous groups of citizens to participate in the process. Each element of the plan had its own Citizens Advisory Committee which held public meetings. 7 committees were formed with 35 citizens participating in total.

There were also 4 Public Workshops, 2 Public Hearings and 10 Citizens Advisory Committee meetings for the public to provide input.

Along with meetings with the Town Council, Town Administrator, Town Staff, board and commission members as well as outside agencies, there were a total of 110 individuals who worked on the 1991 plan.

In comparison, no Public Hearings, regarding the 2021 CCP, had been scheduled until April 14, 2021 and no Citizen Advisory Committee has ever been formed. The result? Citizens haven't been able to participate in the process.

ISSUE #2 - The Pipeline (the Town Hall's newsletter), which contained a survey for this new re-write, was mailed out to the entire list of Charlestown households and PO boxes in 2015, which consisted of 5,177 recipients. Copies were also left in the library (50) and Town Hall (150).

As of July 13, 2015, the Planning Department received 87 responses; 78 from residents, 7 from seasonal residents and 2 from non-resident Charlestown land owners.

Only 4 questions were asked with one having a rating chart.

In comparison, the 1991 questionnaire had 16 questions with one being an essay type question. Another was a 15 question ranking system. In total, there were 31 questions.

Opinion - This process has not been inclusive. 78 residents responding to the 2015 CCP survey is not representative of an open forum for discussion. Nor is it inclusive when the Planning Commission, which is made up of one partisan group, puts the CCP on at the very end of their monthly meeting agenda where a member of the public would need to sit for 3-4 hours before being heard.

When the public is allowed to participate, the Comprehensive Plan gets completed in 15 months. When the process is not inclusive, the process takes 7 1/2 + years.

It seems obvious that the Planning Commission and Town Planner worked tirelessly to avoid working with the general public as was done in 1991. Does it really seem fair to have five (5) voting members of the Planning Commission, who are all members of a political action committee (PAC), decide the fate of Charlestown's future?

We now have a perfect opportunity to step back, complete a recent Town Wide Survey, form Citizen Advisory Committees, hold public hearings and most importantly, let the residents fully participate in the process. After all, it is our town.

Thank you for your consideration,

Frank Glista
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Charlestown, R.I. 02813

