

July 2, 2021

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

Re: Charlestown Comprehensive Plan Update/CHA-CP-21

Dear Mr. Nelson:

I am writing to oppose the state's acceptance of the Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Charlestown Town Council in June. I am the Chairman of the Charlestown Economic Improvement Commission (EIC) and followed, along with our members, the Plan's development over the past year. The EIC was asked to make recommendations to the Plan specifically in relation to the effect that it would have on our town's future economic development. We spent a few meetings discussing the Plan and made a number of recommended changes, which we sent to the Town Planner. The changes included, but were not limited to the following: following the Master Plan now in place for Ninigret Park and expanding and promoting public events in the park; not acquiring more open space but rather providing additional facilities at and improvements to what the town already owns; and establishing guidelines that allow for mixed use land developments. We did not get a response, and then the final version, which was to go out to the public, appeared on the Town's website.

Sadly not one of our substantive changes was made to the plan. We were told that our changes were not consistent with the overall tone of the Plan, without further explanation. For example, one of our proposed changes was to have Ninigret Park's use expanded to include music and other events. Past town survey's about the use of the park have shown this to be a desire of a majority of Charlestown's citizens and doing that would favorably impact the town's economic development. Not only was that change not incorporated into the Plan, but instead the new Plan severely curtails the use of the park.

In addition, the EIC, along with numerous citizens who attended the WebEx TC/Planning Commission meetings to discuss the Plan, expressed a strong desire NOT to approve the Plan until a pending Town Wide Survey was completed, which would afford our Councilors and Commissioners an opportunity to hear what the people want. Those numerous requests fell on deaf ears. The Planning Commission's argument was that the Plan must be voted on immediately to save Charlestown from unscrupulous developers, that in spite of the fact that the Plan is at least 7 years late in being filed!

I would strongly urge the State to not approve the Plan as filed. Thank you for your consideration.

Craig Marr, Chairman Charlestown EIC