

**From:** [Kenneth Robbins](#)  
**To:** [Nelson, Kevin \(DOA\)](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] : Charlestown Comprehensive Plan  
**Date:** Friday, July 2, 2021 10:47:57 AM

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10 Yellow Birch Road  
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July 2, 2021

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[Kevin.Nelson@doa.ri.gov](mailto:Kevin.Nelson@doa.ri.gov)

Re: Town of Charlestown Comprehensive Town Plan (ID#: CHA-CP-21)

Dear Sir:

The Charlestown Town Council recently passed a revised Comprehensive Town Plan. The vote was three in favor and two against. The three aye votes were all members of the Charlestown Citizens Alliance (known as the CCA) who have controlled the Town Council and the Town Planning Commission for many years. The two nay votes were members of Charlestown Residents United (known as the CRU). It is my understanding that your division must now approve and accept this document. I would like to outline several reasons for not accepting this document.

The last comprehensive town plan was approved in 2006 and expired in 2013. As noted above, CCA has been in virtually total control of Charlestown government throughout this time. Yet they did not produce a revised or updated plan until the last few months. Now, they quickly produced a plan and rapidly approved it despite deep concerns of many Charlestown residents. Why the rush? The first answer they give is that a comprehensive plan will prevent Charlestown from being forced to do things, particularly involving zoning, that Charlestown might not want to happen. They cannot explain why this is a problem after eight years without a plan. Another answer is that the Planning Commission spent a great deal of time on producing the plan. Therefore, it should be approved as rapidly as possible. Again, they cannot clarify the logic of this argument.

Then why are they doing this? There are several possible answers. For one thing, some time ago the CCA was thwarted in their desire to eliminate a significant town budget surplus

against the wishes of many residents. The town ultimately agreed to commission a survey to determine what the residents wanted for their town. That survey, though delayed by the pandemic, is now on track to be completed within the next several months. Clearly the CCA Council members are concerned that the results of the survey will not support what CCA would like to include and emphasize in the Plan. They argue that the comprehensive plan can be amended. Given the eight years it took for its development, and the tight control the CCA holds on Charlestown town government, I am not optimistic that an amendment process will be effective within an acceptable time frame, if at all.

The comprehensive plan was approved without the input of many residents and resident groups. For instance, the Economic Improvement Council's input was ignored. The Planning Commission has argued that the public had multiple opportunities to submit input at scheduled meetings. Many residents were not aware of these meetings, or the meetings were held at inconvenient times, or the meeting agenda placed this discussion at the end of an otherwise long and tedious planning agenda. Many residents thought they would have time to review and give input to the plan after all the iterations and changes were completed. They did not realize that the time frame to accomplish this with a 368 page document would be so foreshortened. The Council would not even allow a request from Federal authorities to minimally delay its approval so a review of its impact on federal interests could be evaluated.

Previous comprehensive plan development involved volunteer citizen committees that researched and developed input to the document. This time the CCA did not seek such organized input. Clearly the Plan contains proposals and policies that the CCA wants to impose on Charlestown. The Rhode Island State's approval is now the only thing standing in the way of an underrepresentative group imposing their desires on the entire town. I urge you to reject this effort.

**Kenneth M. Robbins, M. D.**

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