



June 2021

## OMA Update



On March 16, 2020, Governor Raimondo issued an executive order that modified certain provisions of the Open Meetings Act (OMA) as part of the State's emergency response to COVID-19: municipalities were allowed to use virtual platforms for meetings or other business. The Order has been extended several times and was set to expire on May 27, 2021: however, Governor McKee has extended the OMA modifications until June 25, 2021.

Public bodies may now conduct meetings by telephone or audio or video conferencing to allow "adequate alternative means of public access," meaning measures that provide transparency and permit timely and effective public access to the deliberations of a public body: this includes conferencing via telephone, video, or audio.

A Zoom "best practices" handbook called "Holding Public Meetings via Video Conference" is available for downloading on the RI Department of Business Regulation's Zoom for public meetings information webpage.

## Planner Chats

The Covid pandemic and the resulting need for remote work and social distancing has created additional barriers for planners to meet and share their experiences/problems with fellow planners. To stay connected to municipal planners in the State, RI Division of Statewide Planning staff have been conducting "virtual chats" with local planners to find out how they are doing, what they are working on, and how we can help them.



Since mid-February, we have held twenty-four virtual chats and one in-person visit (see

photo, right), with four more visits scheduled within the next two weeks.

What have we learned from planners?

- Affordable housing continues to be a challenge for all RI communities;
- Most municipalities saw an uptick in development applications during the pandemic;
- Planners want to see outdoor dining continue without the need for a special use permit;
- Municipal staff are anxious about how potential hybrid public meetings will work and the lack of funds for needed technology;
- Many communities are beginning to update their Comprehensive Plans; and
- Planners have more work than they can handle, yet they are all very committed to their jobs.

We also told planners that Statewide Planning is always here for them if they need assistance with an issue or problem. As a result of our visits, we have helped local planners by: researching ordinances and regulations in other places; assisting with an issue involving another State agency; connecting planners who are working on similar issues; providing leads on potential funding sources; and much more.

If you would like to schedule a virtual (or in-person) visit with Statewide Planning about an issue you are working on (or to just to check in and chat with us), please contact Roberta at [Roberta.Groch@doa.ri.gov](mailto:Roberta.Groch@doa.ri.gov).

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## Another Comp Plan Approved



The Town of Westerly recently received State approval of its *Comprehensive Community Plan: 2020-2040*.

The objectives of the *Westerly Plan* are to achieve an appropriate balance between conservation and development and to establish a resilient community in all functions, from water supply maintenance to economic development. As the *Plan* states: "Managing growth and protecting cultural and natural resources are complex and delicate tasks. This *Plan* intends to ensure that both are accomplished in a way which enhances the quality of life for all residents." The Town plans to encourage growth that recognizes its assets and enhances opportunities, while also maintaining Westerly's "cherished sense of place." What more could one ask from a comprehensive plan?!

RI Statewide Planning offers congratulations to Town Planner Nancy Letendre, AICP and Principal Planner Alyse Oziolor, Town staff, the Planning Board and the Town Council. Browse the *Westerly Comprehensive Community Plan* [on our website](#). For more information about comprehensive planning, please contact Kevin at [Kevin.Nelson@doa.ri.gov](mailto:Kevin.Nelson@doa.ri.gov).

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## APA-RI In-Person Summer Social

**June 26 APA-RI Summer Social** Join Rhode Island planners in person (at last!) at this fun, free Saturday outdoor event. Bring your own beverages, snacks, and chairs: we'll provide food and lawn games. Location: Colt State Park, Bristol. Family members are

## RI Statewide Planning Meetings

All meetings are open to the public.  
Please check the links to see if a meeting has been canceled or changed.

### [Technical Committee](#)

**June 4 - 9AM** via Zoom

### [State Planning Council](#)

**June 10 - 9AM** via Zoom

### [Transportation Advisory Committee](#)

**June 24 - 5:30PM** via Zoom

## PHOTO TRIVIA

Do you know where in Rhode Island this building is located?

See the answer at the bottom of the newsletter!



## Virtual Events

**June 2** [Discussion about Protecting Our Legacy of Buildings, Places, and Culture](#). The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission hosts two discussions about the new Historic Preservation Plan for Rhode Island, its priorities, goals, and policies, and strategies for implementation. Times: 1) 10AM-11AM or 2) 6PM-7PM.

**June 3** [Women at the Helm](#). What is the path to leadership for women in transportation? Join a panel of leaders for a conversation on the future of women in transportation; they will also share concrete suggestions for how women can empower themselves in the companies, organizations, and governments where they work. Time: 2PM. Free.

**June 4** [Climate Migration: International Pressures, Local Realities](#). Join the Climate Adaptation Forum for a conversation about migration— both international and internal. Hear from experts and from municipalities that are building infrastructure. Time: 10AM-1PM. Fee: \$5-\$15.

**June 4** [Getting to Yes: Zoning Under Housing Choice](#). This webinar will discuss how to build support for housing initiatives and hear from a panel of municipal leaders about strategies to advance residential zoning efforts and lessons learned across Massachusetts. Time: 11AM. Free.

**June 4** [Racism and the Economy: Focus on Entrepreneurship](#). This Federal Reserve webinar will focus on the impact of racism on entrepreneurs of color, examine solutions

that challenge persistent disparities, and explore the potential for entrepreneurship to serve as one pathway to transform economic outcomes for communities of color and the broader economy. Time: 12PM-2:30PM. Free.

**June 8 [Electric Bus Deployment: Cost and Environmental Equity](#).** This presentation introduces an innovative framework and web-based visualization platform to assist transit agencies in identifying optimal deployment strategies for a battery-electric bus system by using a combination of techniques. Time: 1PM-2PM. Free. 1 CM.

**June 9 [Value Capture Strategies and Project Delivery: Public-Private Partnerships](#).** Public-private partnerships (P3s) are agreements between a public agency and a private entity that allow for greater private participation in the delivery of transportation projects. This FHWA webinar features best practices and case studies of P3s in transportation funding and project delivery. Time: 1PM-3PM. Free.

**June 10 [The 24-HR Commute Cycle: Building Flexibility and Equity into a Commuter Transportation Program](#).** How do race, gender and age relate to who/what jobs will likely to continue to commute daily? Webinar panelists will share how their organizations are making commuter benefit offerings more flexible to encourage non-SOV commuting by shift workers and workers who now work on-site less than full time. Time: 2PM. Free.

**June 10 [Updates on the TCI-P Regional Policy Process](#).** Join this webinar about the Transportation and Climate Initiative Program (TCI-P) to hear updates informed by recommendations/feedback received from individuals and organizations. Jurisdictions' TCI-P public engagement plans will be discussed. Time: 1PM. Free

**June 11 [Lessons in New Ruralism](#).** This session is aimed at planners interested in leading grassroots volunteer efforts in small towns and rural areas. Learn about creative solutions for providing basic necessities like support for those aging in place, children's programs, jobs and energy conservation. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1.5 CM.

**June 14-18 [Lecture Series: Toward Equitable Climate Solutions](#).** The URI Metcalf Institute's 24th Annual Public Lecture Series will highlight a just and equitable climate future. Lecture subjects include: "Sustainable Water Systems" and "An Integrated Approach to Energy Justice." All talks will be held from 1PM-2PM. Free.

**June 15-18 [Walk Bike Places Conference](#).** The program features fifty breakout sessions, hands-on workshops, panels, and short talks about what has been learned over the past year by active transportation professionals and how they plan to move forward. This event is both online and in person (in Indianapolis). Fee: \$350-\$675.

**June 16 [Tax Increment Financing: The Primer](#).** Does your community need funding for transportation infrastructure or other public improvements? This FHWA webinar explores tax increment financing ("TIF") as a tool to help fund infrastructure that will catalyze economic development and recover or grow jobs. Time: 1PM-3PM. Free.

**June 18 [Solid Waste Leadership Webinar: Conference of State Solid Waste Directors](#).** This EBC event will provide an opportunity for solid waste Directors from the six New England states to give their perspectives on critical solid waste management issues, including disposal capacity within the region. Time: 8:30AM-1PM. Fee: \$25-\$120.

**June 22-25 [At What Point Managed Retreat? Resilience, Relocation and Climate Justice Conference](#).** This virtual conference will bring together stakeholders from the public, private and nonprofit sectors, together with academics, scientists, and community representatives, to help develop a common understanding of this complex issue, and move the needle toward equitable solutions. Fee: \$40-\$80; a student rate is available.

**June 23-24 [Association of Certified Climate Change Professional® Summit](#)** A first of its kind event uniting Certified Climate Change Professionals® (and aspiring candidates) to collaborate on advancing our profession, advocating as a community of practice and acting together on social inequities. Fee: \$75 members; \$265 non-members.

**June 28 [Addressing Justice in Transportation](#)**. This webinar will highlight case studies of communities affected by past environmental injustice, focusing on those displaced or cut off from economic opportunities due to highway construction. Solutions that can restore, revitalize, and reconnect will also be discussed. Time: 1PM-2:30PM. Free. 1.5 CM.

**Anytime [The Pacific Northwest Transportation Consortium \(PacTrans\)](#)** offers pre-recorded webinars on technological advances being used to develop data-driven, sustainable solutions for diverse transportation needs. Free.

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## Grant Opportunities

**June 1 [EPA Environmental Justice Grants](#)** deadline. Various grant programs that address local environmental and public health issues within an affected community and support and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues.

**June 7 [National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant](#)** deadline. In order to address the critical issues facing our nation's estuaries, the CWG Program will fund projects that address one or more of the following priorities: harmful algal blooms; loss of habitat; and/or flooding and coastal erosion.

**June 9 [Archives Collaboratives grant](#)** deadline. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission seeks projects that will make collections from small and under-represented archives more readily available for public discovery and use. Archives Collaboratives must consist of three or more organizations.

**June 9 [Digital Project for the Public](#)** deadline. This National Endowment for the Humanities program supports projects that interpret and analyze humanities content in primarily digital platforms and formats, such as websites, mobile applications and tours, interactive touch screens and kiosks, games, and virtual environments.

**June 9 [Publishing Historical Records in Documentary Editions](#)** deadline. The National Archives seeks proposals to publish documentary editions of historical records, especially focusing on broad historical movements in U.S. history, such as law, politics, social reform, business, military, the arts, including any aspect of African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Native American history.

**June 9 [Start-Up Grants for Collaborative Digital Editions in African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, and Native American History](#)** deadline. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission seeks proposals to broaden participation in the production and publication of historical/scholarly digital editions and to provide opportunities that augment the preparation and training of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

**June 21 [Conservation Innovation Grants \(CIG\) On-Farm Conservation Innovation Trials](#)** deadline. Grants will stimulate the adoption and evaluation of innovative conservation approaches in partnership with agricultural producers addressing at least one priority: Irrigation Management Technologies; Climate Smart Agricultural Solutions; Management

**June 24 [Digital Humanities Advancement Grants program](#)** deadline. The program supports innovative, experimental, and/or computationally challenging digital projects from early start-up phases through implementation and sustainability. Experimentation, reuse, and extensibility are valued in this program, leading to work that can scale to enhance scholarly research, teaching, and public programming in the humanities.

**June 28 [Recovery Challenge Fund deadline.](#)** This U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service funding opportunity provides assistance for eligible, non-Federal longstanding and new partners working on high priority recovery actions as identified by the Service for ESA endangered and threatened species. Grant opportunity #F21AS00447.

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## Planning Articles of Interest

[Effort to Improve Bike Safety Hits Snag](#)

[RI Supreme Court Upholds Location of School](#)

[Questions Loom for States, Localities, on How to Spend Covid Relief Funds](#)

[Abutters Express Concern Over Contamination](#)

[Need for Affordable Housing Remains on Town Council's Radar](#)

[A New Crop: Warehouses](#)

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## RI Statewide Planning Staff

Click on staff person's name for their email address:

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*Water Resources Board staff:*  
Kathleen Crawley, Acting General Manager

Timothy Stagnitta, Programming Services  
Officer

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**PHOTO TRIVIA ANSWER:**

**CUMBERLAND**

Cumberland Public Library (or Cumberland Monastery)

Photo: Chris Vaccaro, RI Monthly