

At the Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown, County of Washington, and State of Rhode Island, held in and for said Town, County, and State this 22nd day of May, 2023 at the Town Hall Council Chambers, 80 Boston Neck Road, at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT WERE: Gregory A. Mancini, President
Katherine K. Anderson
Lawrence C. Mandel
Matthew B. McCoy
Dr. Kimberly Ann Page

ALSO PRESENT: A. Ralph Mollis, Town Manager
Jeannette Alyward, Town Clerk
Susan A. Murray, Deputy Town Clerk
Matthew F. Callaghan, Jr., Town Solicitor

An audio recording and video recording of this meeting was made to supplement the written record.

1. Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the Town Council of the Town of North Kingstown held on May 22, 2023 was called to order by President Mancini.

2. Notice of Meeting being posted

Pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-6(c), notice of this meeting has been posted on the Secretary of State's Website.

3. Salute to Flag

President Mancini led those in attendance in a salute to the flag.

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

I. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilor Page, seconded by Councilor Mandel and unanimously

VOTED: To approve Consent Agenda Item Numbers 5 through 21 with the exception of Agenda Item Numbers 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 21.

5. Approval of Minutes

VOTED: To approve the minutes of the Work Session/Special Meeting of March 20, 2023, the Regular Meeting of March 27, 2023, and the Budget Public Hearings of April 19, 2023 as submitted by the Office of the Town Clerk.

6. Approval of Extension of Lease

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and was

VOTED: To approve the extension of the Lease between the Town of North Kingstown and the North Kingstown Food Pantry, Inc. exercising the second option pursuant to Section 2 of that certain lease agreement dated November 28, 2012 for an additional five (5) year period commencing retroactively to January 1, 2023 and terminating December 31, 2027.

Councilor Page recused herself as she is on the board of the North Kingstown Food Pantry.

7. Authorization to amend the Engagement Agreement with Envision Technology Advisors, LLC

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To authorize an amendment to the Engagement Agreement with Envision Technology Advisors, LLC, 999 Main Street, Suite 703, Pawtucket, RI 02860 (MPA-308 Award #3339043) for the continuance of the forensic audit, threat remediation and assist to data privacy attorney in response to the ransomware attack, in the amount of \$12,350.00.

8. Approval of Purchase

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the purchase of FortiGate and associated Equipment for Information Technology from NWM Carousel, 659 South County Trail, Exeter, RI 02822, (MPA-308 Contract #3806657), in the amount of \$9,314.55; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: To award a contract for the Fortinet Firewall Setup and Configuration and professional services to Envision Technology Advisors, LLC, 999 Main Street, Suite 703, Pawtucket, RI 02850 (MPA-308 Award #3389043), in the amount of \$8,600.00.

Funding is from Insurance Deductible Account #00105050-532403.

9. Approval of Purchase

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the purchase of 280 Licenses for Office 365 G3, Microsoft Defender for Office Plan 2 (e-mail security), Enterprise Mobility and Security G5 Licenses, and Advanced User/Compliance Administration for Information Technology from Envision Technology Solutions, 999 Main Street, Suite 703, Pawtucket, RI 02860 (MPA-308 Award #3389043), in the amount of \$12,741.00 per month; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: To approve the proposal for the data migration of the Town's data from the Microsoft 365 Commercial tenant to the Azure Government Platform, to Envision Technology Solutions, 999 Main Street, Suite 703, Pawtucket, RI 02860, in the amount of \$22,420.00; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: To approve the purchase of 500 General Software Resale (BitTitan) for the migration from M365 Commercial Tenant to Azure Government to Envision Technology Solutions, 999 Main Street, Suite 703, Pawtucket, RI 02850, in the amount of \$7,500.00.

Funding is from Insurance Deductible Account #00105050-532403 and FY2024 Budget - IT - Productivity Software Licenses 00105050-549201.

10. Approval of Purchase

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Page and unanimously

VOTED: To approve the purchase of Observe and Report Service Delivery Information Technology from Envision Technology Solutions, 999 Main Street, Suite 703, Pawtucket, RI 02860 (MPA-308 Award #3389043), in the amount of \$2,912.00 per month/\$34,944.00 per year.

Funding is from Insurance Deductible Account #00105050-532403 and FY2024 IT Budget - Annual Misc. Software Licenses Acct. 00103050-544601.

11. Approval of Sole Source Purchase

VOTED: To approve the Sole Source Purchase of Radio Equipment installation from Cyber Communications, 90 Colorado Avenue, Warwick, RI 02888, in the amount of \$9,826.00 (MPA #395 Public Safety Communications Equipment - Motorola NASPO Contract 06913, Contract # 3309688, expiration date December 31, 2025).

Funding from the August 24, 2022 Council accepted 2021 Assistance to Firefighter Grant Account 1790000-530104.

12. Approval of Sole Source Purchase

VOTED: To approve the sole source purchase of one (1) Thales Group Automated Finger Identification System (AFIS) Machine in the amount of \$20,287.00; and Technical Support/Maintenance Coverage in the amount of \$2,850.00 per year for years 2 through 6 for a total cost of \$34,537.00 from THALES DIS USA, INC., 101 Park Drive, Montgomeryville, PA 18936.

Funding is from Insurance Deductible Account #00105050-532403.

13. Letter of Resignation

VOTED: To accept the letter of resignation from Martha Parks, resigning from the Library Board of Trustees, and that the Town Council send a letter of appreciation to her for the dedicated service she gave to the Town of North Kingstown.

14. Entertainment License (new)

VOTED: To approve the application for an Entertainment License by Norma Caiazza, 228 North Quidnessett Road, to hold an outdoor High School Choir and Orchestra Concert on the grounds of the North Kingstown Town Beach Campus and bandshell on Monday, June 5, 2023, from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Planning Department, and the Building Official.

15. Ratification of Approval of an Exhibition License with 61+ vendors

VOTED: To ratify the Town Clerk's approval of the application for an Exhibition License with 61+ vendors by Micky Meyer, dba Show Me Snakes LLC, 189 Surrey Drive, Troy, MO 63379, to hold a reptile and exotic pet expo on the grounds of Wide World of Indoor Sports, 1610 Davisville Road, which was held on Saturday, April 15 and Sunday, April 16, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date; receipt of a list of vendors at the Town Clerk's Office by Friday, April 14, 2023; and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Building Official, and the Planning Department.

16. Farmer's Market Permit (new)

VOTED: To ratify the Town Clerk's approval of the application for a Farmers Market Permit by Historic New England/Casey Farm, 2325 Boston Neck Road, Saunderstown 02874, to operate a Farmers Market on Saturday, May 13, 2023, from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date; receipt of a current list of participants (which shall include their name, location of land, Tax ID Number, and evidence of Department of Health approval if required); a Show Promoter's Permit; a copy of the market rules; and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Building Official, and the Planning Department; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: To approve the application for a Farmers Market Permit by Historic New England/Casey Farm, 2325 Boston Neck Road, Saunderstown 02874, to operate a Farmers Market from May 13, 2023 to October 28, 2023 at Casey Farm, 2325 Boston Neck Road, Saunderstown 02874, from 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m., subject to taxes and water paid to date; receipt of a current list of participants (which shall include their name, location of land, Tax ID Number, and evidence of Department of Health approval if required); a Show Promoter's Permit; a copy of the market rules; and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Department, the Police Department, the Building Official, and the Planning Department.

17. Holiday Sales License (transfer) (renewal)

VOTED: To approve the application for transfer of a Holiday Sales License from JD Mercantile Inc., dba Wickford Factory Outlet, 21 West Main Street, to NK Mercantile, Inc., dba Wickford Gourmet, 21 West Main Street, subject to taxes and water paid to date; and it was

FURTHER VOTED: To approve to July 1, 2024 the application for renewal of a Holiday Sales License by NK Mercantile, Inc., dba Wickford Gourmet, 21 West Main Street, subject to taxes and water paid to date and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Marshall and the Building Official.

18. Mobile Home Park License Renewals

VOTED: To approve to June 1, 2024 the following list of Mobile Home Park Licenses Renewals, subject to taxes and water paid to date, approval from the Building Official, and receipt of a map or plan of the mobile home park layout.

TWR	NAME	DBA	LOCATION	MAILING	TOWN/STATE	ZIP	TYPE	PHONE	SENT APP	APP REC	EX	TC Metd	STATUS	E-mail
MH-1	Kingstown Properties LLC	Kingstown Residential Community	6703 Post Road	PO Box 577	Galien Ferry	CT 06331	Michella Allen	860-231-3297	4/13/2023	4/19/23	03320	09/23/23		michella@kingstow.com
MH-2	The Kingstown Group	dba Post Road Mobile Home Park	6101 Post Road	6700 Post Road	NK RI	02895	Office	885-1850	4/13/2023	5/1/23	03437	09/23/23		rockres@postroad.com
MH-4	The Kingstown Group	dba Post Road Mobile Home Park	6200 Post Road	6450 Post Road	NK RI	02895	Office	885-1850	4/13/2023	5/2/23	03437	09/23/23		

19. Victualling License (amend hours of operation)

VOTED: To amend the hours of operation on the Victualling License for Alma LLC, dba Alma Juice Bar & Market, 2 Main Street, as follows:

- From: Thursday - Sunday 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- To: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday - 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Friday, Saturday, Sunday - 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

20. Victualling License (new)

VOTED: To approve to December 1, 2023 the application for a Victualling License by Saugy Inc., dba Saugy Express, 10 Beach Street, subject to taxes and water paid to date, receipt of a copy of their Department of Health approval, receipt of a copy of their RI Retail Sales Tax Permit, and compliance with the recommendations of the Fire Marshall and the Building Official.

21. First Reading – Amendment to Section 9-4

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: That this shall constitute the First Reading of an Ordinance in Amendment of Section 9-4 of the Code of Ordinances, Town of North Kingstown, entitled, "Fee Schedule Enumerated - Table VIII - Public Works Department Fees - Transfer Station", as amended, and that this be advertised and referred to the Regular Town Council Meeting of June 12, 2023 for Second Reading and Consideration of Adoption.

II. REPORTS

22. Report by the Town Manager

Town Manager Mollis gave the following report:

- A reminder that the North Kingstown Library will be installing a new Software System and will be closed this Friday, May 19th and Saturday, May 20th. Information on the new system and upgrading of the app can be found on the library's website.
- As previously reported, we've begun the installation of AEDs throughout Town. Many are in place today and we are working with our local organizations to formulate Action Plans for the health and safety of those participating in various programs within our parks. We will be offering potential funding for necessary equipment which may be part of these Life Saving Action Plans.
- An update on our Police Body Camera PILOT Programs. We just completed our PILOT Program with Axon and have now embarked on a 5-week PILOT program with a second vendor, Utility (formally Body Worn). We are working with the State to get a handle on their Grant Program which will assist us in deciding on the duration of the contract we will be negotiating for Body Cameras. You can expect the results of the completed negotiations, results of our PILOT Programs and update on the State Grant Program at an upcoming Council Meeting.
- Speaking of the North Kingstown Police Department --- congratulations to Officers Maiato, Pluta, and DeAngelis on their receiving the 2023 Grange Officers of the Year Award for their work and response in last summer's Block Island Ferry disturbance....and Lieutenant Don Barrington on receiving the State's Highway Safety Champion Award for his dedication to highway safety initiatives. All 4 individuals are an example of the outstanding Police Department we have here in North Kingstown.
- With the upcoming Memorial Day Weekend, our Town Beach will be opening this weekend. Parking passes are on sale at both the Town Hall and at our Municipal Office Building. In addition, the Splash Pad at Wilson Park will be opening this weekend as well and will run daily from 9am till 7pm. Information on both locations can be found on the website and all our Social Media Platforms.
- Speaking of Memorial Day --- the North Kingstown Parades Committee will be hosting a Memorial Day Observance this Monday. The day will start with a 9am Wreath Laying Ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park and the Civil War Memorial at and across the street from Town Hall here at 80 Boston Neck Road. The Ceremony will be followed by a 10am parade through Wickford Village, ending at the Elm Grove Cemetery for concluding ceremonies scheduled to begin at 11am. We look forward to seeing everyone on Monday.
- Dante Marinaro of Public Works, Executive Assistant Kate Glass, and I were invited to the State House 2023 Clean Energy Awards on May 10th as we were nominated under the Municipality Category. We were honored and surprised to have North Kingstown receive the 2023 Award. Our nomination and subsequent award were based on our Alternative Clean Energy Transportation Projects, our efforts to expand EV chargers throughout town, our Energy Efficiency efforts at our municipal buildings, the conversion of our streetlights, and our energy efficiency plans at the Municipal Office Building.
- Senator Jack Reed has informed me, and the Town of North Kingstown, that he has successfully advanced his requests, on our behalf, for funding to the Senate Appropriations Committee for our Indoor Recreation Center, our Town Beach Master Plan and improvements to the bridge on Frenchtown Road on behalf of RIDOT. These requests will be scrutinized and if moved forward by the Appropriations Committee will then need to be passed by the full Senate and House. Senator Reed's office will keep us up to date and is available should we have any questions.

- And finally, a congratulations to the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kristin Urbach on her selection for the U.S. Chamber Foundation Education and Workforce Fellowship Program. My understanding is that it was a very competitive process where Kristin was selected as one of 34 fellows nationwide, from 22 states with Kristin being the sole recipient from Rhode Island. Congratulations Kristin.

Mr. Mollis further stated that as a follow up discussion regarding the sidewalks on Annaquatucket Road, the Council asked him to evaluate options and costs for the potential construction of a sidewalk from the intersection of Fairway Drive to Boston Neck Road. Adam White has spent a lot of time on this and there are many variables that could affect the cost of this project. We couldn't get an exact figure for this project until it goes out to bid. The Public Works Department has estimated that this project could cost between \$170,000 to \$250,000. The actual sidewalk construction would probably be in the range of \$125,000; however, we expect additional costs due to drainage issues, potential ledge, curbing, and engineering costs. There is also a very strong possibility of required easements from property owners along Annaquatucket Road, which could be extensive, expensive, and could lead to some delays. We currently do not have a funding source for this project; however, we could possibly utilize the Town's capital account, although it is preferred that this account be utilized for capital expenditures on municipal buildings and/or facilities. The FY2025 Budget could be a funding source or ARPA funds could be used.

He further stated that if the Council asked for a list of priorities from Public Works, he would guesstimate this would not be on that list of priorities. We do, however, understand that this has been requested several times over the years. This is a long-time issue, and we do respect the fact that this may be something the Council might want us to proceed with. We will follow the Council's lead or put this on a future agenda for further discussion and/or action.

President Mancini stated that he is no expert in construction costs; however, he thinks the projected cost is low. President Mancini asked how many miles this would be. Mr. Mollis stated that he is unsure. President Mancini stated that it has to be a mile or a mile and a half.

Councilor Page stated that we discussed ARPA funds being used for Post Road and West Main Street and asked if they are still being used for that, as DOT is going to be doing that project. Mr. Mollis stated that he believes we have ARPA funds that could be used. Councilor Page stated that is a potential funding source. President Mancini stated that is an excellent idea. He further stated that he would like to know what the administration's priorities are over and above this project before he would make a decision on this project. There may be other projects that are more important.

Councilor Anderson stated she would like to see what those priorities are as well to determine what we wouldn't be able to do if we moved forward with the Annaquatucket sidewalk project.

Councilor McCoy asked if we maintain a list of unfunded priorities. Mr. Mollis stated that we probably have a couple of lists. We just completed our facilities assessment, which we will be reviewing and analyzing. He further stated that he will work with the Public Works Director to give the Council a list of priorities at a future meeting based on that assessment and include the Annaquatucket Road sidewalk project. He will also provide a report on where we are with the ARPA funds.

President Mancini stated that he feels that this is a priority, and we should try and get it done.

Mr. Mollis stated that he and Public Works will take a second look at this project and prepare a list of priorities as well as an analysis of ARPA funds at an upcoming meeting.

23. Resolution in support of joining Rhode Island Municipal Education Compact

Town Manager Mollis reviewed the proposed resolution and after a brief discussion, a motion was made by Councilor Page, seconded by Councilor McCoy and unanimously voted to adopt the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, North Kingstown recognizes that supporting student educational outcomes is central to positively impacting financial outcomes to improve qualities of health and life within the community; and

WHEREAS, North Kingstown recognizes that the community must be involved in solutions for quality out-of-school programming to positively impact out-of-school learning and help reach our goal of increased graduation rates; and

WHEREAS, North Kingstown looks forward to creating and introducing innovative community-based programs both within and outside the traditional school settings and schedule; and

WHEREAS, North Kingstown, through the Municipal Education Compact, is committed to introducing creative, meaningful programs to lessen the math and reading gap and address chronic student absenteeism while increasing overall FAFSA participation, improving graduation rates and promoting financial literacy; and

WHEREAS, North Kingstown agrees that there are many unique action steps that can be taken by municipal leaders to help advance the concept of expanded learning throughout Rhode Island, such as:

- Conduct community-wide needs assessment of existing and desired out of school opportunities,
- Promote out-of-school learning activities,
- Host a community forum on education,
- Work with the R.I. Department of Education to better understand the areas of improvement applicable to each community,
- Create a Municipal Youth Commission to engage students in local leadership opportunities and develop critical skills,
- Invest in community learning programs,
- Connect families to support awareness,
- Be creative in proposing programs that advance learning in ways unique to each community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: That North Kingstown proudly supports and joins the Rhode Island Municipal Education Compact; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That North Kingstown looks forward to the creation and implementation of innovative programs and ideas unique to North Kingstown to accomplish the goals of the Education Compact and will actively pursue the available funding and grant opportunities available to participants within the Rhode Island Municipal Education Compact.

24. Report by the Finance Director

Finance Director Lathrop stated that he has not prepared a formal report. However, being that this is his last meeting with the Council, he would like to thank the Council and residents. He came to North Kingstown six years ago as he needed a job and didn't expect to stay long. There are great people in North Kingstown, and they have been tremendously supportive of him and his staff. With that support, we have accomplished some good things over the last few years. He further stated that he is not leaving the Town in bad shape as his staff does 95% of the work and things will continue to move along. There are some very dedicated people with great attitudes who work for the Town.

The Council thanked Mr. Lathrop for his service and wished him luck in his new job.

25. Report on Open Space and Conservation Efforts

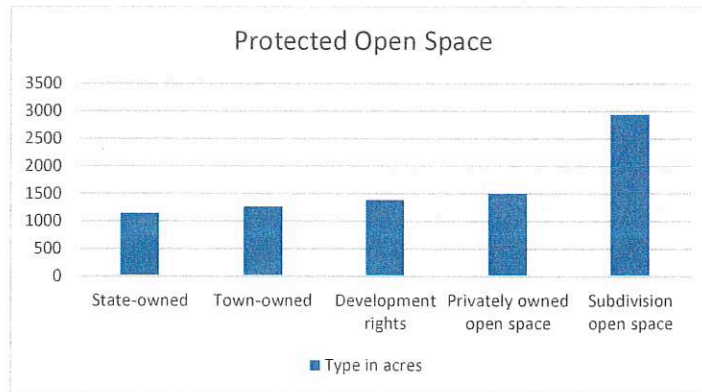
Director of Planning and Development Nicole LaFontaine gave an overview of the below report that was provided to the Council in their packet.

The Town of North Kingstown's Department of Planning and Development ensures the protection and balance of personal rights and quality of life while facilitating change through long and short range planning in accordance with the vision of the community. The Town's active and long-standing open space preservation program impacts all sectors of our community and is one way in which the department helps the Town enhance the quality of life for its residents and protect the valuable natural resources which help to make it an attractive place to live.

Collaborations with local non-profit organizations and state agencies have resulted in the protection of more than 8,200 acres of farmland, wetlands, shorelines, woodlands, wildlife, trails, and open spaces in North Kingstown thus far. Additionally, cluster and conservation development subdivision methods have been successfully utilized by the Planning Department to protect significant open space type acreage within the Town as such:

Open Space Type	Acres
Town-owned open space and open public land	1,263
Development rights by town	1,388
Privately-owned open space (privately owned by non-profit or easements held by others)	1,500
State-owned land	1,144
Conservation design, Cluster, Compound and Planned Village District open space	2,939
Total	8,234

Town- or state- owned open space is land where the Town or state holds the title to the property and most often protected by an open space or conservation easement. Development rights by the Town are where the Town owns the right to develop the property encumbered by a deed to development rights or conservation easement. The deed or easement contains use restrictions on the property and outlines how the property will remain protected through stipulated uses and activities that are allowed to take place on the parcel(s). Privately-owned open space are lands where either the title or conservation easement are held by a private entity. Conservation design, cluster, compound and planned village district open space are lands that are protected through individual subdivision application approvals. These properties are most commonly owned equally by the property owners within each subdivision and are subject to an open space easement restricting the activities that can take place on the property.



The State of Rhode Island Department of Environment Management (RIDEM), U.S. Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS), Land Conservancy of North Kingstown (LCNK), Narrow River Land Trust (NRLT), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the Audubon Society of Rhode Island have partnered with the Town on several conservation and preservation initiatives. Most recently, in January 2023, RIDEM announced the permanent protection of 125 acres of forested land in North Kingstown for public recreational use, including hunting, through a \$1.25 million grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Restoration Program from work completed in 2022. These 125 acres of the D’Ambra property in Saundertown abut Silver Spring Lake, a premier freshwater fishing area within the state, and has wetland habitats, perennial streams, and the headwater tributaries of the Mattatuxet River. It is sandwiched between two existing conservation parcels owned by the Town of North Kingstown, together totaling 224 acres of connected, protected high-value forested habitat that will be open to the public and permitted for hunting and fishing.

Also in 2022, the NRCS executed a wetlands reserve easement over 355 acres known as the Cruickshank property along Tower Hill Road. The Town was awarded \$211,210 from the RI Natural Heritage Preservation Open Space Grant Program, administered by RIDEM, to complete the purchase by obtaining fee simple title to the property. Fee simple title is the complete and total ownership of a piece of land and all properties on it. Instead, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island has accepted the family's offer to donate the land. The Planning Department is conferencing with RIDEM to determine if we can use the open space award on alternative acquisition.

Including the D'Ambra and Cruickshank properties, between 2010 and 2022, a total of 749 acres of land in North Kingstown have been protected from development under the following partnership agreements either through easements or purchases:

Property	Year	Acres	Town of North Kingstown Partner(s)	Agreement Type
D' Ambra (Pendar Rd/Silver Spring)	2022	125	State of RI	Purchase
Cruickshank (Tower Hill Rd)	2022	355	NRCS, Audubon	Easement and donation
Aceto (Gilbert Stuart Rd)	2021	63	State of RI	Purchase
LYF (Gilbert Stuart Rd/Carr Pond)	2019	5	NRLT, RIDEM	Purchase
Regnier (300 Fletcher Rd)	2017	40	NRCS, ALPC, LCNK	Easement
Healy-Rippin (Lafayette Rd)	2016	38	NRCS, ALPC, LCNK	Easement
Benson (Snuff Mill Rd)	2014	42	RIDEM, NRLT, ALPC	Purchase and easement
Girl Scouts (Gilbert Stuart Rd)	2010	81	State of RI	Purchase

The LCNK and NRLT assist the Town with yearly monitoring of several properties to ensure the condition of the lands is in keeping with the terms of the conservation easement or deed to development rights. These agencies are often co-holders of the easement with the Town and are a valuable partner in our open space preservation efforts.

The Town has management plans for some properties protected before 2010, such as the John H. Chaffee Nature Preserve (2001) in partnership with the state (RIDEM) to reflect and honor the conservations ethic of the late statesman for whom the land is named. Where management plans are not in place, conservation easements and/or deed to development rights outline the restrictions for each property. These plans, easements and deeds outline how the lands shall be managed and protected.

Where appropriate, the Town emphasizes conservation development over conventional development during the development process. Conventional development occurs when all of the acreage in a plat of land is subdivided into roadways and lots. Conservation development is a technique where a percentage of the parcel is protected as meaningful open space. Important resources are identified for protection and the development is flexibly designed to fit around the protected areas. Lots are often smaller in size and less area is needed for supportive roads or infrastructure which is cost effective for long term maintenance. The open space gained can be owned by the homeowners as a whole, an individual homeowner, or a separate entity. This method adds to a community's open space inventory without the need for the community to purchase or maintain the open space.

The state expects to announce another round of open space funding later this year. If deemed appropriate, the Town may apply for this funding to protect even more land and add to these protected properties. We are in constant communication with interested parties. The Planning Department will continue to work collaboratively with the other municipal departments, non-profits, and governmental agencies to continue these preservation efforts where appropriate.

President Mancini thanked Ms. LaFontaine for the very detailed report and stated that he found it very useful as it answered a lot of his questions. In answer to President Mancini's question if the Cruickshank property is done, Ms. LaFontaine stated that the owner of the property advised her that the property has been donated to the Audubon; however, she has not checked to see if the conveyance has been recorded.

President Mancini asked how the Town is going to balance its desire for open space with the significant legislative push to encourage housing. Ms. LaFontaine stated that we currently do that. Hopefully the proposed legislation will address the need for funding for affordable housing as it adds density, sewer need, school needs, etc. President Mancini stated that is merely economics, Ms. LaFontaine stated yes. President Mancini stated that there are proposed bills for affordable housing and accessory dwellings, and he thinks members of our community are concerned about that. Ms. LaFontaine stated that we do currently look at that, but we try to focus our development where we already have infrastructure. Our issue is that we need to make sure that the existing infrastructure can support that development. The goal is to focus on where our sewer, water lines, highway access, and public transportation access are for development. There is a cost when you add development to the water and sewer lines, and we need to find a balance. President Mancini asked if there was a way to transfer those costs to the developer. Ms. LaFontaine stated that we have that as an option on Post Road which is called Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs); however, we haven't had anyone utilize it. She thinks it is because of the market among other things. Again, TDRs are another tool that we can use.

President Mancini stated that it appears that the Planning Department is aware of what is happening at the legislature, and we are just trying to find a balance.

Councilor McCoy stated that there are folks in our community who are advocates for redevelopment as opposed to new development and asked what Ms. LaFontaine's thoughts were on this issue. Ms. LaFontaine stated that redevelopment is an important part, when it comes to housing it is difficult because a property may not be able to be transferred to another use. We have a couple of properties on Post Road that are offices, and the developers are looking to change that use to apartments. When projects come in, her goal is to look and see how flexible the project is.

Councilor Mandel stated that he found Ms. LaFontaine's memo to be very detailed and informative.

III. OLD BUSINESS

26. Update on Short Term Rentals Evaluation

Ms. LaFontaine gave an overview of the below update that was provided to the Council in their packet.

The Town Council reviewed short-term rentals at its January 9, 2023 meeting. During the discussion, the Town Council asked a number of valuable questions and requested additional follow-up information to assist in the decision-making process.

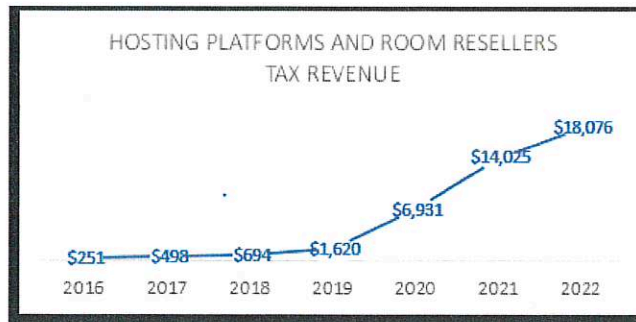
Short-term rentals (STR) are generally defined as a rental of a residential dwelling unit or accessory building for periods less than 30 consecutive days. Short-term rentals can either be owner occupied or non-owner occupied, and operators can rent out entire homes, apartments, or individual rooms. In many cases, short-term rentals are advertised using online hosting platforms such as Airbnb, VRBO, and FlipKey. These websites have resulted in a surge of short-term rentals across the country and locally in Southern Rhode Island. Currently, the Town of North Kingstown does not have provisions in place to monitor or regulate the use of short-term rentals. According to the Rhode Island Department of Business Regulation (RI DBR), there are 76 registered rentals as of May 5, 2023. This is an increase from the 24 registered with RI DBR in November 2022.

Planning Department staff reviewed the opensource database Inside Airbnb prior to the January meeting and again in May 2023. As of May 2023, the Town has an estimated 88 rental units on the Airbnb platform; two more than in September of 2022. Of the 88 units, 79 are identified as entire home or entire apartments for rent, making up 90% of total North Kingstown STR units. The data indicates that 70% of the units are operated by hosts with just one listing on Airbnb. As such, 62 of the 88 units are operated by a unique host.

Most of the Airbnb units remain active. The Inside Airbnb data indicates that roughly 30 out of the 88 units received a customer review within the past four months of the most recent data collection (Inside Airbnb retrieved September 2022). The decrease in reviews is likely due to the fact that Airbnb's in the area are not utilized as frequently in the off season. Also note that in the past 6 months, 43 units have received a customer review.

The average North Kingstown Airbnb unit is available for rent 168 days a year. Availability is depended upon the unit being actively listed on the Airbnb platform as well as the rate in which the unit is being rented by customers. This data suggests that most of the units are listed on a continuing basis throughout the calendar year.

The median cost of a North Kingstown unit is \$260 per night but ranges from \$85 to \$2,500 per night.

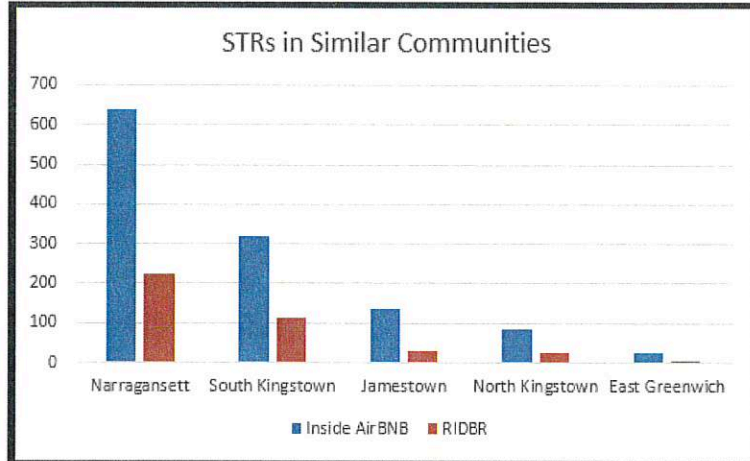


The Town Council asked if the economic impact of the rentals could be determined. The total tax revenue generated from short-term rentals in North Kingstown has increased over 1000% from FY 2019 to FY 2022. In FY 2022, North Kingstown received \$18,076 from the redistribution of the State of Rhode Island. Deb Garneau, Tax Assessor, indicated that there is no evidence that a short-term rental affects the assessed value of a property, but it would disqualify a property owner from the Homestead Exemption.

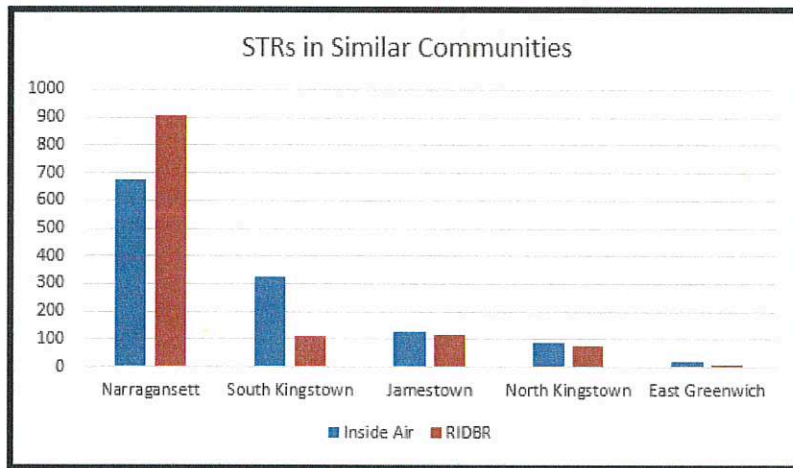
We reviewed the short-term rental data available through RIDBR in April with the Police Department. There had been four calls to Police regarding properties that are registered. The complaints were regarding noise and gatherings. Upon police arrival, there were typically little to no concerns and those alerted responded responsibly. The oldest complaint was September 2021 and the most recent April 2023.

We were asked if there was a correlation between short-term rentals and houseboats. We did not find any data proving such; none of the rentals on the RIDBR database are found off-land.

There have been some changes since the last update in November of 2022. It looks like the ratio of AirBNBs to registered STRs has become much closer to evening out. In fact, there are more registered STRs in Narragansett than there are AirBNBs. While there are other sites like VRBO where STRs can be listed, it is encouraging to see a trend that more STRs are registering with DBR.



The chart above illustrates the number of STRs listed on Airbnb and registered with the RIDBR (11/18/22).



The chart above illustrates the number of STRs listed on Airbnb and registered with the RIDBR (5/5/23).

At the January 2023 meeting, a number of alternatives were proposed: (1) status quo, (2) short-term rental registry, (3) zoning regulations (special use permit and/or development standards), and (4) prohibition of short-term rentals. It is still the administration’s recommendation to proceed with a short-term rental registry.

Councilor McCoy stated that he found this report very informative. He went back and looked at the previous information that had been provided and one thing that stood out was the potential that the owners of these short-term rentals are also benefiting from Homestead Exemptions. Ms. LaFontaine stated that it is her understanding that they cannot. Councilor McCoy agreed and asked if they are currently receiving this exemption and if an assessment has been done to determine if in fact they are. Ms. LaFontaine stated that we did not request that information from the Tax Assessor, but we certainly can and then provide that to the Council. Councilor McCoy stated that he thinks that is important because if a person owns a property and chooses to run it as business, they should not get the advantage of an exemption.

Councilor Mandel stated he agrees with the administration’s recommendation of setting up a registry. He asked if the Council chooses to go with the registry, what would the revenues be and what enforcement mechanism would be used. Ms. LaFontaine stated that our proposal is to come back to the Council with that information if that is the way the Council wants to go. We would propose an ordinance of the registry process, enforcement, and fee schedule, along with an analysis of what it would cost to maintain this.

Councilor Page agreed that the report was very comprehensive and agrees we should move forward with the registry.

President Mancini stated that based on the discussion, it appears that the Council would like to see a cost analysis and a proposed ordinance.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

27. Analysis of North Kingstown Boards and Commissions

President Mancini stated that the report provided in their back-up was very extensive and detailed. (Clerk's note: A copy is filed with the back-up materials for this meeting).

Ms. LaFontaine stated this has been a work in progress for a while. We started months ago with a survey of the users (board members). We asked them questions about their relationship with the Council, how things worked, and we also have seen over the years that we tend to have a lot of vacancies. We looked at several things, such as volunteer participation, what was required by statute or town initiative, number of members of the boards. We currently have 25 Boards and Commissions which have developed over many, many years and we have never taken the opportunity to review them all to see if there are overlaps in duties, charges, and responsibilities. This exercise was a deep look into all the boards and committees to analyze what is statutorily required by state law/ordinance and by resolution, whether charges of the committees meet what is currently required, staff participation, quorum issues, or if there was duplication of efforts. The memo/report before you tonight has been through many versions.

In answer to President Mancini's question if there was any conversations or input from the boards and commissions, Ms. LaFontaine stated there was from the survey and we did speak with all departments who staff these boards and committees. We were really looking at the logistics, and if we are accomplishing what we need to, what are the issues these boards and commissions are experiencing that we can address to make things better and reduce the number of vacancies we have been seeing. She further stated that we were surprised that there really weren't many committees that we could consolidate or eliminate as we are always looking to improve efficiency. In the memo, there is a thorough recap of the analysis of all the committees with recommendations for eliminating the Police Disability Retirement Board, Energy Advisory Board, and consolidation of the Groundwater Committee and Conservation Commission. We also suggest reducing the membership size of several committees. Changes to any of these boards will require some ordinance changes or amendments or repeal of previous Council Resolutions.

President Mancini stated that he thinks we need to get input from the Boards and Committees.

Councilor Mandel stated the memo was thorough, and he knows the Audit Committee has discussed whether or not they are needed any more. However, with our Finance Director leaving he feels that now is not the time to make any changes to the Audit Committee and to revisit whether or not it is required in a year or so. Mr. Mollis stated that he attends every Audit Committee Meeting, and he would agree with the Audit Committee as things have gone very well with our recent audits. With that said, that has been extremely helpful. However, whenever you can eliminate another layer of government, it is a good thing, and with all respect to the members of the committee it doesn't have a valuable role. As Manager he reports to the Council on the Audit as well as the Finance Director and of course the Auditor General plays a role in our audit. However, if the Council is comfortable with leaving this committee in place and revisiting this in a year or so when we have a new finance director, he is okay with that.

President Mancini stated he has gotten complaints in the past that we have staffing issues with some of these committees and wants to ensure that we have staff assisting these committees. He further stated that since he has been on the Council, he feels that the Council has done a good job in communicating with boards and commissions. Having liaisons with these committees only gives one council member's perspective. We need to figure out how we can reach out to these committees to give direction and get their input. Ms. LaFontaine stated that by being a staff member of many boards and commissions she can say that there are different opinions depending on the board. Some want direction and interaction with the Council, others prefer to have the option to address the Council but not necessarily need it.

President Mancini stated that the Council would be open to whatever makes sense based on the needs of the board and the Council.

Councilor Page stated that she agrees that it depends on the Board, for example the Charter Review Commission provides recommendations to the Council, and it wouldn't be effective or appropriate to have a council liaison. Ms. Alyward stated that with the other part of this discussion over the last few months, we realized that the Boards and Commissions Handbook hasn't been reviewed or amended in 8-10 years, so we are going to review it and make recommendations for changes for the Council to adopt. We can incorporate a report to the Council section in the handbook.

Councilor Page appreciates the information in this report and feels that this is a first step.

Ms. LaFontaine stated we can ask the boards and committees what their interactions should be with the Council as well as give them an update on why we are doing this. President Mancini stated that we should focus on the vehicle for communication both ways, and staff should reach out to these boards on input of structure and procedure.

Councilor Mandel stated that we do need two-way communication in whatever form that takes. We should be asking the boards and commissions to share with us what they are doing and if they need direction.

Ms. LaFontaine thanked the Council and stated that we will be coming back to the Council with some proposed changes.

28. Charter Review Commission – Appointment

Motion by Councilor Mandel, seconded by Councilor Anderson and unanimously

VOTED: To reappoint Tracey McCue, 37 Chimney Rock Drive, to the Charter Review Commission to December 31, 2024.

29. Correspondence

5/19/23 - e-mail from John McGinn not seeking reappointment to the Groundwater Committee.

5/19/23 - e-mail from Barbara Pierce regarding the bond issues.

5/13/23 - e-mail from Joshua Kiernan regarding traffic safety issues on Rt 4.

5/12/23 - e-mail from Jacob Amby concerning maintenance on Frenchtown Road.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Jeannette Alyward
Town Clerk