

**MINUTES OF THE APRIL 18, 2017  
SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.  
FREEHOLDERS MEETING ROOM  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the April 18, 2017 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:45 p.m. in the Freeholders Meeting Room. The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

**The Roll was called and the following were in Attendance:**

Chris Kelly, Vice Chairman  
Marian Fenwick, Member  
Al Ellis, Member  
John Schneider, Member  
Peter Palmer, Freeholder Director  
Bill Zielger, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate Member  
Matthew Loper, County Engineer

**Absent:**

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr., Chairman  
John Lindner, Member  
Patrick Scaglione, Freeholder  
Adam Slutsky, Alternate to County Engineer

**Also Present:**

Walter C. Lane, Director of Planning  
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director of Planning  
Tom D'Amico, Supervising Planner  
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Planner  
Laurette Kratina, Chief of Strategic Planning  
Tara Kenyon, Principal Planner  
Andras Holzmann, Planner  
James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner  
Tanya Rohrbach, GIS/Planner  
John Lore, Esq., Deputy County Counsel  
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

Chris Kelly, Vice Chairman presided over the meeting in the absence of Bernie Navatto, Jr.

**Approval of February 21, 2017 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Vice-Chair Kelly asked for a motion to approve the Minutes of the February 21, 2017 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by Freeholder Director Palmer and seconded by Matt Loper. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

## **Discussion/Presentation Items:**

### **Somerset County Agricultural Development Board Annual Report**

Tara Kenyon, Principal Planner, presented the Annual Report of the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board. During her presentation, she discussed preservation goals that have been achieved, Right-to-Farm cases that have been heard, stewardship matters that have been reviewed and decided on, and efforts made for education and outreach. She also discussed goals of the SCADB for the upcoming year, including achieving a total of 10,000 acres of preserved farmland, promoting mediation as an alternative to formal Right-to-Farm proceedings, and expanding upon activities for National Agriculture Month.

### **Draft County Housing Element Update:**

Planning Director Lane informed the Board that the draft Housing Element Update is nearly complete due to the efforts of Chief Strategic Planner Laurette Kratina. He reported that the draft plan element will be distributed to the members of the Master Plan and Housing Committees within the next week for their review and comment. Once the Committees' comments have been incorporated, Planning Staff will ask the Board to release the draft plan element for public comment at the May Planning Board meeting. Director Lane then asked Laurette Kratina to share some of the draft strategies of the updated Housing Element with the Board.

Laurette Kratina, PP. AICP, Chief of Strategic Planning updated the Board regarding the preparation of the Updated Housing Element. The Board completed a 30-year assessment of housing trends in 2016, which was used to begin a dialogue on emerging countywide housing goals and objectives with municipalities and stakeholder groups. Most recently, staff met with the Central Jersey Housing Resource Center Board, and distributed a memo with links to the emerging housing goals and objectives that are posted on the Board's website to municipal officials, planners and housing stakeholder groups. The Board recently received valuable written feedback from Raritan Borough in response to these outreach efforts.

Staff has now begun to draft the updated housing element in earnest. The current housing element was adopted in 1987. It included a narrative of housing trends and recommendations, and a matrix that links implementation strategies to the plan's goals and objectives. A similar format is being used this time as well. All components of the plan have been drafted and are being distributed for review by the Housing and Demographics Committee, The Master Plan Committee and additional members of our senior planning staff. These components include an:

- Executive Summary;
- Introduction;
- Overview of the Planning Process;
- Linkages to the County Investment Framework; and
- A Matrix linking the Goals, Planning Objectives and Strategies

To provide the Board with a sense for what the plan includes, but be brief at the same time, Ms. Kratina spoke about two of the draft implementation strategies associated with the main draft goals. There are six goals. Aligned with each goal are 3 to 6 objectives, and another 5 to 8 implementation strategies. Every effort will be made to cross-reference other County Planning initiatives and County Master Plan Elements in addition to the Investment Framework, such as the Hazard Mitigation Plan, updated preservation plans and the CEDS.

**GOAL 1: Respond to the changing needs of the County's population by encouraging a broad range of housing types at all levels of affordability**

**Draft Implementation Strategies:**

**1d. Apply universal design and accessibility standards to all housing types, both new and rehabilitated, to support residents as their mobility needs change and to accommodate those with existing mobility limitations**

**1h. Modify plans, policies and ordinances to ensure community integration of supported living opportunities for people with disabilities and others with special needs**

**Goal 2: Create healthy, attractive, walkable neighborhoods with proximity and access to jobs, cultural and recreational amenities, services and transportation choices**

**Draft Implementation Strategies:**

**2a. Provide parks, greenways, street trees, green infrastructure, pedestrian, recreation and cultural amenities in all residential and mixed-use neighborhoods.**

**2f. Implement zoning updates, building code modifications and higher residential construction and design standards that improve the safety, efficiency, quality, resiliency and healthfulness of the housing stock**

**Goal 3: Align housing policies and strategies with the principles of regional and local smart growth and sustainability**

**Draft Implementation Strategies:**

**3b. Implement coordinated, mutually supportive housing, land use, infrastructure and financial policies, programs, and investments at all levels of government**

**3g. Invest in infrastructure enhancements and add urban amenities including pedestrian linkages and transit in areas targeted for higher density residential growth and mixed-use development (i.e. Priority Growth Investment Areas)**

**Goal 4: Maximize the dynamic relationship between housing supply, quality of life and the strength of the economy**

**Draft Implementation Strategies:**

**4c. Utilize residential and mixed-use redevelopment as a strategy for addressing State Fair Housing Act requirements by reserving a portion of all new units for low-and moderate-income households**

**4e. Allow design features and amenities in rental projects that will enable units to be successfully converted to for-purchase housing in response to potential changes in the housing market**

**Goal 5: Support efforts to advance the goals of the Federal and State Fair Housing Acts**

## **Draft Implementation Strategies:**

- 5e. Enact zoning and planning policies that discourage tear-down of affordable housing and replacement with high-cost housing
- 5h. Prioritize infrastructure and transportation investments that create "ladders of opportunity" by connecting homeless and disadvantaged people with housing, employment, education, services and other community assets

After we have received feedback from the committees and senior staff, the refined version of the complete draft updated housing element will be shared with the Board for review and comment prior to next month's board meeting. If all goes well, we hope to be able to release the draft plan for public review and comment prior to the end of next month, and will schedule a public meeting on the draft plan for late May or early June.

## **Action / Information Items:**

### **Resolution Conceptually Approving a Development Agreement Between Plaza Raritan 2015 LLC d/b/a Raritan 503 and the County of Somerset**

James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner, offered the Board the resolution conceptually approving a development agreement between Plaza Raritan 2015 LLC d/b/a Raritan 503 and the County of Somerset. Plaza Raritan 2015 LLC d/b/a Raritan 503 (Developer) whose address is c/o Sukhvinder Dabb, 134 Autumn Ridge Road, Bedminster, NJ is constructing a 9,710 square foot retail building on property identified as Block 40, Lots 1 and 17 on the tax map of Raritan Borough and on file with the County Planning Board as RT 121-17S and the Developer has applied to the Somerset County Planning Board for approval of the project.

Mr. Ruggieri requested the Board conceptually approve the agreement and send it to the Freeholders for execution.

Vice Chair Kelly asked for a motion to approve the Resolution Conceptually Approving a Development Agreement Between Plaza Raritan 2015 LLC d/b/a Raritan 503 and the County of Somerset. The motion was made by Freeholder Director Palmer and seconded by Matt Loper. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval of March 2017 and April 2017 Land Development Reports**

#### **March 2017 Land Development Report**

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board packet. The Committee acted upon all first time submissions as follows:

At the March 16, 2017 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee the Committee reviewed a number of projects as well as the first time submissions for the month of February 2017.

#### **7-15 West Main Street, Bound Brook**

Thomas D'Amico stated that the developers of the 7-15 West Main Street project in Bound Brook have requested a waiver of the County Master Plan right-of-way requirement noted in the County Planning Board's January 13, 2017 report. He noted that the County review report and the waiver request are in this month's Land Development Committee packet. Tom stated the project

proposes 63 attached units with a small commercial component and is across the street from the Meridia Downtown Urban Renewal Project. He then introduced Kevin Moore who is an attorney representing West Main Street Urban Renewal, LLC the project developers. Mr. Moore stated that the developer of the project is requesting a waiver request from the Land Development Review Resolution.

He then presented additional information concerning the project and the impacts that implementing the 33 feet from center line County Master Plan right-of-way would have on the project. He introduced Paul Winters, P.E. Mr. Winters presented to the Committee an elevation and site plans of the proposed project which illustrates the various property constraints that impacts the development of the site and the impact of the 33 foot from center line County Master Plan right-of-way would have on the project. The enforcement of the right-of-way requirement in this case would result in a substantial reduction in the size of the project and the design thereof.

Lee Klein, P.E. traffic engineer presented information from the Traffic Impact Evaluation prepared by Bowman Consulting. This includes potential trip generation from the proposed development and trips from the existing uses on the site and traffic counts that they obtained from West Main Street. They concluded that there would be no negligible impact on along West Main Street from the project. Mr. Moore then introduced Louis Reynolds owner/applicant of the project who discussed the severe financial impacts of enforcing the County Master Plan right-of-way on both the residential and commercial components of the site, which impacts would negate the financial viability of the project. Mr. Moore then summarized the proceeding presentations. John Lore then recommended that the Committee follow the usual procedure and take the presented information under advisement and make a decision at the beginning of the next meeting. The Committee agreed. The applicant will be notified of the Committee's decision.

#### **Raritan 503 Development Agreement, Raritan**

James Ruggieri noted that in the Land Development Committee meeting packet was a development agreement with developer Plaza Raritan 2015, LLC d/b/a Raritan 503 who has submitted a site plan to construct a 9,710 square foot retail building and 39 parking spaces. The site was previously occupied by a 7,775 square foot retail building that has since been razed. The site is located on US Route 202 north between Second Avenue and Anderson Street in Raritan Borough.

The project is located within the Somerset Regional Center Traffic Study area. Utilizing the formula in the study, the developer's obligation has been calculated to be \$802. The developer has paid the contribution. A development agreement has been drafted formalizing the assessment and has been signed by the applicant. Planning Board Counsel has reviewed and approved the development agreement.

The Committee members in attendance recommended that the agreement be conceptually approved by the full Planning Board and then transmitted to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for its action.

#### **Somerset Corporate Center – Lifetime Fitness Center/AC Hotel Marriott, Bridgewater**

James Ruggieri noted that in 1997 the Somerset County Planning Board approved an office complex called Somerset Corporate Center consisting of 1.5 million square feet of office space, to be built in stages for a total of six multi-story office buildings. The office park is located at the northwest corner of the US Route 202-206 and US Route 22 interchange. A development agreement between the developer and the NJ Department of Transportation was executed in 1997 requiring the developer to make certain highway improvements in the area. At that time, the

County accepted these improvements as satisfying the developer's obligation to the Somerset Regional Center Traffic Study. The developer has since constructed five of the six office buildings. In 2008 the developer re-applied to the County for the sixth office building which we approved noting that the improvements required per the agreement with NJ Department of Transportation satisfied the Regional Center obligation. This final office building, totaling almost 242,000 square feet, was never built.

At this time, two different development projects are being proposed at the office park: Minnesota-based developer LTF Real Estate Company is proposing a 127,129 square foot three-story Lifetime Fitness center at the corner of Commons Way and Somerset Corporate Blvd. The other project proposes a 150-room seven-story AC Hotel by Marriott, including a 108-seat rooftop bar and grill and a 245-seat detached restaurant; the hotel/restaurant will be located at Route 202-206 and Somerset Corporate Blvd. Both sites are presently owned by SJP Properties. Two minor subdivisions are also proposed to create two new parcels so that the Lifetime Fitness center and AC Hotel Marriott will respectively be on their own lot.

Staff will investigate to determine the magnitude of credits, if any, to which the Somerset Corporate Center is entitled to for the improvements they installed per the agreement with NJDOT. John Lore inquired whether the approvals at the Township for the sixth building have expired. Staff will keep check with the Township concerning this issue and will keep the Committee apprised as to the County's land development review process as said process get further along.

#### **Somerset Regional Center Traffic Study**

Mathew Loper stated that the County is currently evaluating the Somerset Regional Center Traffic Study plan to determine the status thereof at this time. Bernie Navatto asked if there has been an accounting of the funds collected and used. Matthew stated that this has been done.

#### **First Time Submissions**

The Committee acted upon all first time submissions for the month of February 2017. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 29 submissions. There were two new lots proposed and 63 new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 129,020 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 18 multi-family units. There was a total of \$3,473 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr. took no action and did not participate in any discussion concerning the 30 West End Avenue, Bridgewater Volvo, Dunkin Donuts and the Learning Gate site plans in Somerville.

Vice Chair Kelly called for a motion to approve the March 2017 Land Development Report. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by Matt Loper. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously

#### **April 2017 Land Development Report**

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board packet. The Committee acted upon all first time submissions as follows:

At the April 13, 2017 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee the Committee reviewed a number of projects as well as the first time submissions for the month of March 2017.

#### **7-15 West Main Street, Bound Brook**

Director Walter Lane reminded the Committee that at the March, Land Development Committee meeting the applicants of the 7-15 West Main Street, Bound Brook project requested a waiver of the County Master Plan right-of-way requirement noted in the County Planning Board's January 13, 2017 report. The project proposes 63 attached units with a small commercial component on West Main Street (County Route 533) in Bound Brook.

Chairman Navatto noted that the waiver request is consistent with other waiver requests that the Committee has acted on in the past. He noted that we have the March 8, 2017 correspondence from the applicant's attorney Kevin J, Moore. Chairman Navatto stated that paragraphs two and three on page two of the correspondence outline the unique aspects of the property which would justify the granting of a waiver by the Land Development Committee. A motion was made and seconded to grant the waiver. The motion passed unanimously.

John Lore stated that the decision is a reaffirmation of our policy of acquisition of right-of-way along county roads but in this case it is not justified on the particular aspects of this case and would cause hardship on the applicant. Therefore, this waiver decision was based solely on the facts and circumstances of this particular case. Staff will send the Committee's decision to the applicant.

#### **Birch Glen at Somerset, Franklin**

Nora Fekete presented the proposed Birch Glen at Somerset project. It is a residential subdivision creating 32 new lots located on Amwell Road (County Route #514) and Cedar Grove Lane (County Route #619). Proposed access is to be provided from Cedar Grove Lane. The developer, Sycamore Developers, LLC, is dedicating 10.82 acres to Franklin Township for open space. Kelly Mager noted that a Cedar Grove Lane contribution is likely and that Engineering is reviewing traffic, access and stormwater issues.

#### **Chase Hillsborough, Hillsborough**

Nora also presented the Chase Hillsborough project located on U.S. Route 206 and Tara Drive in Hillsborough. The applicant is proposing 457 residential units which include 91 affordable units. Ten three-story apartment buildings are proposed. In addition, a 10,000 square foot clubhouse, six detached garages, maintenance building and recycling center are also proposed as a part of the project. The developer was Clark Hamilton-Chase Partners, LLC.

#### **First Time Submissions**

The Committee acted upon all first time submissions for the month of March 2017. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 30 submissions. There were 10 new lots proposed and no new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 324,212 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 431 multifamily units. There was a total of \$13,410 in development review fees and \$802 in improvement value paid to the County Planning Board.

Bernard Navatto, Jr. did not participate or take any action on the 40 Haynes Street Redevelopment project in Somerville.

Vice Chair Kelly called for a motion to approve the April 2017 Land Development Report. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by Matt Loper. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Wastewater Management Plan Update**

Director Lane updated the Board on the status of the Wastewater Management Plan. He reported that staff has been making good progress updating numerous GIS data sets and distributing these data sets to the municipalities for their review and comments. Director Lane reported that the February 22<sup>nd</sup> Wastewater Workshop was well attended by the municipalities and interested stakeholders. He informed the Board that NJDEP has approved the County's grant application for \$50,000 in funding to complete the septic management plan portion of the overall Wastewater Management Plan. This work on this part of the plan will start shortly.

### **Regional Center Strategic Master Plan Update**

James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner, gave a brief update on the status of the Regional Center Strategic Master Plan which is being updated.

Last year meetings were held with a Steering Advisory Committee and individual subcommittees to get feedback for the consultant to include in the draft updated plan. In February (2017), the consultant submitted a rough draft of approximately the first half of the Regional Center Strategic Master Plan. Staff submitted the rough draft to the Steering Advisory Committee for comment; staff is currently integrating the SAC's comments with staff's comments to forward to the consultant. Staff wants to make sure the update reflects the recommendations that resulted from the Regional Center's 2015 Visioning Session; e.g., mobility issues, resiliency, and "health and wellness" strategies. The consultant has been working to weave into the Plan various health and wellness strategies to help the Regional Center capitalize on the region's health and wellness resources and assets; e.g., RWJ University Hospital Somerset, Johnson & Johnson in Raritan, bike and pedestrian opportunities, etc.

The updated Plan will include recommendations for priority projects and short-term "wins" that will be considered, especially for project initiatives that are in alignment with the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County initiative. Staff has also been working with the consultant's GIS staff to update the maps featured in the Plan.

Staff will be reviewing the second half of the draft updated Plan when that becomes available. When the entire preliminary draft Plan is in a format presentable to the public, staff will begin the process of scheduling meetings to present the preliminary Plan to the Regional Center Partnership, the public and the three Regional Center towns of Bridgewater, Raritan and Somerville. The Final Draft will be presented either to the County Planning Board or the Board of Chosen Freeholders. The goal is to have the final draft completed by early summer.

### **Somerset County Preservation Plan Update Project**

Tara Kenyon, Principal Planner, presented the status of the *Somerset County Preservation Plan*, which encompasses an update to the Farmland Preservation Plan and the Open Space Master Plan, as well as the creation of a Historic Preservation Plan. Staff recently completed its draft of



an RfP, which is currently under review by the Somerset County Purchasing Department. It is anticipated that this project will be complete in mid-2019.

**Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Phase 3 Update**

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner, updated the Planning Board on the Supporting Priority Investments in Somerset County Phase 3 study. The study is in the home stretch with 17 of our 21 towns participating. About half of the towns have draft final land use and mobility scenarios that are near completion. In the remaining towns the county still has to meet to finalize the draft land use and mobility scenarios. The last SAC meeting will be held in mid-May and the last public meeting in early June. The study must be completed by June 30, 2017

**Public Comment**

Vice Chair Kelly opened the meeting to the Public. There being no comments, the public comment portion was closed.

**Committee Reports and Staff Activities Included in Packet**

**Upcoming Meeting:** May 10, 2017 Planning Partners Forum

**Next Meeting Date:** May 16, 2017

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Board, Vice Chair Kelly asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Matt Loper and seconded by Marian Fenwick. The motion was approved by a Voice Vote.

Respectfully submitted,



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Matthew D. Loper, Secretary