

**MINUTES OF THE JUNE 18, 2019
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45PM
FREEHOLDERS MEETING ROOM
COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the June 18, 2019 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:45pm in the Freeholders Meeting Room. The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Pledge of Allegiance

Open Public Meetings Statement

The Roll was called and the following were in Attendance:

Bernie Navatto, Jr., Chairman
Christopher Kelly, Vice Chairman
Marian Fenwick, Member
John Schneider, Member
John Lindner, Member
William Ziegler, 2nd Alternate Member
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer

John Lore, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

Absent

Al Ellis, Member
Brian Levine, Freeholder Director
Brian Gallagher, Freeholder Liaison
Dennis Quinlan, 1st Alternate Member

Also Present:

Walter Lane, Director of Planning
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner
James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner
Laurette Kratina,
Nora Fekete, Planner
Andras Holzmann, Senior Planner
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

Approval of May 21, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for the motion to approve the minutes of the May 21, 2019 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by John Schneider. A Voice Vote was called and the motion moved unanimously.

DISCUSSION/ PRESENTATION ITEMS:

Somerset County Energy Council Updates

Walter Lane, Director of Planning, introduced William Amman, Chair of the Somerset County Energy Council to the Board.

Mr. Amann addressed the Board regarding the background of the Energy Council and when it was established in January 2008 by the Somerset County Board of Chosen Freeholders with the intention of advising the Freeholders on energy issues, and educating the public on effective ways to reduce energy consumption. Since its establishment, the Council has implemented programs to assist Somerset County and its local government entities in conserving energy; improving energy sustainability and resiliency and reducing energy costs. It implemented the County Energy Audit Program in 2009-10 and supported the establishment of the County's Solar Initiative in 2011.

The Council can be comprised of up to 11 members appointed by the Freeholders. All members must be County employees, residents of Somerset County or employees of organizations/companies located within Somerset County. They must also have specialized knowledge and interest in energy issues. The Energy Council is housed under the Somerset County Planning Board is staffed by the Somerset County Planning Division, with Walter Lane, PP/AICP, Director of Planning serving as a voting member. Planning Division staff support has been provided by Laurette Kratina, PP/AICP, Chief of Strategic Planning since its formation in 2008. In addition to providing administrative and technical support, Ms. Kratina assists the Council in carrying out its programs and initiatives; helps the Council forge partnerships and identify resources that can advance its mission and goals. In summary, it is the Council's intent to continue to recognize, communicate, and celebrate best practices, verifiable results, and demonstrated examples of high performance success stories and models of sustainability, energy-efficiency, and resiliency in the County.

Mr. Amann praised Mr. Lane and Ms. Kratina on their great support and efforts. A brief Q&A session was conducted. Director Lane also acknowledged Ms. Kratina's excellent work with the Council.

ACTION ITEMS/ITEMS INFORMATION ITEMS:

June 2019 Land Development Report and Approval of the May 2019 First Time Submissions

Tom D'Amico, Supervising Planner, stated that there was no meeting of the Land Development Committee in June. Therefore, the full Planning Board must act on the First Time Submissions for the month of May which are in your packet.

During the month of May, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 32 submissions. There was no new lot proposed and 38 new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 150,452 square feet of non-residential building space and 45 multi-family units

proposed. There was a total of \$30,559 in improvement value and \$4,620 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the May 2019 First Time Submissions. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Matt Loper. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Preservation Plan Update

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, stated that the County is undertaking an update of the County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan and the development of a new Historic Preservation Plan.

The County has contracted with Heritage Strategies to coordinate the report along with New Jersey Conservation Foundation to develop the Open Space plan, Land Stewardship Solutions to develop the Farmland Preservation Plan and Barton Ross and Partners to develop the Historic Preservation Plan. The GIS mapping is being handled by Washington College.

Mr. D'Amico stated that the consultants continue to make progress from our last meeting. The county has received the revised Farmland Preservation Goals and Objectives chapter and the revised Historic Preservation Goals and Objectives Chapters, plus a number of revised farmland preservation and open space preservation maps. The County professional staff continues to review the various draft chapters.

The consultants also prepared the PowerPoint presentation of the recommended goals and strategies for each section of the plan. The PowerPoint presentation was shown to the Preservation Plan Steering Committee at their meeting on June 6th. The recommended changes to the PowerPoint from that meeting are being made by the consultants at this time.

The next scheduled public hearing will be on June 26th at 7:00 p.m. in the Freeholders meeting room. Staff has coordinated this project with the ongoing Walk, Bike, Hike Somerset County Connecting Vibrant Communities Plan and the recently completed County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Affordable Housing/Mount Laurel IV Settlements Update

Laurette Kratina, Chief of Strategic Planning, described how she has been monitoring municipal involvement in the Mount Laurel IV Declaratory Judgement Process. Sixteen (16) of the County's municipalities have been involved in this process since it began in July 2015. Of these municipalities, all but Branchburg and Hillsborough have executed settlement agreements with the Fair Share Housing Center regarding their municipal affordable housing obligations through 2025. She noted that negotiations with the Fair Share Housing Center and various developers are underway in these two towns and they continue to move closer toward reaching settlements.

Most of the County's towns involved in the declaratory judgment process have prepared amended Housing Elements and Fair Share Plans and begun to adopt the ordinances that implement these plans. Once these plans and ordinances are deemed compliant by the Court, these 16 municipalities will be protected from builder's remedy lawsuits. The Court has already issued Judgements of Compliance and Repose for a handful of towns including Bedminster, Bridgewater and Franklin. Simultaneously, Ms. Kratina has been monitoring the outcome of this process in terms of the number and type of major residential projects that have been planned thus far by the municipalities that are striving to meet their affordable housing obligations.

Planning Staff have been continuously updating the Division's GIS dataset of major affordable housing projects that have been proposed, are under construction or have been completed since the Fair Housing Act was adopted in 1985. Ms. Kratina provided a summary focused on the projects that are currently planned, but have not yet been built. These projects are identified in settlement agreements, adopted housing elements and fair share plans and ordinances.

There are a total of 82 major affordable housing developments planned in the County at the current time - not including proposed group homes, scattered site rehabilitation and buy-down of existing homes or accessory apartments. This number may change as the local planning process continues. They will yield close to 9,000 housing units, of which just over 2,500 will be affordable to low- and moderate-income individuals and households. Four of the 82 projects are assisted living facilities that will accommodate a total of 507 residents, of which 31 will be low- and moderate- income eligible.

The top 5 municipalities in terms of the total number of planned projects are Warren, Bridgewater, Montgomery, Raritan and Hillsborough. The top 5 municipalities in terms of the total number of future new housing units are Hillsborough, Warren, Branchburg, Raritan, and Bridgewater. The 82 planned projects have been grouped into 4 project type categories, 1) inclusionary new construction, 2) inclusionary redevelopment, 3) 100% affordable/municipality-sponsored and 4) Assisted living.

- 35 projects (43%) are Inclusionary – New Construction,
- 24 projects (29%) are Inclusionary – Redevelopment,
- 19 projects (19%) are 100% affordable/municipality sponsored, and
- 4 are assisted living projects.
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Virtually all are attached housing types such as low and mid-rise apartments, condominiums and townhouses.

The Planning Division does not currently maintain a database for tracking the hundreds of supported group homes for people with disabilities that have been created or proposed so as not to disclose the location of individual homes that are occupied by vulnerable individuals. These are summarized in municipal settlement agreements and updated housing elements and fair share plans. Ms. Kratina noted that she attended the NJ Spotlight roundtable on "Affordable housing in NJ" held on May 31st. Panelists included Kevin Walsh, Executive Director of the Fair Share Housing Center, Assemblywoman Schepisi, Chairman Restrepo of the Housing

and Community Development Network of NJ, Developer Christiana Foglio of Community Investment Strategies, and a Vice President of RWJ Barnabas.

Ms. Kratina noted that it became very apparent by attending this event that there is a lack of information about the numbers of projects and housing units that are being planned statewide as a result of the Mount Laurel IV Declaratory Judgement Process across the State. Most are being planned in a vacuum without adequate consideration given to regional planning concerns. There is an overall lack of transparency regarding where they are being located, how many units will be created and how these projects are being designed, which raises a host of questions:

- What is the capacity of utility and community systems to support them?
- How will our housing market and economy respond?
- Will they have appropriate access to transportation choices, employment and education centers?
- How are they being integrated into neighborhoods and communities?
- Do they alleviate or contribute to diversity and income disparities across the state?
- Do they advance the principles of smart growth, sustainability and resiliency?

Ms. Kratina noted that because the Division's affordable housing dataset is in GIS format, we are able to see that all but a few of the 82 proposed projects are located within sanitary sewer service areas. All but a few are located either within Priority Growth or Alternative Growth Investment Areas according to the County Investment Framework Map. And most exciting, just under 1/3 of the projects planned in Somerset County involve redevelopment of vacant, underutilized commercial and industrial areas, consistent with the fundamental planning principle that redevelopment of sites that are already well-served by transportation and utilities is the most sustainable way to grow.

Ms. Kratina noted that the Board's new Master Plan – Housing Element encourages the use of high-performing residential design and construction methods that produce housing that is energy efficient, served by multi-modal transportation linkages and green infrastructure and that supports healthy lifestyles. She noted that the Division is looking into the possibility of hosting a workshop on resilient residential design later this year or early next year to build awareness of these concepts, in partnership with the Energy Council. She noted that staff will discuss planning this event in greater detail at tonight's Energy Council Meeting and with the Housing and Demographic Committee at its upcoming July 16th meeting.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

Laurette Kratina, Chief of Strategic Planning, informed the Board that joint review comments concerning the draft updated multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan were received from the NJ State Office of Emergency Management and the FEMA Region II Office on June 11th.

All required changes are minor and non-substantive in nature. The County's consultant – Anna Foley with AECOM is currently preparing the final version of the plan. It should be ready for County Planning and County OEM Staff to review by June 28th. Once planning staff have verified that all necessary changes have been made, it will be submitted to both review agencies for verification as well. A fast turn-around time is anticipated. Staff is striving to have the plan

ready for adoption by the Board of Chosen Freeholders this summer, as well as for adoption by all of our participating municipalities, SRVSA and the North Plainfield Board of Education. Sample resolutions have been developed for their use to expedite the adoption process.

The local mitigation review report included general comments about the strengths of the plan, as well as opportunities to improve the plan during the next 5-year update. The plan can be strengthened by engaging the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council; including naturally occurring radon as a hazard of concern; and potentially addressing hazardous materials and man-made hazards during the next update. The addition of dollar values to more of the benefit cost analyses associated with mitigation projects was also recommended.

Walk, Bike, Hike Somerset County Study Update

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner, provided the Board with an update on recent Walk, Bike, Hike Somerset County study activities. He reported that staff has been working with the Engineering Division and the NJTPA to review the draft WBH Draft Final report and Pattern Book. The report will be finalized and submitted to the NJTPA by June 30th.

2020 Census Update

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner, provided the Board with an update on recent Somerset County Census 2020 activities. He reported on the numerous 2020 census activities that took place since the last Planning Board meeting. County staff drafted invitations to municipalities and stakeholders to request their participation in the Somerset County Complete Count Committee. Invitations will be going out to each municipality, county agency, faith based groups, trusted voices, literacy volunteers, human and social services agencies.

Staff revised the draft work program and will be developing a tool kit. County staff will be engaging with the County Superintendents of Schools, PTA/PTO groups, Somerville Area Ministerial Association, Bonnie Dunkin Hunterdon United Way and RVCC on various Census 2020 projects. Staff is working on securing a table at the 4-H Fair for the Census Bureau. He also reported County staff submitted the County's response for PSAP geography program to Census Bureau on June 14th

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Director of Planning Walter Lane reported on the work underway to complete the Wastewater Management Plan (WMP). Staff met with representatives from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to discuss various aspects of the wastewater planning process. NJDEP reported the Montgomery/Rocky Hill WMP Chapter is finally advancing to the adoption phase of the wastewater planning process and will be published in the NJ Register for public comment in the near future. He reported the Septic Management Plan (SMP) was also discussed and NJDEP was happy with the draft and only minor formatting changes were needed. The Sewer Service Transfer Issue was also discussed. The contract with Maser Consulting to assist with the GIS work for the WMP is being finalized. A kickoff meeting with the consultant team will be held next week.

Support of Municipal Planning Efforts

Director of Planning Walter Lane gave a brief overview of some of the ways the Planning Division has been assisting the County's municipalities on their local planning initiatives. He reported that he has been attending redevelopment committee meetings in South Bound Brook and Manville. Building on the work from the Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County Initiative, he has been assisting Bound Brook with their efforts to improve access to the Raritan River and working with South Bound Brook to be jointly designated a Transit Village with Bound Brook. Staff has been working with Bridgewater on Safe Routes to School project. Director Lane stated that he has worked very hard over the last few years to raise the level of coordination/collaboration with the municipalities. These efforts are examples of the value the County Planning Board and Division provide to Somerset County.

Public Comments

Chairman Navatto, Jr., opened the meeting to the public. There being no comments, the meeting was closed to the public.

Committee Reports

The Committee Reports were included in the meeting packet.

Next Meeting Date: July 16, 2019 @4:45pm

Adjournment:

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Navatto, Jr., asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by John Lindner. A Voice Vote was called and the motion moved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary