

**MINUTES OF THE MAY 19, 2020
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45PM
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

This meeting was held as a virtual meeting. Information on how to join the meeting was posted on the County website and published in the newspapers. Chairman Navatto, Jr reported the meeting had been duly advertised in accordance with Open Public Meetings Act.

Pledge of Allegiance

Open Public Meetings Statement

The May 19, 2020 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:45pm. The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

The Roll was called and the following were in Attendance:

Bernie Navatto, Jr, Chairman
Christopher Kelly, Vice Chairman
Al Ellis, Member
John Schneider, Member
John Lindner, Member
Jeffrey Wright, Member
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer
William Zeigler, 1st Alternate
Ericka Inocencio, 2nd Alternate

Joseph DeMarco, Esq., County Counsel

Absent

Freeholder Director Robinson
Freeholder Deputy Director Sooy, Liaison

Also Present:

Walter Lane, Director of Planning
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director
Laurette Kratina, Chief of Strategic Planning
Tom D'Amico, Supervising Planner
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner
Jim Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner
Andras Holzmann, Senior Planner
Nora Fekete, Planner
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Aarthy Sabesan, Senior Planner-GIS
Chirstina Tricarico, Planner-GIS
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

Approval of April 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, asked for the motion to approve the Minutes of the April 19, 2020 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by Jeffrey Wright. A Voice Vote was called and the motion moved unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS/ITEMS INFORMATION ITEMS:

Somerset County Planning Division Responses to COVID-19

Director of Planning Walter Lane provided a brief overview of the Planning Division's activities since the last Planning Board meeting. He reported the office continues function very well and staff continues to stop into the office to perform work task that cannot be complete remotely. Numerous virtual meetings have been held, including an Agriculture Roundtable Discussion, a Brownfields Learning Lab hosted in partnership with NJIT's newly formed New Jersey Brownfields Assistance Center. Director Lane facilitated a meeting between South Bound Brook and the Center has already provided technical assistance and guidance on a few brownfields issues in the Borough. Connections have been made with the Center.

Staff has attended numerous meetings and workshops such Complete Count Committees for the County and the State, NJTPA meetings and State Planning Commission meetings. He also organized a panel session for the NJ County Planners Association's June meeting to discuss long term recovery planning related to COVID-19. The panel included presentations from Carolyn Grossman Meagher, Director of Regional Planning for New York City, Pete Kasabach from NJ Future, Max Slusher from the Atlantic County Economic Alliance and Passaic County Planning Director Michael Lysicatos. A long-term recovery working group was formed and will be headed by Director Lane. It is the goal of this working group to provide feedback and input into the State of New Jersey's Recovery efforts. Pete Kasabach from NJ Future and Nat Bottigheimer, NJ Director of the Regional Plan Association offered to bring the County Planners Association's concerns and comments back to the Governor's Recovery Task Forces since they have been asked to serve on several task forces. In addition, Nat Bottigheimer will be presenting on the Reginal Plan Association's various efforts at the June Planning Board.

Director Lane also detailed numerous of planning projects the Division has been working on including providing GIS mapping support to the US Census Bureau, provided technical planning support for numerous municipal planning efforts and advancing the completion of the Preservation Plan. He stated that the office has been very busy and thank the entire staff for a job well done and commended them on their professionalism. He highlighted the Tuesday/Thursday weekly staff meetings that allow everyone to interact as a team. A screenshot of a Zoom staff meeting was shown to the Board as was submitted to the Public Information Office to highlight the County staff is still working to serve the residents of Somerset County. He reported Tony McCracken, James Ruggieri and Tom D'Amico had submitted selfies of themselves working at home that were featured on the County's Facebook page.

Proposed Site-Specific WQMP Amendment: Elion Partners Project, Franklin Township

Director of Planning Walter Lane provided an overview of the Elion Partners application for a WQMP Amendment which had been previously discussed by the Planning Board. He reviewed a map of the proposed amendment. This proposal involves a roughly 425,000 warehouse/office development on a 45-acre lot and proposed to add an additional 1.5 acres to the existing sewer service area.

This proposed amendment has been discussed with both the Master Plan and Environment and Utilities Committees. During our initial review of the proposed amendment, it appeared that this proposal was inconsistent with the County Investment Framework since the land being proposed to be added to the sewer service area is in the Priority Preservation Area. Original this property was included in a sewer service area but was removed by NJDEP due to some environmentally sensitive features on the property. Director Lane noted that if the location of the buildings were available at the time the sewer service boundary was negotiated in 2011-2012 with NJDEP, the boundary would have reflected this, and that it was always anticipated this site would be developed in accordance with the long-term zoning of this site. In addition, the proposed development is consistent with municipal zoning and the amendment is supported by Franklin Township. Most of the site is within the sewer service area and Alternate Growth Investment Area pursuant to the County Investment Framework. Based upon these facts, staff recommended supporting this amendment and both the Master Plan and Environment and Utilities Committees concurred. A draft letter stating the County's position was included in the Board packet. The County will have an additional opportunity to review the amendment during the formal consent process. A vote was taken and the Board unanimously approved authorizing Director Lane to submit the letter to NJDEP.

May 2020 Land Development Report and Approval of April 2020 First Time Submissions

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packets. The Committee acted upon all first time submissions for the month of April. At the May 13, 2020 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 April 2020.

Ridge Apartments at Bound Brook II Waiver Request, Bound Brook

Tom presented information concerning a waiver request from the developers of the Ridge Apartments at Bound Brook II project which is a proposed 42-unit apartment building located at the intersection of Mountain Avenue (County Route 527) and Second Street (a local road). The developers De Mattheis Real Estate wish to waive two requirements in the County Planning Board's land development review report dated March 17, 2020. The first requires a master plan right-of-way 66 feet (33 feet from the centerline) along Mountain Avenue which is designated as a minor arterial in the Somerset County Road Functional Classification System. The developers stated that if the 66 foot right-of way is implemented on the subject property then the above noted project will not be financially feasible. They also noted that other existing structures along Mountain Avenue would be compromised if the master plan right-of-way was implemented. The second requirement the developers wish to waive is the requirement that any new driveway be 35 feet from the county right-of-way line.

They wish to construct a driveway on Second Street with a separation of 29.63 feet from the right-of-way line along Mountain Avenue. The developers propose to restrict this driveway to right turn in and right turn out only. After a through discussion the Committee agreed to defer a decision until the June Committee meeting. At that meeting the county engineering and planning professionals will report on their investigation of the master plan right-of-way issue along the entire County Route 533 corridor and the driveway issue.

First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first time submissions for the month of April. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 23 submissions. There were 12 new lots proposed and no new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 15,313 square feet of non-residential building space and 356 multi-family units proposed. There was no improvement value paid to the County Planning Board. There was \$2,370.00 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr. did not take any action on or participate in any discussion concerning the Somerset Station, LLC site plan in Somerville.

Chairman Navatto asked for the motion to approve the May 2020 Development Report and Approval of the April 2020 First Time Submissions. The motion was made by John Schneider and seconded by Chris Kelly. The Roll was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Preservation Plan Update

Tom D'Amico, Supervising Planner, stated that work continues on the Preservation Plan. The plan is 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. Tom noted that the second draft of the historic preservation plan was reviewed and comments were submitted to Heritage Strategies. We have received final comments and revisions from Heritage Strategies on the Open Space element and they are currently being reviewed by Staff. In addition, staff is reviewing the final text of the Agricultural Plan for any changes. Staff need to finalize the maps and the layout of the plan. We hope to have the plan submitted to the Steering Committee next month for their review and comment.

Director Lane stated once the draft plan is ready for public review, the plan will be made available well in advance of any public meetings to ensure there is adequate time for review prior to any future meetings. Depending on the restrictions that may still be in place due to COVID-19 in the coming months will impact how we engage the public. It is hoped the plan will be able to be approved later this year.

2020 Census Update

The Somerset County Complete Count Committee met last week and received an update from the Census Partnership Specialist about changes in the Census Bureau Operating Plan. Specifically the Census Bureau will begin opening New Jersey offices in the next two weeks and will begin to

conduct the group quarters and homeless counts at that time. The Census Bureau has extended the self-response phase to August 11th. Beginning August 12th, Census Bureau staff will begin knocking on household doors that have not completed a census form. Census takers and self-response census will end on October 31, 2020. The population numbers are to be delivered to the President sometime in spring 2021 instead of December 31, 2020 due to Covet 19. The congress will have to vote to change the date. The Census Bureau reported that in two weeks in will begin delivering census forms to households that have a PO box in every community since no census information is delivered to any PO box.

Staff noted they continue to send out weekly census updates from the New Jersey Complete Count Commission along with excel tables and a dash board that presents the latest county, municipal, census tract and congressional district self-response rates. County staff is working with many of its Complete Count Commission members to distributed printed census materials including Healthier Somerset, in North Plainfield Bound Brook, Franklin, the United Way Bound Brook Borough and Peapack and Gladone Borough. The Cultural and Heritage Commission has been working with the Public Information office to create a series of culture, art and history short videos as part of their Culture Counts series that include a Freeholder explaining why the census is important to complete. Staff is also working to distribute census materials to a local food pantry at the Somerville YMCA.

Director Lane highlighted the Census Response Dashboard prepared by Aarthy Sabesan who heads the GIS Section of the Planning Division. This was prepared at the request of US Census Bureau and another version has been prepared for use by Congressman Malinowski's office. He reported this dashboard is being widely shared and be cited as a model for the rest of the country to use to share census response information. He thanked Aarthy Sabesan for excellent work on the dashboard as well Ken Wedeen, Laurette Kratina and Kaitlin Bundy for all their efforts to support the County's Census outreach efforts.

Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-Regional Study

Andras Holzmann, Senior Planner, reported that the County has finalized a contract with Stantec Inc. for consultant services for the NJTPA funded Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-regional study. Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc is the sub-consultant for the study. The study will be to explore up to five county road corridors up to one mile long for safety improvements for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists. A kickoff meeting for the study is scheduled with Staff and the consultants on Thursday May 21, 2020.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Director Lane reported progress continues to be made to complete the wastewater management plan. Some of the buildout results have been submitted by Maser Consulting for staff review and a workshop to review the buildout results with the municipalities is being planned for the end of June. At the recent Master Plan Committee, the issue of the lack of response from NJDEP regarding informal reviews of draft work products was discussed. He described delays that are taking place in the NJDEP WMP review process that are causing hold-ups in terms of County Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) completion and adoption state-wide. He noted work will

move forward and the completed plan will be submitted without the benefit of informal review by NJDEP of key WMP components if necessary.

Director Lane asked for the Board's approval to stop submitting documents or work products for informal review and only make formal submissions. The Board unanimously approved submitting documents or work products as formal submissions.

State Plan Update

Director Lane updated the Board on the status of plan endorsement petitions being pursued by several of the County's municipalities. Rocky Hill contacted Director Lane to inform the County the Borough is planning on scheduling a plan endorsement pre-petition meeting. He indicated the County will be happy to assist the Borough in their efforts to navigate the plan endorsement process. He noted the SPC adopted a resolution extending the center expiration deadline considering the COVID-19 Emergency Declaration. He noted that staff will be looking at how we can take advantage of the County Plan Endorsement Process, especially from the perspective of how this can make the municipal endorsement process easier.

Public Comments

Bernie Navatto 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: June 16, 2020 @4:45pm

Adjournment:

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

Respectfully submitted

Matthew D. Loper, Secretary