

**MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 15, 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.

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the September 15, 2020 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:45pm. 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
Al Ellis, Member
John Schneider, Member
John Lindner, Member
Jeffrey Wright, Member
William Zeigler, 1st Alternate
Ericka Inocencio, 2nd Alternate
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer

William Ziegler, 1st Alternate will be voting in place of Jeffrey Wright

Marina Stinely, Esq. covering for Joseph DeMarco, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

Absent

Christopher Kelly, Vice Chairman
Freeholder Director Robinson
Freeholder Deputy Director Sooy, Liaison

Also Present:

Walter Lane, Director of Planning
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner
Laurette Kratina, Chief of Strategic Planning
James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner
Andras Holzmann, Senior Planner
Aarthy Sabesan, Senior Planner-GIS
Nora Fekete, Planner
Christina Tricario, Planner-GIS

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

Approval of August 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, asked for the motion to approve the Minutes of the August 18, 2020 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by John Lindner and seconded by Al Ellis. A Voice Vote was called and the motion moved unanimously.

Discussion/Presentation Items:

Director of Planning Walter Lane reported this presentation was postponed because Mr. Grzella due to a death in his family. Mr. Grzella will present at a future Planning Board Meeting. Director Lane conveyed the Board's condolences to Mr. Grzella.

Planning Director's Report

Director of Planning Walter Lane provided an overview of work underway in the Planning Division. He reported the Division continues to work a hybrid schedule of working in the office and remotely and this schedule is working well. He briefed the Board on the following items:

- Staff is working with the Board of Chosen Freeholders on several economic development initiatives including reaching out to major corporations to highlight the benefits of staying or relocating to Somerset County. Work has begun on the AT&T Landuse Study in cooperation with Bedminster Township. A kickoff meeting was recently held with officials from Bedminster Township.
- The next Planning Partners Forum will be held virtually on September 24th at 8am. The major presentation item will be on the new Stormwater Utility Resource Center by representatives from NJ Future. The Stormwater Utility Resource Center provides resources and technical assistance to municipalities considering forming a stormwater utility.
- Director Lane, as President of the NJ County Planners Association, worked with the Long-Term Recovery Working Group to finalize a policy document that outlines a series of guiding principles and strategies to help advance the State's recovery from the impacts from COVID-19 and advance and advocating for many long standing planning goals. The NJCPA will authorize the release of the document and will distribute a press release with quotes from several members of the working group. The final document will be shared with the Board. Director Lane stated this document demonstrates the value that County Planning provides the residents of New Jersey.
- A meeting with NJDEP and the NJCPA Wastewater Working Group was held in early September to discuss how to advance the wastewater planning process in a collaborative manner. The meeting was very productive and the group will continue to meet senior NJDEP staff on a monthly basis.
- On September 18th the regular monthly NJCPA meeting will have presentations about the Jersey Waterworks Green Infrastructure efforts and RPA's Be My Neighbor accessory housing initiative.

- Staff has submitted a Sub-regional Studies Grant Application to the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority for an update of the County's Circulation Element. The new Circulation Element will contain an updated and expanded EV Readiness Plan. He reported that the NJTPA is very excited about this grant application since will be the first county circulation element to contain an EV readiness plan.
- Staff has providing technical assistance for various municipal planning efforts. The Planning Division has been assisting Manville, Bernardsville, Bound Brook, South Bound Brook and Raritan during the past month. By coordinating County and local efforts, there has been a tremendous alignment of efforts to ensure local and County planning goals are achieved.
- Director Lane asked the Board if they would like to schedule the remaining meetings for 2020 as virtual meeting due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19. Chairman Navatto asked the Board if everyone was in agreement to hold the remaining meetings for 2020 as virtual meetings. The Board agreed to hold the remaining regular Board Meetings as virtual meetings. A Public Notice will be advertised with the new meeting information.

ACTION ITEMS/ITEMS INFORMATION ITEMS:

September 2020 Land Development Report and Approval of the August 2020 First Time Submissions

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packets. At the September 9, 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 August 2020. The meeting was held via Zoom.

Ridge Apartments at Bound Brook II Update, Bound Brook

Supervising Planner Thomas D'Amico stated that the Ridge Apartments at Bound Brook II project is a proposed 42-unit five-story apartment building located at the intersection of Mountain Avenue (County Route 527) and Second Street (a local road). The applicant, after a number of reviews, has submitted a plan acceptable to the Office of the County Engineer which shows a 50 foot right-of-way and on street parking removed in this section of the County Route 527 corridor.

The Committee agreed with the recommendation of the County Engineer and County Counsel that if County received correspondence from the Bound Brook Planning Board stating that removing parking along this section of the aforementioned corridor is acceptable, the Land Development Committee waives the right-of-way requirement.

Peapack Road Supportive Housing, Far Hills

Principal Community Planner James Ruggieri stated that the proposed Peapack Road Supportive Housing project consists of two affordable (COAH) one-story group homes on separate vacant parcels consisting of four bedrooms each for a total of eight bedrooms.

The group home on Lot 1.02 will be approximately 2,236 square feet and the group home on Lot 2.03 will be approximately 2,345 square feet. The approximately .85-acre property is located on Peapack Road (County Route 512). The applicant is The Matheny School and Hospital, Inc. Planning Director Walter Lane stated he has received correspondence, forwarded from the County Administrator, from the attorney of the Borough of Far Hills noting that the applicant for this project would not be able to meet the frontage requirements outlined in the County Planning Board's review report of July 1, 2020. The attorney further stated that the aforesaid frontage requirements would jeopardize the project and the Borough's affordable housing compliance.

Director Lane noted that based on the Borough's concerns, the office of the County Engineer has further investigated the frontage requirements and they have identified a possible alternative which would significantly reduce the contribution amount or extent of the improvements to be constructed in the County right-of-way. Principal Engineer Kelly Mager stated that this alternative treatment would be consistent with the current treatment along the frontage across the street from the subject property.

After discussing the issue the Land Development Committee agreed that the alternative treatment proposal should be transmitted to the applicant and the Borough for their consideration. It was also noted that all of the other requirements in the County Planning Board review report of July 1, 2020 must be fulfilled prior to final County Planning Board approval.

Haven at Princeton, Montgomery

Planner Nora Fekete presented the Haven at Princeton project which is a major subdivision proposing 122 townhomes and 32 affordable unit apartments. The 73.9 acre tract is located south of Rocky Hill on River Road (County Route #605). Kelly Mager outlined the requirements for County Planning Board approval which include the County road moratorium requirements. Also noted were requirements for access/clear sight, right-of-way, stormwater managements and map filing. It was also stated that this site is along the Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway and that buffering should be provided along the frontage of the site to the greatest extent possible.

First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of August 2020. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 22 submissions. There were 122 new lots proposed and six new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 55,176 square feet of non-residential building space proposed. There was \$16,023 in improvement value and \$2,400 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board. Bernard Navatto, Jr, took no action and did not participate in any discussion concerning the 43 Williams Street site plan in Somerville.

Chairman Navatto asked for the motion to approve the September 2020 Land Development Report and Approval of the August 2020 First Time Submissions. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by John Schneider. The Roll was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Preservation Plan Update

Supervising Planner Thomas D'Amico 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.

We have received the final draft of the Open Space and Historic Preservation elements and the Goals and Strategies for the Open Space and Historic Preservation elements from the consultant Preservation Strategies. All these documents are being reviewed by County professional staff. A conference call with the consultant was held on September 10th in which staff discussed the completion of outstanding materials. Staff is now working with the County Graphics Department on the covers of the various elements.

The plan has been coordinated with the County Investment Framework, the Walk, Bike, Hike Somerset County Connecting Vibrant Communities Plan and the County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

2020 Census Update

Supervising Transportation Planner Kenneth Wedeen reported the last day to complete the Census 2020 form is September 30th. This can be accomplished on-line, over the phone or by working with a census-taker, who are now going door-to-door.

Somerset County's participation rate is presently 76.4 percent, and it ranks 4th among NJ Counties. Morris County ranks first. In comparison, the self-response rate for New Jersey is 68.1 percent, and it is 65.1 percent for the United States. Planning staff stated the County's low response rate municipalities have participation rates ranging from 61 – 69 percent, and its high self-response rate municipalities have participation rates ranging from 80 to 83.5 percent.

Planning staff reported they distributed 3,000 printed census bags to local food pantries throughout the County and the 500 lawn signs that were printed and distributed to all 21 municipalities by the County. Social media support continues to be provided for local census events at which Census 2020 is being promoted. The County's work promoting the Census will continue throughout the next 15 days, including two more meetings of the Somerset County Complete Count Committee.

The County's Census Bureau Census Partnership Specialist is preparing a report describing all of the outreach activities that took place in the County. This information will be used by Planning staff to compile a summary report of census activities completed by the County for the Freeholder Board. Planning staff stressed the assistance provided by the County to the municipalities with low self -response areas. Planning staff acknowledged the hard work and valuable contributions made by the County Public Information Office and Graphics Staff. All the grant monies allocated to the County by the State 2020 Complete Count Commission have been spent on promoting census 2020. No funds were used for County administrative or staff resources.

Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-regional Study

Senior Planner Andras Holzmann reported that staff has continued to receive feedback from the public using the study's interactive mapping tool. To date over 350 pins have been dropped and over 150 lines have been drawn on the map. Staff has also received comments from the public from study email address. The steering advisory committee for the study met on August 19th and helped select five county road corridors that will be studied further and have Road Safety Audits conducted on them.

The five county road corridors selected are: (1) Finderene Ave / E. Main St in Bridgewater, (2) Franklin Blvd in Franklin, (3) Greenbrook Rd in North Plainfield, (4) Somerset St in Raritan, and (5) Millstone River Rd in Millstone.

A public meeting will be held in the fall to get feedback from the public on the five chosen county road corridors.

Resolution Authorizing the Submission of the Revised Septic Management Plan Component of the Countywide Wastewater Management Plan for the County of Somerset to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and to the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders

Director Lane reported the Planning Division has been working on revising the draft Septic Management Plan (SMP) Component of the Countywide Wastewater Management Plan (WMP). All changes requested by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and our municipalities have been made. He asked the Board to authorize submitting the revised SMP to NJDEP and the County of Middlesex by approving the resolution in the Board's packet. The SMP must be approved by the County of Middlesex since wastewater from several of our towns is treated by facilities in Middlesex County.

Chairman Navatto, Jr., asked for a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing the Submission of the Revised Septic Management Plan Component of the Countywide Wastewater Management Plan for the County of Somerset to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and to the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders. The motion was made by Jeffrey Wright and seconded by John Lindner. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Director Lane provided a brief update on the status of the Wastewater Management Plan (WMP). Staff is working with our municipalities to finalize the revisions to the WMP Buildout Analysis. All but two towns has provided comments on the WMP Buildout Analysis. If the Planning Division does not receive any additional comments, the consultant will be authorized to finalize the WMP Buildout Analysis. It is the goal to complete the entire draft WMP by this November.

Public Comments

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

Committee Reports

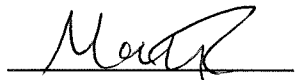
The Committee Reports were included in the meeting packet.

Next Meeting Date: October 20, 2020@4:45pm (virtual)

Adjournment:

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to Adjourn. The motion was made by John Schneider and seconded by Erika Inocencio. A Voice Vote was called and the motion moved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary