

**MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 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 December 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
Chris Kelly, Vice Chairman
Al Ellis, Member
John Schneider, Member
John Lindner, Member
Jeffrey Wright, Member
Freeholder Director Robinson
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer
William Zeigler, 1st Alternate
Erika Inocencio, 2nd Alternate

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

Absent

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
Nora Fekete, Planner
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

Approval of November 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto asked for the motion to approve the minutes of the November 17, 2020 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by John Lindner and seconded by John Schneider. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously with the exception of Bernie Navatto, who abstained.

Discussion/Presentation Items:

Millstone Borough Plan Endorsement Update

Planning Director Walter Lane provided a brief update on the status of Millstone Borough's Plan Endorsement Petition. The Borough has been working for some time now to achieve Plan Endorsement Status from the State Planning Commission. As previously discussed, the NJDEP had raised concerns about the current Center Boundaries. After discussion with NJDEP and OPA, the Borough is considering a revised Center Boundary which would follow the sewer service area delineation for the Borough and changing the current Planning Area 3 designation to a Planning Area 2 designation. These issues were discussed in detail with the Master Plan Committee meeting on several occasions. The County has raised concerns about the changing of the center boundary as well as the current State Planning Rules that allow for undeveloped and or environmentally sensitive features to be included within Centers.

Staff is concerned if the changes requested by NJDEP are implemented it will set a precedent for future changes to center boundaries as well as potential changes to the County Investment Framework. Millstone Borough's Planning Board is meeting on the evening of December 15th to discuss these issues. The Borough has asked for a letter of support from the County for their Plan Endorsement Petition. Director Lane made it clear to the Borough the County will support the Borough's efforts but may raise concerns about the changes to Center Boundaries as well the exclusion of environmentally sensitive lands from Centers to ensure consistency between the County Investment Framework and the Sate Plan Map. Director Lane asked for Board approval to send a letter to the State Planning Commission letter stating our concerns. The Master Plan Committee endorsed sending the proposed letter. He also asked the Board to approve sending (if reviewed and approved by the Master Plan Committee) the letter prior to the next Board meeting if necessary. Chairman Navatto stated this was a long-time issue. Chairman Navatto asked if the Board was in favor of sending the letter following the process outlined by Director Lane. The Board unanimously approved sending the letter.

Planning Director's Report

Director of Planning Walter Lane provided an overview of work underway in the Planning Division. He briefed the Board on the following items:

- A Planning Partners Forum was held on December 10th. There were three presentations: NJ County Planners Long Term Recovery Policy Document, Wastewater Management Plan Updates and an update from the Somerset County Business Partnership. Over 30 attendees participated in the forum.

- Green Jobs Task Force spearheaded by Freeholder Marano will be holding their first meeting on December 16th.
- Staff submitted a Hazard Mitigation Grant to FEMA for the work on the Flood Resiliency Element.
- He reported the AT&T Land use Study continues to advance. A site visit was held on December 7th.
- Efforts continue to advance the implementation of the State Plan. Warren Township has indicated they would like to peruse Plan Endorsement.
- Director Lane reported he continues to participate in the Business Partnership's Strategic Planning Sessions. The draft Strategic Plan is consistent with our planning efforts.
- The Director and Planning Division Staff continue to provide technical assistance to numerous municipalities.
- He provided a brief update on the activities of the NJ County Planners Association.
 - Long Term Recovery Document distribution started.
 - On December 2nd, an EV Discussion was held.
 - At the December 4th NJCPA Holiday Meeting, NJDEP Deputy Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette spoke to the group about how NJDEP and Counties can work together to support our shared planning goals.

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ACTION ITEMS/ITEMS INFORMATION ITEMS:

December 2020 Land Development Report and Approval of the November 2020 First time Submissions

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packet.

At the December 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 November 2020. The meeting was held via Zoom.

Riverview at Raritan, Raritan

Principal Planner James Ruggieri updated the Committee on the proposed Riverview at Raritan Project in Raritan. The project site consists of a 2.215-acre property on Orlando Drive just to the west of the Lena luxury apartments. According to the Zeus Industrial Products website, the company operated its Raritan facility on Orlando Drive from 1966 to 2013 where they manufactured various tubing-type products. In 2013, Zeus relocated their Raritan operations to a new facility on Route 202 in Branchburg. In 2015, the vacated Zeus property on Orlando Drive underwent a contaminated soil removal and replacement project.

In November 2020, the County Planning Board received a site plan application by applicant Orlando Heights Realty, LLC to construct a four-story residential building called the Riverview at Raritan consisting of 70 apartment units of which 7 apartments will be below-market rate. 158 parking spaces will be provided 41 of which will be covered by part of the proposed building. As part of the project, the 2 existing masonry buildings will be demolished. Primary access will be to Orlando Drive with proposed emergency access to John Street which connects to Somerset

Street. Both Orlando Drive and John Street are local roads. At the municipal level, the applicant is seeking a use variance from Raritan Borough.

Based on the submitted information, the site and the proposed building have not been designed to facilitate the collection of recyclable materials by the County as part of the Somerset County Solid Waste Management Program. Somerset County PB issued its report dated November 23, 2020 to the Borough and the applicant advising them of this and explaining the size and number of dumpsters that would have to be provided just for recycling and how they would need to be positioned for front loading County vehicles. The applicant was also advised that, as an alternative, if the intent is to have all recycling and garbage collected by a private hauler, the ultimate owner or property management company is to provide a written statement indicating that recycling will be collected by a private hauler and this complex will not participate in the Somerset County Solid Waste Management program.

Mr. Ruggieri noted that this type of redevelopment project demonstrates that a former industrial property can be successfully remediated and converted into a productive use, which might otherwise have become an eyesore near an existing luxury housing development. In addition, the proposed apartments will be one block from Somerset Street and in general should complement Raritan Borough's proposed Comprehensive Economic Development Plan which seeks to create a vision for downtown Raritan. The project is also within walking distance of the Raritan River Greenway linear park system and within walking distance of Duke Farms.

First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of November 2020. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 23 submissions. There were 5 new lots proposed and 59 new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 318,480 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 216 multi-family units. There was \$16,441 in improvement value and \$6,344 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 134 East Main Street, the 261 Davenport Street and the Immaculate Conception School site plans in Somerville.

Chairman Navatto asked for the motion to approve the December 2020 Land Development Report and Approval of the November 2020 First Time Submissions. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Jeffrey Wright. The Roll was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

Preservation Plan Update

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner reported that the County is updating the County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, the Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan and developing a new Historic Preservation Plan. The County has contracted with Preservation 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 with assistance from the Planning Division's GIS section.

The county has received the draft of the Open Space Master Plan and the Historic Preservation Master Plan which we have transmitted to the Preservation Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee met on the November 23rd and we received some comments which are being incorporated into the final draft. In addition, Staff just received some comments and suggested changes from the County Park Commission which are being reviewed. Staff also just received the revised tourism chapter. Supervising Planning D'Amico reported he completed some minor changes to the chart and map showing all historic sites open to the public and the chart listing the Historic American Building Survey and Historic American Engineering Record sites in the County. Our GIS staff is currently working on farmland preservation mapping.

Supervising Planner D'Amico stated he expects to transmit the Agricultural Preservation Plan in early next week to the Steering Committee. After their review and all recommended changes are made to the Plans, they will be posted on the County website and distributed for public review.

Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-regional Study

Kenneth Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner, updated the Planning Board at regarding the Somerset County Roadway Corridor Safety Study. The consultant team hosted several bi-weekly meetings and has been working closely with county and NJTPA staff to complete a draft of the Existing Conditions Report.

The consultant has been working on preliminary planning for the 2nd SAC meeting to be hosted on February 17th. County staff and the consultant have identified the last two weeks in March and 1st week in April 2021 to host the five RSA audits. The consultant has prepared a draft set of two dates to host each RSA which includes a rain date. Two RSA's will be hosted each of the last two weeks in March and one RSA in the first week of April. The consultant also prepared a draft list of county, NJTPA, consultant and municipal participants for each road safety audit for review by county and NJTPA staff. He also provided a brief updated on the Sub-regional Studies grant application for the Circulation Element Update.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Director Lane provided a brief update on the wastewater management planning effort. Good progress continues to be made on this effort. Drafts of a series of plan maps and the associated text were reviewed by the Master Plan and Environment and Utilities Committees. Director Lane asked the Board to approve the release of these documents to the municipalities and other stakeholders for their review and comment. The Buildout Analysis section of the Wastewater Management Plan will be released once comments are received from the municipalities on the other documents that were just discussed. Letters will also be sent to the operators of wastewater treatment facilities that may have capacity issues as detailed in the Buildout Analysis results. Strategies to address these capacity issues will be discussed with these operators. The Septic Management Plan (SMP) is still under review by NJDEP. A presentation on the SMP will be made to Middlesex County as the designated planning agency review

process. The Board approved release of the series of plan maps and the associated text for municipal and stakeholder review.

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: January 19, 2021 at 4:45pm.

Adjournment:

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

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary