

**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 16, 2021 MEETING OF  
THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.  
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Call to Order**

The February 16, 2021 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:45 p.m. This meeting was held as a virtual meeting.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Open Public Meetings Statement**

Chairman Navatto, Jr. reported the meeting had been duly advertised in accordance with Open Public Meetings Act as follows:

In accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 *et seq.*, and the Emergency Remote Meeting Protocol for Local Public Bodies N.J.A.C. 5:39-1.1 through 1.7, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided. The date, time and virtual meeting information for this meeting was published in The Star-Ledger and the Courier News. The agenda and the virtual meeting information was also posted on the County Planning Board website.

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

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr., Chairman  
Chris Kelly, Vice-Chair  
Al Ellis, Member  
John Lindner, Member  
Jeffrey A. Wright, Sr., Member  
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer  
Commissioner Paul Drake  
Sami Shaban, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate  
Ashok Rakhit, 2<sup>nd</sup> Alternate

Sami Shaban, 1<sup>st</sup> Alternate voted in place of Erika Inocencio who was absent.

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

**Absent**

Erika Inocencio, Member  
Commissioner Director Robinson

**Also Present from Staff:**

Walter Lane, Director of Planning  
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director  
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner  
Laurette Kratina, Chief of Strategic Planning

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner  
Adam Bradford, Senior Transportation Planner  
James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner  
Nora Fekete, Planner  
Aarthy Sabesan, Senior Planner-GIS  
Christina Tricarico, Planner-GIS  
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner  
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

### **Approval of January 19, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the minutes of January 19, 2021 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Jeffrey Wright. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

### **Discussion/Presentation Items**

#### **ALICE in NJ - Before, during and after COVID19**

Chairman Navatto introduced Catherine Connelly from the United Way of Northern New Jersey to present on their recent ALICE in NJ - Before, during and after COVID19 presentation. Ms. Connelly gave an overview of the United for Alice Initiative of which the ALICE in NJ - Before, during and after COVID19 presentation was a component of this initiative. She explained ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. The ALICE population is defined as households where the cost of living exceeds their income, but their income exceeds the Federal Poverty Level. Many members of the ALICE population are essential workers like day care providers, home health aides and supermarket staff members.

Ms. Connelly provided an overview of the ALICE website: [www.unitedforalice.org](http://www.unitedforalice.org) She then highlighted the vast array of data sets that provide details on the ALICE population in New Jersey down to the County level. About 27% of households in NJ meet the definition of ALICE. In Somerset County, 24% of our population is defined as ALICE. Several other data sets and sections of the report were presented. The Board asked numerous questions regarding the data sets provided. Chairman Navatto thank Ms. Connelly for her excellent presentation.

#### **Millstone Borough Plan Endorsement Update**

Director Lane reported he has been working with Borough and the Office of Planning Advocacy to advance the Borough's Plan Endorsement Petition. As the Board may recall, NJDEP wanted to exclude a property that had been in the original center boundary and is the current sewer service area. The reason they wanted to exclude the parcel is because it had not been developed and the new NJDEP landscape data showed environmentally sensitive features on the parcel. Since our sewer service boundaries are set to expire in 2023, they wanted to remove this parcel now. I have been informed the property will now be included in the proposed center.

Director Lane continuing to work with the Borough to finalize our letter of support for the Borough's Plan Endorsement Petition. The County's letter will support the Borough's efforts and highlight the need for the State Plan to guide planning decisions instead of the wastewater management planning process informing State Plan decisions. Once the draft letter is finalized, Director Lane stated he will share a draft with the Master Plan Committee for their review and approval.

## 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:

- Director Lane introduced the new Senior Transportation Planner Adam Bradford. Mr. Bradford started at the beginning of this month. The County was able to lure Mr. Bradford away from Hunterdon County. Director Lane stated Mr. Bradford brings a wide range of planning experience to our office. Mr. Bradford gave an overview of his experience and looks forward to working with the Board. Chairman Navatto welcomed Mr. Bradford to the Planning Board.
- The Green Jobs Task Force continues to meet on a bi-weekly basis. The mission statement was finalized. *"The mission of the Green Economy Task Force is to identify and prioritize for the Board of Commissioners what Somerset County and its various agencies will do to improve the county's ability to attract, retain, and grow employers whose needs match our location, physical and workforce assets, recognizing the new opportunities and challenges now emerging as our economy decarbonizes and strives for greater efficiency."*
- At the last State planning Commission meeting, the Board of Public Utilities made a presentation on the State Energy Master Plan. Director Robinson asked Director Lane to speak about our Greening Economy Task Force and the County's efforts to advance the implementation of the State Energy Master Plan. The Commission and BPU President were very excited to hear about our efforts and I have reached out to the BPU to continue the discussion.
- Director Lane reported he has been asked to present on Somerset County Planning efforts at the April State Plan Commission Meeting.
- Work continues to progress on our Age Friendly Planning initiative. Staff has been working with Rutgers on the creation of an online mapping tool that would allow various county divisions and departments to analyze trends and develop strategies to address the needs of our growing senior population.
- Planning and Engineering Staff met with Ridewise to identify opportunities to partner to advance the recommendations of the Walk, Bike, Hike Study as well as the strategies consistent with the Preservation Plan.
- Tom D'Amico, Kaitlin Bundy and Director Lane will be making a presentation on the County's historic preservation planning efforts as part of a Preservation NJ webinar on March 4<sup>th</sup>.
- As part of the AT&T Land use Study, the consultant team shared a few initial concepts for the repositioning of the site with the Bedminster's Master Plan Sub-committee. The discussion was very informative and will help shape the refined recommendations. Staff is working to schedule meetings with the property owner Met Life and a series of focus group meetings as part of the public outreach activities for this project.

- As previously reported, Governor Murphy signed legislation to create a new Economic Development Incentive Program. Based upon our initial review of the legislation, it is evident that many of the concerns we had raised have been reflected in the new legislation. The new programs seem to support places that are doing good planning, i.e. Somerset County. The Regional Center Partnership has engaged the Somerset County Business Partnership, working with John Maddocks and Director Lane, to undertake an analysis to the new legislation and provide comments and suggested modifications to ensure Somerset County can fully benefit from these new programs.
- At last month's meeting Director Lane mentioned the work our County has done regarding regional planning which has helped inspire a similar effort in Middlesex County. They are creating a Strategic Investment Framework that mirrors our County Investment Framework. Director Lane has been invited to serve on the Technical Advisory Committee for this effort. The first meeting is on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

### **Action Items/Informational Items**

#### **February 2021 Land Development Report and Approval of the January 2021 First Time Submissions**

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

At the February 10, 2021 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee the Committee reviewed the first time submissions for the month of January 2021. The meeting was held via Zoom. The first time submissions was the only item on the agenda.

#### **First Time Submissions**

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of January 2021. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 29 submissions. There were 8 new lots proposed and 3 new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 198,604 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 51 multi-family units. There was \$102,333 in improvement value and \$8,415 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to approve the 2021 January First Time Submissions. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by Jeffrey Wright. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **Preservation Update**

Tom 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.

The County has received the draft of the Farmland Preservation Plan which was sent to the Steering Committee. A Steering Committee meeting was held on February 11<sup>th</sup>. Staff did receive some comments from the Committee which will be incorporated into the Plan. Staff is currently finalizing comments concerning the Tourism and Outreach and Education chapters. After all chapters of the plan have been reviewed by the Steering Committee and after recommended changes are made to the Plans, they will be posted on the County website and distributed for public review. The entire plan will be submitted to the County Planning Board to be adopted as part of the County Master Plan.

Supervising Planner D'Amico noted that 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.

#### **Municipal Stormwater Plans and Ordinances Review**

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner, reported in March of 2020, NJDEP has contacted all municipalities in New Jersey about updates to the Stormwater Management Rules and that each municipality would need to update their ordinances accordingly. In December of 2020, Somerset County sent reminder notices to the municipalities that the deadline for adopting ordinances was March 2021.

As of February 16, 2021, the Planning Division has received four adopted stormwater ordinances to review. Currently both Montgomery and Far Hills are being reviewed by Engineering, while comments have already been sent back to the municipalities of North Plainfield and Millstone. Five townships (Bedminster, Bernards, Watchung, South Bound Brook, and Hillsborough) are in the process of adopting their ordinances, and the County should be receiving those by the end of the month.

#### **Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-Regional Study**

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner reported since the last Planning Board meeting, NJTPA and consultant staff have reviewed and commented on five existing conditions reports for the Somerset County Roadway Corridor Safety Study. Staff hosted several zoom meetings and has been working with the consultant on developing TAC meeting #2 meeting materials. These TAC meeting materials include a TAC meeting list, invitations, PowerPoint presentation that summarizes work completed since the last Tac meeting including:

- Selection of five road safety corridors
- Compiling public input from the online mapping tool and study email address
- Compiling public comments from the November 12<sup>th</sup> Public Meeting #1
- Reviewing the five existing conditions reports
- Preparing and reviewing a PowerPoint presentation and meeting exercise materials for the February 18<sup>th</sup> TAC meeting.
- Preparing meeting invitations and other materials for the five two day road safety audits that are to be hosted in the last two weeks in March and the first two weeks in April.
- Staff will post the February 18<sup>th</sup> TAC meeting PowerPoint presentation, meeting materials and a meeting recording along with the existing conditions reports on the study web page after the February 18<sup>th</sup> TAC meeting.

#### **Wastewater Management Plan Update**

The Board was briefed by Director Lane on the status of the Wastewater Management Plan (WMP). He reported progress continues to be made on completing the WMP. Staff has incorporated the few municipal comments received into the revised maps and text component. This will be formally submitted to NJ Department of Environmental Protection later this week for formal approval and adoption.

Staff is also working with our wastewater treatment facility operators regarding potential capacity constraints at the facilities based upon the buildout results. Per the wastewater planning rules, the WMP must identify strategies to address these potential capacity constraints. The County had asked for a list of strategies from these facilities by January 20<sup>th</sup> and have received responses from all but one of the operators. Potential next steps were discussed with the E&U Committee prior to today's Board Meeting. The E&U Committee directed staff to allow the remaining operator to have two additional weeks to submit the requested information. If the requested information is not received in two weeks, staff will draft a strategy to address the potential capacity constraints that is consistent with the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) Continuing Planning Process Document. The draft will be sent to the operator for their review. This matter will also be discussed at the next Master Plan Committee meeting in early March. The Septic Management Plan Component was presented to the Middlesex County Water Resources Association and to the Middlesex County Planning Board last month. As noted during our meeting last month, both groups approved the submission to the Plan Component to NJDEP. We received their resolutions endorsing the Septic Management Plan Component late last week.

Director Lane reported the NJ County Planners Association Wastewater Planning Working Group he is currently chairing is developing a set of recommended changes to the Wastewater Management Planning Rules as well as a draft Wastewater Management Plan Template prepared by NJDEP. These changes will be shared with NJDEP at the end of March. He thanked Chief of Strategic Planning Laurette Kratina for pulling together all our staff's comments and the comments from the other Counties into two comprehensive documents. A draft of the document will be shared with the Board at the March meeting.

### **Public Comment**

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

### **Committee Reports**


Committee Reports were included in the Packet.

**Next Meeting Date:** March 16, 2021@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 Jeffrey Wright and seconded by John Lindner. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Matthew D. Loper, Secretary