

**MINUTES OF THE MAY 18, 2021
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

Call to Order

The May 18, 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
Erika Inocencio, Member
Sami Shaban, Member
Commissioner Director Robinson
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer
Ashok Rakhit, 1st Alternate

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

Absent

Commissioner Paul Drake (lost zoom connection)

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

Tom Boccino, Principal Planner, Open Space Preservation
Aarthy Sabesan, Senior Planner-GIS
Christina Tricarico, Planner-GIS
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Cynthia Mellusi, Office Manager

Approval of April 20, 2021 Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the minutes of April 20, 2021 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by John Lindner and seconded by Chris Kelly. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

Discussion/Presentation Items

2021 New Jersey Draft Climate Change Resilience Strategy

Director of Planning Walter Lane briefed the Board on the 2021 New Jersey Draft Climate Change Resilience Strategy. In October of 2019, Governor Phil Murphy signed Executive Order 89 establishing the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience consisting of seventeen (17) State Agencies and Commissions. Included in the executive order was a provision to create the position of the Chief Resilience Officer for New Jersey. This new position was tasked with developing the state's first Climate Change Resilience Strategy and Coastal Resilience Plan, with support from the Interagency Council. Enhancing the resilience of New Jersey's communities, ecosystems, infrastructure, and economy requires a joint, collaborative approach to governing and the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience has been tapped to lead this initiative. A link to the draft document was included in the Board's Packet.

Director Lane described the six (6) focus areas of the draft Climate Change Resilience Strategy. He highlighted several of the strategies for each of the focus areas.

PRIORITY 1: BUILD RESILIENT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- Integrate climate change into state, county, and regional planning documents and initiatives to help guide local actions
- Promote local resilience and plan integration through state planning criteria
- Integrate climate change into multi-jurisdictional multi-hazard mitigation planning
- Assess existing rules and policies and future reforms that support climate change resilience
- Integrate public health considerations into climate resilience and hazard mitigation planning, policies, and projects

PRIORITY 2: STRENGTHEN THE RESILIENCE OF NEW JERSEY'S ECOSYSTEMS

- Consider future climate conditions in conservation and protection decisions
- Expand protection of lands and waterways to safeguard ecosystem health
- Create landowner assistance programs to encourage farmers, foresters, and other resource managers to incorporate changing future conditions into their management practices

PRIORITY 3: PROMOTE COORDINATED GOVERNANCE

- Strengthen the engagement and leadership role of the Interagency Council in driving resilience and adaptation in state policy
- Create resilience action plans at each agency with standard goals and metrics
- Create opportunities for local governments to work with the Interagency Council
- Develop guidance for how to integrate social vulnerability and environmental justice considerations into resilience planning

PRIORITY 4: INVEST IN INFORMATION AND INCREASE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING

- Build a state-wide clearinghouse website for all climate change and resilience information
- Build a collaborative climate change research agenda to guide future research efforts across state agencies, federal agencies, universities/colleges, and other organizations

PRIORITY 5: PROMOTE CLIMATE-INFORMED INVESTMENTS AND INNOVATIVE FINANCING

- Incorporate climate risk analysis into existing state asset management, capital funding, and grant programs through updated evaluation, prioritization, and cost-benefit criteria
- Prioritize investments that maximize co-benefits of greenhouse gas mitigation and resilience
- Promote public-private partnerships to share fiscal risk and deliver cost-effective resilience solutions

PRIORITY 6: COASTAL RESILIENCE PLAN

- Support all coastal counties and municipalities to develop resilience plans that address current and future coastal hazards
- Ensure development and redevelopment is informed by current and future coastal hazards

Director Lane noted Somerset County has been advancing many of these strategies for several years. The Hazard Mitigation Plan is great example of coordinating land use policies with resiliency planning considerations. The forthcoming draft Preservation Plan has many of these strategies as well. The County is well positioned to be a leader in this area.

The draft letter outlining Somerset County's comments on the draft plan, which was included in the Board packet, was discussed. The draft letter was approved for submission by the Board. Director Lane was asked to invite the State's Chief Resilience Officer to a future Planning Board Meeting.

S-3688 Provides for regional economic impact report and review by affected municipalities for certain proposed retail warehouse developments

Director of Planning Walter Lane provided an overview of proposed legislation which calls for a regional review process for proposed retail warehouse development projects. Two versions of the bill were included in the Board's packet. The proposed legislation would create a intermunicipal review process for warehouse projects. He described the process on how these

projects would be reviewed and described the County Planning Board's and the State Planning Commission's role in the review process. He discussed the concerns identified by staff and the Master Plan Committee. While an increased role for Counties providing regional planning guidance is desirable, there are concerns on the process described in the legislation as well as the additional resources needed to implement the process that has been proposed. The legislation offers an opportunity to update the County Planning Enabling legislation. The Board authorized Director Lane to brief the Board of County Commissioners on this legislation and report back to the Board at a future meeting. A comment letter on the proposed legislation will be drafted for the Master Plan Committee to review.

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 informed the Board the Planning Division will fully return to office at the beginning of June. The current A/B schedule will end on June 1st. He hopes to be able to have in person meetings later this Fall.
- The Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution supporting the State Energy Master Plan. A copy of the resolution was included in the Board Packet.
- Director Lane continues to work with the Borough of Millstone to advance and implement various items in their Plan Endorsement commitments.
- Work continues with the County Administrator, the Somerset County Business Partnership and the Regional Center Partnership to seek changes to the provisions of the Economic Recovery Act of 2020 by working with our Legislative Delegation. A "clean bill" will be introduced sometime in June to make changes to the Act.
- Director Lane will be on a panel at the NJ Future/APA-NJ NJ Planning Conference and will speak about the County's Walk, Bike, Hike Study.
- Director Lane shared he has been participating in Vehicle Miles Traveled Policy Discussion group being lead by NJ Future to discuss how to implement policies and strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled in New Jersey.
- A Complete Count Committee meeting was held on May 17th and was well attended. The Census Bureau will be the featured presentation at the June 8th Planning Partners Forum.
- Director Lane announced with sadness that Laurette Kratina will be retiring at the end of June. He thanked her for all her excellent work over the years and for helping to make the Planning Division one of the best planning agencies in the state. Chief of Strategic Planning Laurette Kratina thankrd the Board for the opportunity to serve the Board and the residents of Somerset County. Chairman Navatto thanked Ms. Kratina for her work and will miss working with her. Director Lane thanked Ms. Kratina for all of her work and the assistance she has provided to him over the years.

Action Items/Informational Items

May 2021 Land Development Report and Approval of the April 2021 First Time Submissions

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packet. At the May 12, 2021 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee the

Committee reviewed a number of items as well as the first time submissions for the month of April. The meeting was held via Zoom.

2021 Land Development Awards Program

Director of Planning Walter Lane suggested the 2021 Land Development Awards be presented in September as either an outdoor or indoor ceremony. The Committee agreed to this. The Awards Program flyer will be sent out shortly.

Warren Township-County Recycling Requirements

There were some issues raised by Warren Township concerning the County recycling requirements for multi-family projects. The Township was concerned it would be responsible for providing recycling services if the County does not provide them. County Counsel Joseph DeMarco investigated this and determined that this is not the case. However, County Counsel stated that the County could be asked to reimburse the developer for the costs of recycling if they provide the service. Counsel suggested that a form be prepared that is signed by the developer stating definitively that recycling will be collected by a private hauler and the multi-family development will not participate in the Somerset County's Solid Waste Management Program. The Land Development Committee agreed with this recommendation. Staff will prepare a form for review by County Counsel and will present it at next month's Land Development Committee meeting.

Residences at Overleigh, Far Hills

James Ruggieri presented, for informational purposes, the Residences at Overleigh which is a project located on US Route 202 across from intersection of Lake Road in Borough of Far Hills, less than one (1) mile from Far Hills train station. The 42 acre property is owned by "Enrico Acres LLC". The property is mostly undeveloped except for four (4) detached residential structures, a barn, sheds, an abandoned pool and an underground bunker all to be demolished.

The applicant Pulte Homes of NJ, LP (with Mellilo Equities) is seeking preliminary and final subdivision and site plan approval for a proposed 134-unit residential project consisting of 105 market-rate age-restricted townhouses clustered into twenty-three (23) residential buildings and one (1) multi-family building consisting of 29 affordable rental apartments. Each of the 105 townhouses will be on their own fee simple lot; the 29-unit apartment building will also be on its own lot. [Inc. lands remaining, there will be total 107 lots.] The 29 affordable apartments will count towards the Borough's Third Round Mt. Laurel affordable housing obligation pursuant to a settlement with Fair Share Housing. Access will be from a bifurcated driveway connecting to U.S. Highway 202. The County will handle recycling for the townhouse portion of the development. The apartment portions will be served by private hauler.

It is shown on the plans and the Stormwater Management Report that the project utilizes a variety of Best Management Practices as outlined in NJDEP regulations including small-scale bio-retention basins, underground infiltration basins, underground detention basins, and a traditional detention basin. Since the plan shows the stormwater system and site proposed impervious cover does not adversely impact County drainage facilities, we requested that the Borough perform the review of the stormwater management for this proposal. To handle sewage treatment, the applicant is proposing an on-site wastewater treatment facility (WWTF)

with discharge to groundwater. The WWTF will be designed to handle up to 30,150 gallons per day. The estimated wastewater flow is 29,850 gallons per day (gpd). The applicant is pursuing the necessary Treatment Works Approval with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) for the proposed WWTF.

The project is located within the Priority Preservation Investment Area as shown on the Somerset County Investment Framework Map; in light of this, from the County Planning Board's perspective, the proposed method of handling wastewater treatment with an on-site treatment facility is the preferred method of managing the project's wastewater versus tying into an existing wastewater collection system which otherwise could encourage sprawl development contrary to County master plan since the project is located in the non-growth area. The on-site treatment method is what the County had suggested in a letter sent last November to the Borough of Far Hills and the applicant.

Bridgewater Commons Volta Charging Stations, Bridgewater

James Ruggieri also presented a plan for vehicle charging stations. The applicant Volta Charging, LLC is proposing to install 20 electric vehicle charging stations at eight (8) separate locations at the Bridgewater Commons Mall. Some of the existing surface parking lots will be restriped at the eight (8) locations to provide one (1) parking stall for each station. Each charging station measures just over seven feet tall, about 32 inches wide and about 13 inches thick.

1. County Engineering confirmed the project will not adversely affect any County facilities, pursuant to this; a County Planning Board letter dated April 29, 2021 was issued approving the project.
2. In staff's observation, this particular type of application serves to illustrate at least four points:
 - Shows consumer demand for electrical vehicle usage in general continues to grow strong with it the demand to find ways to meet that demand with additional electrical vehicle charging stations;
 - This would seem to demonstrate yet another way a major premier shopping mall identified a unique way to redefine itself as more than just a retail complex by providing a service conveniently located and easily accessible.
 - How a relatively large number of electrical vehicle charging stations can be accommodated at a major shopping facility with relatively little physical change required to the mall property; i.e., restriping of existing parking;
 - Demonstrates what staff sees as an interesting and innovative way to provide electrical vehicle charging services. Illuminated advertisements or "Sponsors Displays" pay for installation, fueling and maintenance thereby allowing "free fuel" to be provided to the consumer.

First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of April 2021. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 27 submissions. There were four (4) new lots proposed and four new lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month, there was 481,442 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 356 multi-family units. There was \$6,735 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

Bernard Navatto, Jr., did not participate in any discussion or take any action on the St. Pierre, Inc. site plan projects in Somerville.

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the May 2021 Land Development Report and Approval of the April 2021 First Time Submissions. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Al Ellis. The Roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Preservation 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 Heritage Strategies to coordinate the report along with the 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 previously received drafts of the Open Space Master Plan, the Historic Preservation Master Plan and the Farmland Preservation Plan which have all been reviewed by the Steering Committee. We have sent to the Steering Committee the Introduction Chapter, the Land Use Planning Context Chapter, the introductions to the Open Space, Farmland Preservation and Historic Preservation Sections, Public Education and Outreach, Tourism chapter and the implementation chapter. The Steering Committee meeting will be held via Zoom on May 26th. 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. The Plans will be submitted to the County Planning Board for adoption as part of the County Master Plan.

The Plan is composed of essentially four (4) volumes. The first volume consists of the introductory materials which include the Introduction Chapter, Landscape Context, the Land Use Planning Context, the introductions to the Open Space, Farmland Preservation and Historic Preservation Sections, Public Education and Outreach, the Tourism chapter and the implementation chapter. The Second, Third and Fourth Volumes include the Open Space Preservation Plan, Farmland Preservation Plan and the new Historic Preservation Plan. This effort has been coordinated with the County Walk, Bike, Hike Connecting Vibrant Communities Plan, the County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the County Investment Framework.

Green Leadership Hub Relaunch

Planner Nora Fekete reported the Green Leadership Hub will be relaunched in June. Several meetings were held with the County's Planning partners (Ridewise, Energy Council and Hillsborough Township) to generate ideas for meeting format for the June meeting. The previous survey for Hub Members was updated and will be distributed prior to the June meeting date.

Municipal Stormwater Plans and Ordinances Review

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner stated that the seven (7) municipalities have had their ordinances approved, and confirmation of such has been reported to the NJDEP. Those municipalities are as follows: Bedminster, Bernards, Bernardsville, Far Hills, Montgomery, North Plainfield, and Warren.

The following four (4) municipalities are Conditionally Approved: Branchburg, Hillsborough, Millstone, and Somerville. The following three municipalities are undergoing public hearing periods and have not yet formally submitted: Green Brook, South Bound Brook, and Watchung. The Planning and Engineering Divisions continue to offer support to the municipalities, and are dedicated to reviewing the updated ordinances in a timely manner to ensure the municipalities come under compliance. Staff is working with our NJDEP contact to pursue further outreach efforts in hope the remaining municipalities will submit their ordinances shortly.

Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-Regional Study

Kenneth Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner, reported since the April Planning Board meeting the consultant team has identified all comments from the five (5) RSA audits, the November 2020 public meeting, online mapping exercise and emails. The consultant has constructed a master list of comments and safety recommendations for each of the five (5) corridors. Engineering staff has sent the consultant as built plans and traffic signal plans for the five RSA corridors.

County Planning and Engineering staff will be meeting with the consultant team to review the most critical safety recommendations and will be working to identify the package of safety recommendations that will be advanced for both corridor-wide and specific locations within each of the five (5) RSA corridors. The meetings will take place virtually in early June 2021. Following this meeting the consultant will prepare five (5) draft RSA corridor reports each will be reviewed by county and NJTPA staff. This will take place in late June 2021 early July 2021. The draft reports will be updated with the county and NJTPA comments by the consultant and will be shared with the TAC at their last TAC meeting in early August 2021.

After the last TAC meeting the final public meeting will be scheduled for late September. The TAC will have a final review of the reports in September and then the draft final report will be submitted to the NJTPA for their final review by October 30th. The final report will be submitted to the NJTPA by the November 30th. The study contract will conclude on December 31, 2021.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

The Board was briefed by Director Lane on the status of the Wastewater Management Plan (WMP). He discussed a draft letter which has been discussed with the Master Plan Committee as well as the Environment and Utilities Committee regarding a request for an extension of the approved Future Wastewater Service Area (FWSA) Map. This map is set to expire in 2022. All of the components of the County's Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) have been submitted to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). If the County began the process to update Area (FWSA) Map now, the recently submitted plan will need to be updated and the years of effort to complete the WMP will have been wasted. The Board will be asked to approve the extension request letter at the June Planning Board Meeting. Staff will be meeting with our municipalities to discuss our strategy for updating the FWSA Map on May 24th.

Director Lane reported he has been participating in a series of meetings with NJDEP to discuss potential changes to the WMP planning process. The Department is utilizing a Lean Six Sigma process to identify potential process changes to streamline the WMP process. There will be five (5) five (5) hour meetings during this effort.

NJDEP has recently requested additional changes to the Septic Management Plan component. Over the last year, staff has made numerous changes to the SMP to address NJDEP comments. Director Lane described the process which was approved by NJDEP that was utilized to create the SMP. The NJDEP is requiring change to the Plan now or will require the changes after the SMP is adopted. He reached out to the Wastewater Planning Bureau Chief regarding this issue and will report back to the Board at the June 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 Report were included in the Packet.

Next Meeting Date: Tuesday, June 15, 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 Chris Kelly and seconded by Commissioner Director Robinson. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary