

**MINUTES OF THE JULY 20, 2021
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

Call to Order

The July 20, 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
John Lindner, Member
Erika Inocencio, Member
Commissioner Paul Drake
Adam Slutsky, will be voting in place of Matt Loper, who was absent
Ashok Rakhit, 1st Alternate, voted in place of Al Ellis, who was absent

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

Absent

Al Ellis, Member
Sami Shaban, Member
Commissioner Director Robinson
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer

Also Present from Staff:

Walter Lane, Director of Planning
Anthony McCracken, Assistant Director
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner
Adam Bradford, Senior Transportation Planner
James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner
Tom Boccino, Principal Planner, Open Space Preservation
Christina Tricarico, Planner-GIS

Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Patrice Brown, Administrative Assistant I

Approval of June 15, 2021 Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the minutes of June 15, 2021 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by John Lindner. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

Discussion/Presentation Items

NJ Climate Change Resiliency Strategy

Chairman Bernard Navatto, Jr. introduced Nicholas Angarone, Bureau of Climate Resilience Planning/Climate and Flood Resilience at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Angarone provided an overview of the recently released NJ Climate Change Resiliency Strategy (CCRS). He stated the document is a policy framework that includes forward-looking state policies that address some of the State's vulnerabilities to climate impacts and help strengthen resilience in NJ. The CCRS is intended to provide recommendations for how state agencies can undertake actions to enhance resilience, not necessarily to be prescriptive as to how specific rules should change or what they should say. Executive Order 89 contains recommendations for how the State Government can change its policies, regulations, funding decisions, and operations to enhance resilience. The CCRS will be reviewed every two (2) years.

Mr. Angarone provided an overview of the six (6) priority focus areas of the Climate Change Resilience Strategy. He then highlighted several of the strategies for each of the focus areas. The following are the priority focus areas:

- PRIORITY 1: BUILD RESILIENT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES
- PRIORITY 2: STRENGTHEN THE RESILIENCE OF NEW JERSEY'S ECOSYSTEMS
- PRIORITY 3: PROMOTE COORDINATED GOVERNANCE
- PRIORITY 4: INVEST IN INFORMATION AND INCREASE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING
- PRIORITY 5: PROMOTE CLIMATE-INFORMED INVESTMENTS AND INNOVATIVE FINANCING
- PRIORITY 6: COASTAL RESILIENCE PLAN

Mr. Angarone summarized the various comments received on the CCRS and thanked the Planning Board and the County Energy Council for submitting comments. He stated there will be revisions to the CCRS. In particular, the CCRS will have better linkages to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. The final portion of the presentation summarized the Resilient NJ: Local Planning for Climate Change Toolkit.

Chairman Navatto thanked Mr. Angarone for the excellent presentation.

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 reported a “clean-up bill” for Economic Recovery Act of 2020 was recently signed by the Governor. The new legislation incorporates the changes the Board had previously discussed. The new legislation was guided by our initial work on the Suburban Disadvantage Report. This is a major accomplishment and would not have been possible without the leadership from the Regional Center Partnership, the Board of Commissioners and the Somerset County Business Partnership. The revised Economic Recovery Act of 2020 will allow the County and our municipalities to attract new businesses and job to the County.
- Staff and consultant team working on the AT&T Land Use Study made another presentation to the Bedminster Township Land Use Board earlier this month. Refined recommendations were discussed with the Land Use Board and additional input and direction was provided to the team. A draft final report will be submitted to Bedminster for their review and comment early this fall.
- Director Lane stated the State Planning Commission (SPC) is considering some change to the State Planning Rules and the Plan Endorsement process. He stated he has been involved in these discussions and provided several recommendations to the SPC. He also reported that he is assisting several municipalities navigate the Municipal Plan Endorsement process. Recently, North Plainfield has indicated to the SPC that the Borough plans to pursue plan endorsement.
- Director Lane reported the Green Leadership Hub held a meeting to relaunch this effort on June 17th. The meeting had almost twenty (20) participants and there was a very good discussion. There was a great deal of interest on efforts to promote the adoption of electric vehicles, green infrastructure, increasing recycling efforts and promoting energy efficiency. The next Hub meeting will be in the fall.
- Staff has been working to develop a strategy for the update of the County Investment Framework Map.
- Director Lane informed the Board two (2) municipalities (Manville and Raritan) submitted applications for NJEDA’s 21st Century Redevelopment Program. The projects submitted as part of this round of funding will build off the work the County completed as part of our award-winning Supporting Priority Investment in Somerset County initiative.

Action Items/Informational Items

July 2021 Land Development Report and Approval of the June 2021 First Time Submissions

Thomas D’Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packet. The July 14, 2021 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee was held in the Engineering Conference Room, County Administration Building in Somerville. The Committee reviewed a number of projects as well as the first-time submissions for the month of June 2021. It was noted that there was no quorum for the meeting. Therefore, there were no official actions taken.

300-306 East Main Street/Meridia 1, Bound Brook

The Committee reviewed the request to begin construction on two projects in Bound Brook. 300-306 East Main Street is a six-story 60 unit apartment building with 5,628 square feet of retail located on Main Street (County Route 533) near the Bound Brook Train Station. The

Meridia 1 project is a six-story 75 unit apartment building with 2,967 square feet of retail located on Main Street between John and Church Streets.

The applicant requests that the County send a letter to the Borough stating that we have no objections to the Borough issuing footing and foundation permits so that work can start on the site as long as there is no work is permitted in the County right-of-way.

First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of June 2021. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 31 submissions. There were five new lots proposed and two lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 133,265 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 47 multi-family units. There was \$11,886 in improvement value and \$4,590 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 75 North Bridge Street and Bell Avenue Holdings site plans in Somerville.

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the recommendations of those who attended the committee meeting. The motion included the denial of the request of the applicant of the 300-306 East Main Street/Meridia 1, Bound Brook projects to begin construction prior to full County Planning Board approval. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Adam Slutsky. The roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Preservation Update

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, reported that the County is currently in the process of updating the County Open Space Preservation 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. As far as we know this is the first time that a Preservation Plan involving Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation has been completed.

The Plan has the three individual preservation plans for Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation as well as a volume that has information relating to all three major plans. It is composed of four sections so that an individual can, if they wish, read the introduction section and the particular plan they are interested in. It has been a major effort by our consultants, the County professional staff and our Steering Committee to prepare and review all of these documents. All four major components of the plan have been completed and reviewed by the Steering Committee. The only changes to the text are some minor changes to Chapter 9 which is the "Moving Forward Implementing Somerset County's Preservation Plan" chapter which will be completed shortly. There are numerous maps which are to be included in the plan. We have received the final GIS map package from Washington College and the County Planning Division's GIS Section will completing the final changes to the maps this week.

Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-regional Study

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner reported since the June Planning Board meeting, County Planning and Engineering staff have begun to review the five draft Road Safety Audit (RSA) reports. County staff has scheduled the 3rd TAC meeting for Tuesday August 3rd from 1-4 p.m. At the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting the consultant will present a PowerPoint summarizing the recommended safety improvements for the five RSA corridors. After the TAC meeting the consultant will incorporate comments from TAC members, municipalities, North Jersey transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) and county staff and revise the five draft final RSA reports. The reports will then be distributed for public comment leading up to the final public meeting scheduled for September 15th/16th.

After the public meeting, the public's comments will be incorporated into the draft final report which will be submitted to the NJTPA by October 28th. The NJTPA will review the draft final report and Somerset County will review NJTPA comments and submit the final RSA report by November 30th to the NJTPA. The consultant contract will conclude on December 31, 2021.

Open Space Update

Tom Boccino, Principal Planner, Open Space Preservation, reported that the Open Space Preservation Program has several properties either under negotiation or under contract throughout the County. The Open Space Advisory Committee has been reviewing grant requests from municipalities through the County Recreation Grant Program and has recommended funding for recreation development to three (3) municipalities and is currently considering funding requests from three (3) additional municipalities. He also reported he has provided final comments on the Open Space Preservation Plan.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Director of Planning Walter Lane provided a brief update on the status of the County's wastewater planning initiatives. He reported the NJ County Planners Association (NJCPA) Wastewater Management Plan (WMP) Working Group he has been chairing continues to meet with representatives from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) on a regular basis. At the last meeting, NJDEP provided some of their initial thoughts on the Group's suggested changes to the WMP Rules.

Director Lane reported the County has not received any feedback on the various components of the WMP previously submitted to NJDEP. The Septic Management Plan Component should be published for adoption in the NJ Register sometime during the next two months based on the most recent information from NJDEP. He also briefed the Committee on the status of the proposed WMP Site-specific Amendment for the Glen Gery site. Staff recently received a response to the Board's September 30, 2019 letter regarding the proposed amendment. The response will be reviewed and be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Environment and Utility Committee as well as the next Master Plan Committee 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: August 17, 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 John Lindner. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary