

**MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 17, 2021
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

Call to Order

The August 17, 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
Sami Shaban, Member
Commissioner Director Robinson
Commissioner Paul Drake
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer
Marina Stinely, Esq. covering for Joseph DeMarco, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

Absent

Al Ellis, Member
Ashok Rakhit, 1st Alternate

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
Nora Fekete, Planner
Christina Tricarico, Planner-GIS
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner

Michael Stepowyj, GIS Coordinator

Approval of the July 20, 2021 Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the minutes of July 20, 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

Preservation Plan Update

Director of Planning Walter Lane reported the final draft of the Preservation Plan has been completed. He thanked Thomas D'Amico who served as the project manager for successfully managing this huge undertaking. He also thanked the members of the project: Anthony McCracken, Kaitlin Bundy, Thomas Boccino, Kate Katzer and Aarthy Sabesan for all their hard work.

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.

The final draft of the complete preservation plan, including all of the mapping, has been finished. The Plan has four volumes. The first is entitled the "Preservation Plan" which has information relating to all three major plans including a County Landscape Context and History, a Land Use Planning Context, a brief introduction to the three individual plans, a Public Outreach & Education chapter and a chapter on Tourism. The next three volumes are the Open Space, Farmland and Historic Preservation individual plans. The entire plan 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. Staff has coordinated the Preservation Plan with the Walk Bike Hike Connecting Vibrant Communities Plan, the County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the County's Investment Framework.

The plan will be on the County website shortly. Four zoom public meetings have been scheduled on the following dates and times:

Wednesday September 22 at 10:00am
Tuesday, September 28 at 2:00 p.m.
Thursday, September 30 at 6:30 p.m.
Tuesday, October 5 at 6:30 p.m.

In addition, the County Planning Board will hold the appropriate public hearing so that the Plan can be adopted as an element of the County Master Plan.

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 the Walk Bike Hike Study is receiving an Achievement in Planning Award from the New Jersey Planning Officials.
- Director Lane stated he has been part of a County working group charged with developing a plan on how to best use the American Rescue Plan funds.
- Staff hosted a meeting with the Office of Planning Advocacy and several of our towns who are pursuing Plan Endorsement/Center Designation.
- Director Lane stated staff has reviewed one potential amendment to the sewer service boundary. He also reported NJDEP has not provided any feedback on our draft plan. He will be following up on draft plan's status in the coming weeks.
- Director Lane and Supervising Planner Kenneth Wedeen have been participating in the NJTPA's Freight Concept Development Study Port Reading Secondary at Grade Rail Crossing Elimination Study. This study is advancing a recommendation from the County's 2007 which identified potential options for eliminating the at-grade rail crossing on Main Street in Bound Brook. A public meeting for the study will be held on September 13, 2021.
- Staff is reviewing a recently released draft of a NJ Transit Study which recommends the elimination of the existing NJT 65 Bus Route serving Somerset County. Formal comments on the study will be prepared and review by the Transportation Committee for submission to NJ Transit.
- Director Lane informed the Board that Aarthy Sabesan has been promoted to be the manager of the new Office of County GIS Services which will be housed in the Planning Division.
- Director Lane introduced Mike Stepowyj as the newest member of the Planning Division. Mr. Stepowyj was the GIS Coordinator in the County's Finance Office and now will be leading the County's GIS efforts with other Divisions and our municipalities as a member of the new Office of County GIS Services. Mr. Stepowyj introduced himself to the Board and stated he was excited to work with the Board.
- Director Lane informed the Board Christina Tricarico, Planner – GIS Specialist, has resigned. He thanked her for all the great work she has done during her tenure at the County. Ms. Tricarico thank for the Board for opportunity to work for the County.
- Lastly, Director Lane stated Assistant Director of Planning Anthony McCracken, will be retiring at the end of August. Director Lane thanked Mr. McCracken for all of his great work and support over the years. He stated Mr. McCracken was a great counsel over the years and he will miss working with him. Mr. McCracken thanked the Planning Board and Board of County Commissioners for the opportunity to work for the County for all these years. Chairman Navatto thanked Mr. McCracken for his service to the Board. Commissioner Drake echoed Chairman Navatto's comments.

Action Items/Informational Items

Resolution Conceptually Approving A Development Agreement Between 2 G Birch Glen, LLC and the County of Somerset (Birch Glen at Somerset)

Nora Fekete, Planner, offered the Board the resolution conceptually approving a development agreement between 2 G Birch Glen, LLC and the County of Somerset.

2 G Birch Glen, LLC has made application to the Somerset county Planning Board for a major subdivision approval with reference to a project comprised of a 32 lot major residential subdivision on the property identified as Block 423.01 – lot 46, 1.04 on the tax map of Franklin Township, Somerset County, New Jersey on Cedar Grove Lane, County Route #619 and Amwell Road, County route #514, and is on file in the Somerset county Planning board as file number FL 670. She requested the Board to conceptually approve the agreement and send it to the Commissioners for execution.

Chairman Navatto, Jr., asked for a motion to conceptually approve a development agreement between 2 G Birch Glen, LLC and the County of Somerset. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by John Lindner. The roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

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

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packet. The August 11, 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 July 2021.

2 G Birch Glen, Franklin

Planner Nora Fekete presented the 2 G Birch Glen, LLC project. The project involves an application for major subdivision approval for a 32 lot major residential subdivision on Cedar Grove Lane (County Route 619) and Amwell Road (County Route 514) in Franklin Township. The project is located within the Cedar Grove Lane and Elizabeth Avenue Corridor Improvement Plan Areas which location triggers a pro rata monetary contribution obligation for improvements in the project areas. The developer's fair share obligation towards Cedar Grove Lane and Elizabeth Avenue Corridor Improvement Plan Areas has been determined to be \$58,137.00. A development agreement has been drafted formalizing the assessment. Planning Board Counsel has reviewed the agreement and it has been signed by the applicant. The developer has paid the contribution.

The Committee conceptually approved the agreement and recommended that the full County Planning Board conceptually approve the agreement and transmit it to the County Commissioners for their action.

Bed One, Bedminster

Supervising Planner Thomas D'Amico presented, as an informational item, the Bed One development which is a project proposing 160 residential units and 16,000 square feet of retail space in Bedminster Township. It is located on a 22 acre site bordered to the north by Burnt Mills

Road, to the east by US Route 202, and to the south by the Interstate-78 off ramp to Interstate-287. Access to the site will be from a proposed access drive off Burnt Mills Road north of the US Route 202/206 intersection. Areas of interest to the County include traffic impacts to the County road system, frontage requirements, clear site requirements, ADA requirements and stormwater management.

First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of July 2021. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 41 submissions. There were 182 new lots proposed and 95 lots created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 508,334 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 818 multi-family units. There was \$156,185.58 in improvement value and \$11,026 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to approve the August 2021 Land Development Report and approval of the July 2021 First Time Submissions. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by John Lindner. The roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

Somerset County Road Corridor Safety Analysis Sub-regional Study

Kenneth Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner reported since the last Planning Board committee meeting, Planning and Engineering staff have been reviewing the draft Road Safety Audit reports. Somerset County hosted the final TAC meeting on August 3rd at which time TAC members and municipal representatives provided initial feedback on the draft recommended safety improvements for each RSA corridor.

County and consultant staff is following up by emailing all TAC members and municipal representatives that participated in the RSA study with a link to review their specific RSA corridor draft report. Somerset County is asking for all comments to be submitted by September 6th. In addition, NJTPA staff have submitted initial comments on the five (5) draft RSA reports and the August 3rd TAC meeting PowerPoint presentation. Somerset County will review all the TAC and municipal comments after September 6th and include these comments in the revised draft final RSA reports. The five (5) draft RSA reports will be summarized at the second virtual public meeting to be hosted on September 29th from 7-9 p.m.

County and consultant staff will include comments from the public meeting into the final report that will be submitted to the NJTPA for their review by October 27th. The final report with all the comments will be submitted to the NJTPA by November 30, 2021
The study contract will conclude on December 31, 2021.

Planning for Electric Vehicles Initiatives

Adam Bradford, Senior Transportation Planner, reported that at the start of the summer, the County was awarded \$80,000 under the NJ It Pay\$ to PlugIn grant. The grant is facilitated through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). Ten (10) proposed charging station locations were identified by County Planning Division staff and approved by NJDEP.

Planning Board staff recently completed an Electric Vehicle Charging Station (EVCS) webmap which shows the proposed charging station locations (all ten locations are publicly owned), existing Level 2 & 3 charging stations, and public libraries and golf courses in Somerset County.

The purpose of the EVCS webmap is to create an electric vehicle charging station database for interdepartmental staff to use in various analysis projects and transportation plans. Next steps include creating a webmap for the general public that is simple, easy to understand and easy to use.

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: September 21, 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