

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 18, 2022
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

Call to Order

The January 18, 2022 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.

Swearing in of New and Reappointed Members

Marina Stinely read the oath and swore in the following members of Planning Board.

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr.
Michael Giordano
Maria Tapia-Burch

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

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr., Chairman
Al Ellis, Member
Erika Inocencio, Member
Michael Giordano, Member
Sami Shaban, Member
Commissioner Director Shanel Robinson
Commissioner Paul Drake
Matthew Loper, Secretary/County Engineer
Maria Tapia Burch, 1st Alternate
Marina Stinely, Esq. covering for Joseph DeMarco, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

Absent

Chris Kelly, Vice-Chair

Also Present from Staff:

Walter Lane, Director, Office of Planning Policy and Economic Development
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner
Nora Fekete, Planner
James Ruggieri, Principal Community Planner
Tom Boccino, Supervising Planner, Preservation
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner
Aarthy Sabesan, Manager, Office of GIS Services
Adam Bradford, Senior Planner
Patrice Brown, Administrative Assistant

Approval of November 16, 2021 Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the minutes of November 16, 2021 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by Matt Loper. A vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

Action Items

Selection of Chair Pro-Tem

Bernard Navatto, Jr. made a motion to nominate Mathew Loper as Chair Pro-Tem. Michael Giordano seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Election of Officers for 2022

Chair Pro-Tem, Matt Loper asked for nominations for the Chair of the Somerset County Planning Board. Al Ellis nominated Bernie Navatto, Jr. as Chair and was seconded by Commissioner Paul Drake. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Navatto asked for nominations for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Director Shanel Robinson nominated Michael Giordano as Vice Chair and was seconded by Commissioner Paul Drake. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously. Chairman Bernard Navatto Jr. nominated Matt Loper as Secretary and was seconded by Michael Giordano. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chair Comments

Chairman Navatto thanked the Board for re-electing him as Chairman. He welcomed the new appointees to the Board. Chairman Navatto expressed his gratitude and pride in having a part in the great accomplishments of the Board and looks forward to the new term.

Resolution Designating 2022-2023 Planning Board Meeting Dates

Director of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, Walter Lane reviewed the meeting dates for 2022 and the first meeting of 2023. Director Lane also announced these meetings will be initially advertised as virtual meetings for the entire year due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. Should conditions improve during the year, the Board may hold in person meetings and readvertise the meetings as necessary. He also discussed a potential conflict for the December Meeting due to a Board of Commissioners Meeting scheduled for the same time. Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to approve this resolution. A motion was made by Al Ellis

and seconded by Director Shanell Robinson. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Designating Non-Voting Representative to the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board for 2022

Director Lane provided an overview of the resolution. Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to approve this resolution which appoints the Chairman of the Environmental & Utilities Committee or the Chair's Designee as the representative to the Agriculture Development Board. The motion was made by Commissioner Paul Drake and seconded by Al Ellis. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Authorizing Certain Somerset County Planning Board and Office of Planning Policy and Economic Development Members the Responsibility of Signing All Subdivision Plats to be Filed with the County Clerk for 2022

Director of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, Walter Lane summarized the proposed resolution which designates authorized signatories of subdivision plats. Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to approve this resolution designating those that can sign subdivision plats. The motion was made by Michael Giordano and seconded by Commissioner Paul Drake. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of Dates for 2022 Committee Meetings

Director of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, Walter Lane reviewed the proposed meeting dates for all the 2022 Planning Board and Sub-Committee Meetings. Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to approve this resolution. The motion was made by Commissioner Paul Drake and seconded by Al Ellis. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Preliminary 2022 Committee Assignments

Director of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, Walter Lane referred to this list in the Planning Board Packet. He requested that if any member wish to discuss the assignments to contact Director Lane or Chairman Navatto. If there are no changes, Director Lane will ask for the Board's approval at the February Board Meeting.

Planning Director's Report

Director Walter Lane provided an overview of work underway in the Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development. He briefed the Board on the following items:

- He reported the County and the County Agriculture Development Board received a 2021 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award for implementing outstanding environmental programs and projects supporting healthy and sustainable communities. These efforts included a series of roundtable events to develop strategies to ensure local farmers markets could safely function during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the development of print materials and interactive web tools for farmers which included information about how to comply with COVID compliance guidelines at farmer's markets, the lauded Ag Story Map and the Influencing Ag Event. He noted he

received a call from the Governor congratulating him on the award, but he told the Governor Kate Katzer deserved all the credit for these efforts. Director Lane thanked Kate Katzer for her excellent work.

- Director Lane announced two staffing changes in the Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development. Tom Boccino was promoted to Supervising Planner and will be overseeing the newly formed Preservation Section in the Office. This new section will coordinate all the County's Preservation efforts. In addition to serving as Manager of the Cultural and Heritage Commission, Kaitlin Bundy will also serve as the Manager of Strategic Initiatives. She will be assisting Director Lane and a variety of policy related matters associated with the implementation of County various plans and initiatives.
- He reported an offer was made for the Office Manager position and once all the paperwork has been finalized, he will make a formal announcement. Interviews will be conducted shortly for the Deputy Director position. Recruitment of candidates for the Economic Development Manager, GIS Services Coordinator and Planner – GIS Specialist position continues.
- Director Lane provided a brief update on the work of the County's American Recovery Plan Working Group. He has been involved with numerous discussions on the potential uses of this funding. There are numerous opportunities to use this funding to help the County advance many of the projects and programs developed by the County Planning Board.
- The County delivered the AT&T® Land Use Study Final Report to Bedminster Township in December. The Township Committee endorsed and accepted the Final Report via resolution and thanked Director Lane and the County for working with the Township to set the future vision for this important site.
- Director Lane reported the County was lauded for its electric vehicle (EV) planning efforts at the January North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority Meeting. He thanked Kenneth Wedeen and Adam Bradford for their transportation planning efforts.

Action Items/Informational Items

December 2021 and January 2022 Land Development Reports and Approval of the November 2021 and December 2021 First-Time Submissions

Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner, referred to the report in the Planning Board Packet. The January 12, 2022 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee was held in the Second Floor Engineering Conference Room, County Administration Building in Somerville.

November First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of November 2021. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 30 submissions. There were 183 new lots proposed. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 595,680 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 12 multi-family units. There was \$80,870 in improvement value and \$1,940 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 19 West High Street and the Taco Bell site plan projects in Somerville.

December First-Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of December 2021. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 32 submissions. There were 14 new lots proposed. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 163,969 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 49 multi-family units. There was \$24,290 in improvement value and \$17,664 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board.

It was noted that there was a total of 2,449 multi-family units proposed in 2021 which was an increase of 618 units from 2020. Also, the total number of new lots proposed increased by 678 lots from 271 in 2020 to 949 lots in 2021.

Bernard Navatto, Jr., did not participate in any discussion or take any action on the 2-4 West End Avenue and the Robert Wood Johnson Somerset Pavilion site plan projects in Somerville

Chairman Navatto, Jr., asked for a motion to approve the December 2021 and January 2022 Land Development Reports and approval of the November 2021 and December 2021 First-Time Submissions. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by Matthew Loper. The roll was called and the motion passed unanimously with Michael Giordano abstaining from the vote.

Preservation Plan Update

Thomas D'Amico reported that the County is currently in the process of updating the County Open Space Preservation Plan, the 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 has been handled by Washington College with assistance from the County Office of GIS Services.

As was previously mentioned, the final draft of the complete Preservation Plan, including all mapping, has been finished. A copy of the complete Plan has been available online and hard copies of the Plan are available at fifteen (15) County libraries. The County held four virtual public meetings to discuss the plan. Over seventy (70) people attended the meetings and we have received approximately 160 comments from both the virtual public meetings and from written comments submitted to us. We also received considerable comments from the State Agricultural Development Committee.

The County professional staff has entered all comments into a database and have reviewed the comments. We will be sending all recommended changes to the Preservation Plan Steering Committee early next week for their review and comment. We will be scheduling a Steering Committee Meeting in early February. Staff will make appropriate changes to the various plan elements based on the Steering Committee's comments. After the recommended changes are incorporated into the Plan, the revised plan will be submitted to the County Planning Board for review and adoption as part of County Master Plan. Staff will be scheduling public meetings after all appropriate input has been incorporated into the plan.

The Plan will also be sent to all municipalities in the County, consistent with the County Planning Act and to the County Park Commission, County Agriculture Development Board and the County Cultural and Heritage Commission for their endorsement.

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection 2021 Natural and Working Lands Strategy Scoping Document

Director of Planning, Policy and Economic Development, Walter Lane provided an overview of the 2021 Natural and Working Lands Strategy Scoping Document which is part of the State of New Jersey's efforts to address the impacts of climate change. The document was prepared by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. Staff prepared a draft comment letter that was included in the Board's Packet. The primary goal of the document is "to identify and prioritize detailed strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change through carbon storage and sequestration on New Jersey's natural and working lands." This goal is highly consistent with the goals established in the County's soon to be adopted Preservation Plan and will be a valuable tool when implementing the goals from our plan. The County's Preservation Plan contains an updated Open Space and Recreation Master Plan Element, an updated Farmland Preservation Master Plan Element, and a new Historic Preservation Master Plan Element. The draft letter included several comments that should be included in the document such as providing technical and funding assistance to Counties, municipalities, and non-profits to implement the Strategy's recommendations as well as suggesting Counties play a lead role in this planning process. Director Lane asked the Board to authorize submission of the letter to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. The Board authorized the submission of the letter.

Public Comments

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

Committee Reports:

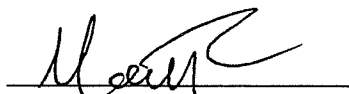
Committee Reports were included in the Packet.

Next meeting Date: Tuesday, February 15, 2022 @ 4:45 (Virtual)

Adjournment:

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Navatto, Jr., asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by Al Ellis and seconded by Michael Giordano. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion moved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,


Matthew D. Loper, Secretary