

**MINUTES OF THE MAY 17, 2022  
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.  
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Call to Order**

The May 17, 2022 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:47 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  
Michael Giordano, Vice-Chair  
Christopher Kelly, Member  
Albert Ellis, Member  
Erika Inocencio, Member  
Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson  
Commissioner Paul Drake  
Matthew D. Loper, Secretary  
Ashok Rakhit, 1st Alternate  
Marina Stinely, Esq. covering for Joseph DeMarco, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

**Absent**

Sami Shaban, Member  
Maria Tapia-Burch, 2nd Alternate

**Also Present from Staff:**

Walter Lane, Director, Office of Planning Policy & Economic Development  
Angela Knowles, Deputy Director, Office of Planning, Policy & Economic Development  
Aarthu Sabesan, Manager, Office of GIS Services  
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner

Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner  
Adam Bradford, Senior Transportation Planner  
Tom Boccino, Supervising Planner, Preservation  
Kate Katzer, Principal Planner  
Kaitlin Bundy, Manager, Cultural & Heritage and Strategic Initiatives  
Sheli Daniels, Office Manager

**Approval of the Meeting Minutes:** April 19, 2022 Regular Meeting

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the minutes of April 19, 2022 Planning Board Regular Meeting. The motion was made by Chris Kelly. The motion was seconded by Michael Giordano. A vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Robinson abstaining from the vote.

**Discussion/Presentation Items:**

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

- Several staff members attended the NJ Association of Counties Conference in May. Director Robinson and Walter Lane presented together on a panel discussing the value of county planning from the Commissioner's perspective. They were joined by planning directors and administrators from other counties on the subject. It was a very well attended session and was a good opportunity to highlight what we at the County are doing in terms of partnerships. Director Robinson added that the County work is impeccable and she is glad to be part of the team.
- Last month the County hosted the NJ Resiliency Accelerator, a program sponsored by the NJDEP, NJ Office of Planning Advocacy, NJ Department of Community Affairs, FEMA and the State Office of Emergency Management. The focus was on riverine communities in the state. Seven communities applied and were accepted, three of which are in Somerset (Bound Brook, Manville and Millstone). He presented on the County's work as an example of partnerships and collaborations and uses the County Investment Framework, Preservation Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan and Walk-Bike-Hike Framework as examples of how we partner with our towns. The presentation and program were well-received and another workshop coming in future weeks. The goal of the program is to provide the tools strategies to make towns more resilient.
- Director Lane noted at the upcoming NJ Planning & Redevelopment Conference, Angela Knowles and Kate Katzer will be speaking on different panels about their work in the County. Angela will talk about redevelopment work in Raritan and Kate will talk about the Ag Board and our (d) Education and Outreach efforts. Shows that staff is recognized as subject matter experts in the field.
- He also noted he had received a public comment on the March 30<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting minutes, adopted at last the meeting, noting a few names were misspelled. The Board will be asked to adopt corrected minutes at the June Planning Board Meeting.

- Director Lane stated he is looking at when to resume in person meetings for the Planning Board's monthly meetings. Ample public notice will be given when the in-person meetings will resume.

**Action Items/Informational Items:**

**Adoption of the Somerset County Preservation Plan**

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane provided an overview of the Preservation Plan Element and stated Supervising Planner Thomas D'Amico will go through the comments received, which are all in Board's packet, and will review the changes that were made. Director Lane stated he will review the resolutions and letters of support received and then open the meeting for public comment. If no additional changes needed, the Board will be asked to adopt the Preservation Plan.

Supervising Planner Thomas D'Amico gave an overview of the four volumes of the preservation plan: Preservation; Open Space; Farmland; and Historic. Received a number of comments on all four volumes including on the history section of the Historic preservation plan. Reviewed the twenty-four (24) comments from the public and the County's response to the comments. Electronic copies will be sent to all municipalities. Director Lane thanked Mr. D'Amico for his presentation and noted that all comments received were in the Board's packet, so all are on the record. Director Lane also noted resolutions from the Somerset County Park Commission and the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board, as well as a letter of support from Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission. All of these groups unanimously supported the adoption of the Preservation Plan.

Chairman Bernie Navatto opened the meeting to the public at 5:05pm. Rory Britt, President of the Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission stated that he appreciates all the work done by Kaitlin Bundy and the Cultural & Heritage staff and Tom D'Amico's work with the Historic Preservation plan. He was pleased with combination with Open Space and Farmland since creates more opportunities for collaboration. The public session was closed at 5:06pm.

Before the vote, Director Lane stated this is a historic action by County Planning Board. This plan is likely the only one of its kind in the state, possibly the country. A motion was made by Commissioner Paul Drake to move the resolution and he commended the staff on the great planning the County does. The motion was seconded by Michael Giordano. Bernie echoed Commissioner Drake's comments, thanked Director Lane and entire staff. It was noted that Erika Inocencio and Albert Ellis joined the call prior to this agenda item. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

## **May 2022 Land Development Report and Approval of the April 2022 First Time Submissions**

Supervisor Planner Thomas D'Amico reported the May 11, 2022 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee was held in the Second Floor Engineering Conference Room, County Administration Building in Somerville. The Committee acted upon one action item as well as the first-time submissions for the month of April 2022.

### Rica Site Plan Waiver Request, Warren

Thomas D'Amico presented the waiver request for the Rica site plan locate on King George Road (County Route 651). The developers wish to construct a 104,206 square foot, three-story, self-storage facility on a two-acre lot. The existing use is a real estate office and single-family dwelling. The County Planning Board has issued two reports on the project. The project has been approved by the Warren Township Board of Adjustment. The applicant is requesting a waiver from the Clear Sight Requirements for the new access point for the proposed development as outlined in the County Planning Board reports for the project. Gary Dean, consulting traffic engineer for the applicant, sent a sight distance evaluation to the County which was previously distributed to the Land Development Committee.

Richard Sasso, attorney for the applicant, stated that the proposed self-storage facility generates a small amount of traffic. Gary Dean stated that although the access point does not meet the published numbers in the County Land Development Regulations it meets the AASHTO design criteria for sight distance. Page 2 Land Development Committee Report May 11, 2022 He stated that the only way to meet the criteria was to move the retaining wall which is located on the adjacent property and which was constructed by the County. Mr. Dean then gave a summary of the traffic generated from the proposed self-storage use.

Thomas Tabatneck, Engineer from the County Engineering Land Development Review Section, presented the AASHTO standards and the standards in the County Land Development Public Works Handbook for sight distance which indicate that the sight distance as proposed by the applicant is inconsistent with the aforesaid standards. Mr Dean stated that the AASHTO standard is desirable but not required. There was a discussion concerning the driveway location. Cathy Mueller, Engineer for the applicant, stated that other locations were considered and found to be problematic. She added that the design utilizes the current location of the existing driveway.

Chairman Navatto stated that the Committee must consider all the testimony and updated reports and the Committee will get back to the applicant with a decision.

### April First Time Submissions

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of April 2022. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 32 submissions. There were five new lots proposed and one new lot created. Of the site plans proposed during the month there

was 589,861 square feet of non-residential building space proposed. There was \$3,658.80 in development review fees and \$106,704 in performance sureties paid to the County Planning Board. Bernard Navatto, Jr., did not participate in any discussion or take any action on the Vargas Residence site plan in Somerville.

Chairman Navatto, Jr. asked for a motion to approve the May 11, 2022 County Planning Board Land Development Committee. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Director Robinson. A roll call was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Somerset County Circulation Plan Project Update**

Supervising Planner Kenneth Wedeen stated on April 4th, Somerset County advertised an Request for Proposals (RFP) regarding the County Circulation Element Update Plan. Three consultant responses were received on May 4 which will be reviewed, scored, and ranked by the Consultant Selection Committee on May 19th. One proposal for a professional services contract shall be submitted to the Board of Somerset County Commissioners for approval at their June Board of Somerset County Commissioners meeting.

### **County Investment Framework Update**

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Deputy Director Angela Knowles gave a brief intro and history of the County Investment Framework project and the County's work with the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers. She noted the project has several tasks to be completed over the course of a year and we are still in the preliminary stages of the project. We expect the Framework to be completed and ready for adoption by June 2023.

To date, Rutgers has collected master plan documentation and GIS data to use in their update of the Framework and we have been working with Rutgers to determine any data that is now obsolete, data the needs to be revised, and new data that should be included in the update. For example – Resiliency data will now be included, and the newly adopted Preservation Plan data will be included in the criteria for investment areas. Staff continues to hold standing meetings every few weeks and will continue to bring in additional staff into the process as we move forward.

### **Wastewater Update**

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane provided a brief update on the Wastewater Management Plan. No additional applications for Site Specific Amendments to the Wastewater Management Plan. There may be a few that come in but none have come in the last month. The County submitted the revised Septic Management Plan (SMP) component to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) based on the last set of comments the County had received. The SMP is now with them for review. He stated the County is still waiting on comments on other components sent to DEP over a year ago.

**Public Comments**

No comments were presented.

**Committee Reports:**


Committee Reports were included in the Packet.

**Adjournment:**

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Navatto, Jr., motioned to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Christopher Kelly. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:19pm.

**Next meeting Date:** June 21, 2022 @ 4:45 Regular Meeting (Virtual)

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Matthew D. Loper, Secretary