

**MINUTES OF THE JULY 19, 2022  
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.  
ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

**Call to Order**

The July 19, 2022 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:48 p.m. This meeting was held as a virtual meeting.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Open Public Meetings Statement**

Chairman Bernard V. 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  
Albert Ellis, member  
Christopher Kelly, Member  
Commissioner Paul Drake  
Matthew D. Loper, Secretary  
Marina Stinely, Esq. covering for Joseph DeMarco, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

**Absent**

Erika Inocencio, Member  
Sami Shaban, Member  
Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson

**Also Present from Staff:**

Walter Lane, Director, Office of Planning Policy & Economic Development  
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner  
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner  
Adam Bradford, Senior Transportation Planner  
Tom Boccino, Supervising Planner, Preservation  
Kaitlin Bundy, Cultural & Heritage Manager

Nora Fekete, Planner  
Erika Phillips, Principal Community Planner  
Jessica Paolini, Manager of Economic Services  
Naghma Malik, GIS Services Coordinator  
Sheli Daniels, Office Manager

**Approval of the Meeting Minutes: June 21, 2022**

Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the minutes of the June 21, 2022 Planning Board Meeting. The motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Michael Giordano. Chairman Navatto asked the Board to authorize approval of the June 21, 2022 Meeting Minutes. A voice vote was called and the motion passed unanimously, with Chairman Navatto abstaining.

**Discussion/Presentation Items:**

**New Jersey State Planning Commission Warehousing Guidance Document**

Office of Planning Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane reported both he and Deputy Director Knowles had reviewed the guidance document from the State Planning Commission which provides a comprehensive overview of the warehousing industry and provides a framework for municipalities to follow when planning for warehousing. The guidance document spoke to new technologies as well as how warehouses that have automation will provide different challenges. It also outlined best practices for appropriately siting warehouses, regulating their size and minimizing their impacts to quality of life, traffic, air quality, and stormwater management as much as possible.

Director Lane provided an overview of the draft letter he and Deputy Director Knowles presented to the Master Plan and Land Use Committee. The draft letter suggested greater promotion of regional planning efforts to address potential impacts of warehouses. The County's letter also indicated counties could provide support to the municipalities and assist them with preparing their master plans and ordinances for warehousing uses. Director Lane asked the Board to authorize submission of the County's comment letter to the New Jersey State Planning Commission.

Chairman Navatto asked the Board to authorize submission of the letter as presented. The Board unanimously authorized Director Lane to submit the letter to the New Jersey State Planning Commission.

**July Planning Director's Report**

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Director Walter 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:

- Director Lane reported the Board's Second Alternate Member, Maria Tapia Birch, has resigned from the Board.

- He discussed the need to add another alternate member to the Land Development Committee. The Board approved the appointment of Michael Giordano as the alternate member of the Land Development Committee.
- He reported he continues to assist Bedminster Township to advance recommendations from the AT&T Land Use Study. He has provided technical support and guidance during the Board's deliberations. He has also recommended the Borough of Millstone to the NJ Brownfields Assistance Center as a potential participant in an upcoming the Brownfields Inter Agency Working Group Meeting. The Borough was selected to present to the Brownfields Inter Agency Working Group Meeting. The Borough received several offers from various agencies for technical assistance as well as potential funding programs to assist the Borough.
- Director Lane report Adam Bradford has been licensed as a Professional Planner. The Board congratulated Mr. Bradford.
- He introduced the three (3) newest staff members: Jessica Paolini is the new Economic Development Manager, Naghma Malik is the new GIS Coordinator and Erika Phillips is the new Principal Community Planner. Each of the new staff members introduced themselves to the Board and gave a brief overview of their experience.

Chairman Navatto stated that he was happy Walter is filling some of the vacant positions and to the people who just joined the staff, you have joined the best staff in the entire state, if not the entire east coast and you have big shoes to fill, so welcome aboard. Director Lane concurred with the chairman's statements.

1<sup>st</sup> Alternate Ashok Rakhit joined the meeting at 4:55pm.

### **Action Items/Informational Items:**

#### **July 2022 Land Development Committee Report**

Supervising Planner Thomas D'Amico reported the July 13, 2022 meeting of the County Planning Board Land Development Committee was rescheduled to July 19, 2022. The meeting was held via Zoom. The committee reviewed one waiver request as well as first time submissions for the months of May and June, 2022.

#### **Rica Waiver Request, Warren**

Thomas D'Amico presented the waiver request for the Rica site plan locate on King George Road (County Route 651) in Warren Township. 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. Kenneth Yanga stated that although the proposed access point meets the AASHTO's stopping sight distance requirement with an available sight distance 334 feet, it does not meet the intersection sight distance requirement in the *Somerset County Public Works Handbook* which is 10 times the design speed of the road, in this case 450 feet. The applicant has not sufficiently explored all other options to mitigate the sight distance issue. It was recommended that we defer the waiver request and discuss other alternatives with the applicant's engineer. It was unanimously agreed by the

Committee to table the waiver request and direct the County professional staff to work with the applicant and the applicant's engineer to resolve the issue and explore other solutions to the problem.

### **May First Time Submissions**

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of May. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 17 submissions. There were four new lots proposed. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 126,075 square feet of non-residential building space proposed. There was \$30,373 in improvement value and \$7,960 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 Richards Avenue minor subdivision in Somerville.

### **June First Time Submissions**

The Committee reviewed all first-time submissions for the month of June. During the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 39 submissions. There were 15 new lots proposed. Of the site plans proposed during the month there was 908,047 square feet of non-residential building space proposed as well as 21 multi-family units. There was \$2,940 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 Somerville Pioneer Solar I & II project in Somerville.

Supervising Planner D'Amico added mention of the state guidelines concerning warehouse development. In the past two months Somerset County has had over one (1) million square feet of warehouse development proposed in the county, mostly in Franklin Township, but also in Bridgewater and Hillsborough. In addition, last year at this time we had 1,158 multi-family units proposed, this year only 124.

Supervising Planner D'Amico asked that the Planning Board approve the Land Development Committee report for the July meeting. Motion was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Mike Giordano. A roll call was taken and the motion was unanimously passed.

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

Supervision Transportation Planner, Kenneth Wedeen reported the Somerset County Board of County Commissioners approved a professional services contract award for the Somerset County Circulation Element Update for Michael Baker International (MBI), WSP and Susan Blickstein on June 28<sup>th</sup>. The professional services contract has been signed and returned to Somerset County.

Planning staff hosted the kickoff meeting with the NJTPA, County and MBI on July 18<sup>th</sup>. Planning staff is working to launch the study beginning with scheduling the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

meeting #1 for September 15<sup>th</sup>, creating the Public Involvement Plan and beginning data collection from various county state and federal sources. Staff is also establishing a bi-weekly video call to keep the study moving forward.

### Somerset County Electric Vehicle Planning and Implementation Efforts

Senior Transportation Planner, Adam Bradford reported that on May 13, 2022 the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) executed the Grant Agreement for an It Pays to Plug In: NJ's Electronic Vehicle Charging Grant (IPPI) in the amount of \$32,000. The executed grant agreement allows the NJDEP to authorize construction of four Electronic Vehicle Charging Stations (EVCS) at the following County Golf Courses: Quail Brook, Warrenbrook, Green Knoll and Neshanic Valley.

Planning Board and Facilities & Services staff conducted a series of meetings during June to determine the feasibility of installing four EVCS within the nine-month IPPI grant construction requirements. Staff concluded that the installation, construction, permitting, and County/Municipal approvals for four EVCS could not be completed in time. The two 6-month construction extension requests, which are not automatically guaranteed by NJDEP, were also factored into the total timeline.

Staff contacted Bryan Electric Company, a state contractor who specializes in EVCS as a turnkey operation. The contractor has installed over 500 EVCS and recently completed a Mercer County project for eight golf courses. Planning Board and Facilities & Services staff have begun preliminary discussions regarding the four golf courses with quotes anticipated to follow at the end of summer.

### Wastewater Update

Office of Planning Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane provided a brief update on the status of the Wastewater Management Plan (WMP). He stated he has not received any updates from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regarding the various submissions for the County's WMP. He reported he is working with NJDEP to set up a staff meeting with NJDEP for early August. He is awaiting dates and time from NJDEP.

He also reported the County has received a request Sewer Service Area Transfer application from the Warren Township Sewerage Authority (WTSA). This request is to transfer one parcel (Block 85, Lot 71 a.k.a. 31 Geiger Lane) from the WTSA's existing Stage IV Sewer Service Area (SSA) to the WTSA/Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority (SRVSA) Middlebrook SSA. Staff is reviewing how to best process the request in advance of the County's meeting with NJDEP in early August. Ashok Rakhit inquired about the frequency of this type of request. Director Lane provided an overview of the rules governing the transfer process and stated this is the first time we have officially received this type of request.

### Public Comments

No members of the public were present.

**Committee Reports**

Committee Reports were included with the Packet.

**Adjournment**

There being no further business before the Board, Chairman Navatto called for a motion to adjourn. Vice Chairman Giordano motioned to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Member Kelly. A Voice Vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:26pm.

**Next meeting Date:** August 16, 2022 @ 4:45 Regular Meeting (Virtual)

Respectfully submitted,



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Matthew D. Loper, Secretary