

**MINUTES OF THE MARCH 21, 2023
MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.
IN PERSON MEETING**

Call to Order

The March 21, 2023 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:49 p.m. This meeting was held in person.

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 location for this meeting was published in The Star Ledger and the Courier News. The agenda and the meeting information was also posted on the County Planning Board website.

1st Alternate, Ashok Rakhit was sworn in by Marina Stinely.

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
Erika Inocencio, Member
Commissioner Paul Drake
Ashok Rakhit, 1st Alternate
Adam Slutsky for Matthew D. Loper, Board Secretary

Absent

Sami Shaban, Member
Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson
Matt D. Loper, Board Secretary

Also Present from Staff:

Walter Lane, Director, Office of Planning, Policy & Economic Development
Angela Knowles, Deputy Director, Office of Planning, Policy & Economic Development
Kaitlin Bundy, Manager, Cultural & Heritage
Aarthy Sabesan, Manager, Office of GIS Services

Jessica Paolini, Manager, Economic Development
Thomas D'Amico, Supervising Planner
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Transportation Planner
Thomas Boccino, Supervising Preservation Planner
Erika Phillips, Principal Community Planner
Naghma Malik, GIS Services Coordinator
Stephanie Ladas, GIS Specialist
Sheli Daniels, Office Manager
Marina Stinely, Esq., covering for Joseph DeMarco, Esq., Deputy County Counsel

Approval of the Meeting Minutes: Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the February 21, 2023 Planning Board Meeting Minutes. The motion was made by Board Member Chris Kelly and seconded by Vice Chair Michael Giordano. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION / PRESENTATION ITEMS:

Circulation Plan Update

Supervising Transportation Planner, Ken Wedeen reported that the project team just completed the first public meeting on February 1st at which the consultant presented the results from the public outreach activities, crash analysis, equity analysis and then hosted an online series of breakout rooms to obtain public feedback on residents most important transportation issues and opportunities. The Circulation Plan will consider the needs of all users and travel modes and will include an equity-based approach focused on equity communities. The plan will address environmental concerns, traffic congestion, and safety. Ken also noted the remaining study schedule includes drafting findings and recommendations, a spring online public survey, a spring TAC meeting, and a summer public meeting to solicit public feedback on the study recommendations. The draft final report deliverables will be assembled, reviewed, and finalized during the summer/fall 2023. Details are included in the committee report packet.

Board Member, Chris Kelly stated that, as a life-long cyclist, he applauds the efforts being made to make the roads safer and more available to those cyclists who are not as experienced. Commissioner Drake asked if the County will see the final results of recommending policy changes to the county on sidewalks and bike lanes. Director Lane stated that yes, Engineering always prioritizes safety in their designs. Adam Slutsky added that when the County repaves a road, the County looks at the Walk-Bike-Hike plan to what can be implemented from the plan. Supervising Planner Wedeen reiterated that a key point is that we will use this plan to obtain Federal Funding; that we are teeing everything up for that, as this is a public driven process.

Board Member, Ashok Rahkit asked what can be done on the municipal level to create space for bicycles. Director Lane answered that we coordinate with the towns on a daily basis and that we use the Walk-Bike-Hike Framework to do that.

Planning Directors Report:

Director Lane reported that he and Deputy Director Knowles hosted a meeting with the leadership of the American Planners Association, NJ Chapter and the County Planners Association to discuss ways to improve statewide and regional planning efforts. He also reported Bound Brook received Plan Endorsement from the State and the County had assisted the Borough in during the Plan Endorsement process.

Director Lane stated that he also attended the Branchburg Planning Board Meeting to support the Township’s vision for the Raritan Valley Community College Priority Growth Investment Area. He also stated he will be making a presentation on the County planning efforts at the State Planning Commission on April 4, 2023. In addition, he and Economic Development Manager, Jessica Paolini, continue to work with Bedminster to promote the redevelopment opportunities at the former AT&T campus.

Director Lane introduced Stephanie Ladas as our new GIS Specialist. He also mentioned the Office of GIS Manager, Aarth Sabesan, and her staff’s efforts in creating an interactive map web application for affordable and senior housing options.

ACTION ITEMS / INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

Resolution Conceptually Approving a Development Agreement between Warren Construction Company, Inc, the County of Somerset and the Township of Warren

Supervising Planner Tom D’Amico reported on a development agreement and resolution conceptually approving the agreement for the Peach Tree Lane project on Peach Tree Lane in Warren Township. The project is a minor, one-lot subdivision where two new dwellings are proposed. It is located in the Mountain Boulevard Transportation Improvement District (TID) area. It has been determined that the applicant’s contribution to the Mountain Boulevard TID is \$1,354 which has been submitted. The agreement between the developer, Warren Construction Company, and Warren Township has been signed. It is requested that the County Planning Board conceptually approve the agreement and transmit it to the County Commissioners for their approval. The full resolution and agreement is in the committee reports packet.

A motion to approve was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Erika Inocencio. The roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

March, 2023 Land Development Committee Report and Approval of the February, 2023 First Time Submissions

Supervising Planner Tom D’Amico reported that the Land Development Committee did not meet this month. Therefore, the full County Planning Board must approve the First Time Submissions for the month of February 2023. The First Time Submissions information is in the committee reports packet. Supervising Planner D’Amico stated that during the month, the County Planning Board reviewed a total of 24 submissions. There were two new lots proposed. Of the site plans proposed during the month

there was 545,820 square feet of non-residential building space proposed. There was \$2,660 in development review fees paid to the County Planning Board. A motion to approve was made by Chris Kelly and seconded by Al Ellis. The roll was called and the motion passed unanimously.

County Investment Framework Update

Deputy Director Angela Knowles reported that the County Investment Framework continues to move forward. Staff has been working with the Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers to update the ten-year-old framework. Rutgers proposed some boundary adjustments based on new data and overlays. It is determined that in some cases the County will have to reach out to the town to be sure the County is representing their needs and desires as the project moves forward. Any decisions made will go through the Master Plan Committee and then the County Planning Board before finalization.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Director Walter Lane stated that staff received an update from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection on the status of the Wastewater Management Plan (WMP), the Septic Management Plan (SMP) component as well as all the other components submitted. The SMP should be in the NJ Register for adoption in another month or two. The County is still awaiting comments on the draft components that were submitted in June of 2021.

Director Lane reported a Site-Specific Amendment regarding an application for a single-family housing project by Millstone River Road and Hamilton Road in Hillsborough Township was discussed with the Master Plan Committee. This land was originally zoned for industrial & warehousing. The applicant requested to present this project at the next County Planning Board Meeting. Director Lane stated staff is also discussing this project with Hillsborough Township. The County Planning Board directed Director Lane invite the applicant to present at the next Board meeting.

Public Comments

No members of the public were present.

Committee Reports

Committee Reports were included with the meeting packet.


Director Lane announced the first Planning Partners Forum meeting will be held virtually on Tuesday March 28th, 2023 at 8:00am. The guest speaker is Stephanie Hunsinger, the State Director of AARP New Jersey. He also mentioned that this year is the 40th anniversary of the Cultural and Heritage Commission. Cultural & Heritage Commission Manager, Kaitlin Bundy announced the Farm to Frame exhibit and gallery reception to be held on Friday, March 24, 2023 at 6:00pm in the County Administration Building Atrium.

Next meeting Date: April 18, 2023 @ 4:45 Regular in Person Meeting

Adjournment

There being no further business before the board Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was moved by Michael Giordano and seconded by Chris Kelly. A voice vote was called, and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:33pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary