

**AMENDED MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 30, 2024
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
HELD AT 4:45 P.M.
IN PERSON MEETING**

Call to Order

The January 30, 2024 meeting of the Somerset County Planning Board convened at 4:45 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 associated regulations, adequate notice of this meeting has been provided. The date and time for this meeting was published in the Star Ledger and the Courier News. The agenda for this meeting was also posted on the County Planning Board website.

Swearing in of New & Reappointed Members

Erika Inocencio was sworn in as a member of the Somerset County Planning Board by Deputy County Counsel Joel Shain.

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

Bernard V. Navatto, Jr, Chair
Michael Giordano, Vice-Chair
Erika Inocencio
Sami Shaban
Commissioner Paul Drake
Matt Loper, Secretary

Absent

Albert Ellis
Christopher Kelly
Commissioner Director Shanel Y. Robinson
Ashok Rakhit, 1st Alternate

Also Present from Staff:

Walter Lane, Director, Office of Planning, Policy & Economic Development
Ken Wedeen, Supervising Planner, Transportation
Erika Phillips, Supervising Planner, Environmental & Resiliency
Kaitlin Bundy, Manager Culture & Heritage
Katelyn Katzer, Principal Planner, Farmland Preservation
Naghma Malik, Coordinator, Office of GIS Services
Stephanie Ladas, Specialist, Office of GIS Services
Sheli Daniels, Office Manager
Joel Shain, Deputy County Counsel covering for Joseph DeMarco, Esq.

Approval of the November 21, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the November 21, 2023 Planning Board Meeting Minutes. The motion was moved by Matt Loper and seconded by Mike Giordano. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS / INFOMATIONAL ITEMS

Selection of Chair Pro-Tem

Chairman Bernie Navatto nominated Matt Loper as the Chair Pro-Tem. The motion was seconded by Mike Giordano. A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers for 2024

Chair Pro-Tem Matt Loper stated the next order of business is for the election of officers for the board. Matt asked for nominations for the position of Board Chair. Mike Giordano nominated Bernie Navatto for the Chair. The motion was seconded by Paul Drake. There being no other nominations, Matt Loper called for a roll call vote for the Chair. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. The Chair Pro-Tem turned over the meeting over to Chair Bernie Navatto.

Chair's Comments

Chairman Navatto stated "it is my pleasure to serve on this board with all of you and I appreciate the confidence". Chairman Navatto called for nominations for the Vice-Chair. Matt Loper nominated Mike Giordano for Vice-Chair. The motion was seconded by Bernie Navatto. There being no other nominations, the Chairman called for a roll call vote for the Vice Chair. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Navatto called for the election of Secretary and nominated Matt Loper. The motion was seconded by Sami Shaban. There being no other nominations, the Chairman called for a roll call vote for the Secretary. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Designating Somerset County Planning Board Meetings for 2024-2025

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane presented the resolution Designating Somerset County Planning Board Meetings for 2024-2025. Director Lane indicated meetings will be held the 3rd Tuesday of every month, in person, at 4:45pm, except for the December 2024 meeting due to a conflict with the Commissioner's Meeting. Meetings will be held in the third floor Commissioners Meeting Room in the County Administration Building, located at 20 Grove St, Somerville, NJ. Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was moved by Paul Drake and seconded by Bernie Navatto. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Designating a Non-voting Representative to the Somerset County Agriculture Development Board for 2024

Director Lane stated this is the annual appointment of a non-voting representative to the Agriculture Development Board, which usually is the Chair of the Environmental & Utilities Committee, or the Chair's designee. Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was moved by Sami Shaban and seconded by Mike Giordano. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Resolution Authorizing Certain Somerset County Planning Board and Office Of Planning, Policy & Economic Development Members the Responsibility of Signing All Subdivisions Plats to be Filed with the County Clerk for 2024

Director Lane explained stated the County Enabling Act directs the County Clerk not to accept a filing of a subdivision plat which does not bear the certification of approval or review from an authorized County Planning Board officer or staff member. The resolution authorizes the following Board Members and staff members to sign subdivision plats.

1. Chairperson, Somerset County Planning Board
2. Secretary, Somerset County Planning Board
3. Director, Somerset County Office of Planning Policy and Economic Development
4. Deputy Director, Somerset County Office of Planning Policy and Economic Development
5. Supervising Planner, Somerset County Office of Planning Policy and Economic Development

Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was moved by Sami Shaban and seconded by Paul Drake. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Dates for 2024 Committee Meetings

Director Lane presented the schedule of dates for all sub-committee meetings. The schedule calls for the Transportation Committee and the E&U Committee to meet virtually on the Thursday prior to the Planning Board meeting at 3:30pm and 4:00pm respectively in the months of February, April, June, August, October & December. The MP/LU Committee is to meet virtually on the Wednesday prior to

the Planning Board meeting at 4:00pm and the Housing/Demographic Committee to meet virtually on the Thursday prior to the Planning Board meeting at 4:00pm in the months of March, May, July, September & November. The Land Development Committee will meet in person, monthly on the Wednesday prior to the Planning Board meeting at 8:15am in the Engineering Conference Room on the 2nd floor, 20 Grove St, Somerville. The Board agreed with the schedule.

Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the 2024 Committee Meeting Dates. The motion was moved by Mike Giordano and seconded by Erika Inocencio. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Preliminary 2024 Committee Assignments

Director Lane also presented the preliminary 2024 committee assignments. He stated that since there are no new board members this year, the assignments would remain the same as in 2023 with a few minor modifications. He asked the Board Members to reach out to Chairman Navatto or himself if they have any questions or concerns.

Planning Director's Report

Director Lane stated he was pleased to announce that in early December, the Somerset County Business Partnership celebrated the latest class of their 40 Under 40 inductees. Jessica Paolini was recognized as a member of the newest 40 Under 40 classes. Director Lane congratulated her on this award and thanked her for her great work.

He stated he was also pleased to announce Kate Katzer was elected as Chair of the North Jersey RC&D Board on January 11, 2024 and will be working closely with RC&D Staff and fellow Board Members to continue the Board's work. He reported that she has served on the Board of the North Jersey Resource, Conservation & Development.

Director Lane continued to report on the great work of staff and announced the Housing Navigator App was featured at the Esri Mid-Atlantic User Conference held in Philadelphia. This conference is the premier regional GIS event, with attendees from nearly every commercial sector, government organization, and nonprofit field. The Housing Navigator App was featured during the Plenary Session of the conference as best in class app. Director Lane thanked the entire GIS team (Aarthy Sabesan, Naghma Malik and Stephanie Ladas) for their excellent work.

Director Lane informed the Board the public hearing process to adopt the Cultural and Heritage Commission's Long-Range Plan as an element of the County Master Plan will begin at the February Planning Board Meeting. In late January, the draft Long-Range Plan will be sent to all the County's municipalities and posted on the County website. As part of the February Planning Board Meeting, a public hearing will be held to solicit comments of the draft Long Range Plan. After the thirty (30) day public comment ends, the final draft of the plan will be presented at a Planning Board Meeting for adoption.

Director Lane briefed the Board on the status of a proposed bill which would reform the municipal responsibilities of affordable housing as well as abolish the Council on Affordable Housing. Senate Bill 50 was heard by the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee on January 25, 2024 and was voted out of Committee and referred to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee. Director Lane stated the proposed bill calls for the Department of Community Affairs will determine the municipalities' fair share obligations using the methodology developed by Judge Jacobson as well several other factors. He stated while the bill does reference the State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP) there are opportunities to strengthen the connections with the policies of the SDRP.

Director Lane shared he has been asked to serve on an advisory committee to develop and Action Agenda for Equitable, Sustainable Housing Development in NJ. This effort is being led by NJ Future with support from the Princeton University School of Public and International Affairs. The goal of this effort is to develop specific "priority solutions" and action steps to ensure there is future housing development that is "equitable and sustainable" and is connected to opportunity, and is walkable, healthy and climate-safe.

He also reported he was invited to serve as a member of the NJ Committee of the Regional Plan Association (RPA). For over 100 years, RPA has served an independent non-profit civic organization that develops and promotes ideas to improve the economic health, environmental resiliency, and quality of life of the New York metropolitan area. RPA holds up the County's planning work as a model for rest of the region to follow.

January 2024 Land Development Report & Approval of the November 2023 and December 2023 First Time Submissions

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane provided a brief report on the activities of the Land Development Committee. The Committee met on January 10, 2024 and reviewed a Development Agreement for Seritage Project in Watchung Borough. The Committee also review the First Time Submissions for the months of November 2023 and December 2023. Bernard Navatto did not take any action on the projects in the Borough of Somerville.

Chairman Navatto called for a motion to approve the January 2024 Land Development Committee Report and the First Time Submissions for November 2023 and December 2023. The motion was moved by Matt Loper and seconded by Mike Giordano. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Circulation Plan Update

Supervising Transportation Planner, Ken Wedeen reported that during December 2023 and January 2024 Planning Board, County Engineering and North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) staff have been reviewing the draft Keep Somerset Moving: Transportation Plan 2045 Study Draft Final

Report. The review process has included several rounds of reviews by Somerset County Engineering and Planning staff reviewing the draft final report along with County staff reviewing NJTPA's comments on the draft document.

At this point, the Planning and Engineering staff are in the process of compiling our final comments on the draft final report. In addition, Somerset County is awaiting NJTPA comments on the draft final report. Planning staff will compile one final set of comments that include county engineering, planning and NJTPA staff comments into one final document that will be reviewed by the Planning Director and County Administrator.

Once the final set of comments has been approved, Somerset County planning staff will transmit one final set of revisions to the consultant who will make the final revisions and create both print and digital copies of the final report.

State Development and Redevelopment Plan Update

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane gave a brief report on the update of the 2001 State Development and Redevelopment Plan (SDRP). He and Supervising Planner Erika Phillips have been participating in a series of meetings with the NJ Office of Planning Advocacy to discuss the update of the SDRP. Staff have provided numerous recommendations on how to improve the Cross Acceptance process as well as the mapping protocols.

The updated draft preliminary SDRP should be released in early April of 2024. Once the SDRP is released, the Cross Acceptance process will officially start. Per the State Planning Act, each County must designate a Negotiating Entity by governing body resolution to work with the State Planning Commission to gather feedback on the draft preliminary SDRP and prepare a Statement of Agreements and Disagreements based upon public comments received during the Cross Acceptance Process. In the past, the County Planning Board served as the Negotiating Entity. Director Lane recommended the Planning Board serve in this role again.

Chairman Navatto called for a motion to have the Somerset County Planning Board to serve as the Negotiating Entity for the County as well host the public hearing on the draft SDRP. The motion was moved by Sami Shaban and seconded by Erika Inocencio. A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Director Lane said he will prepare a resolution designating the County Planning Board to serve as the Negotiating Entity for the Board of County Commissioners consideration.

Wastewater Management Plan Update

Office of Planning, Policy and Economic Development Director Walter Lane summarized the status of the County's wastewater planning efforts. He stated the County has not heard from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regarding the status of the Notice of Adoption for the approval of

the Septic Management Plan (SMP). He reported Middlesex County had reached out asking about the SMP and informed staff the NJDEP wanted to release the adoption notice in March and then hold a public hearing in Middlesex County. Director Lane reminded the Board Middlesex County has to approve our SMP since part of the existing sewer service in Somerset County is served by a wastewater treatment plant located in Middlesex County. He also reported the County has not received any initial comments on the draft Wastewater Management Plan, which was submitted to NJDEP in June 2021, but NJDEP said the County would receive comments on the draft plan within the next two weeks.

Director Lane provided a brief update on the proposed site-specific amendment to the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) involving Cyzner Properties proposal to provide public sanitary sewer service to Lots 44.04 and 44.03 to serve a single-family home on each lot. The Board had previously determined this amendment was not consistent with the County Master Plan. He referred to the letter in the Board's packet from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) informing the applicant a site-specific amendment to the County Wastewater management Plan was not needed since the applicant only needed to construct lateral service lines a short distance to connect to the existing sewer line located in front of their property.

The applicant has asked the County to provide a letter to the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewerage Authority stating the County approves this connection. Director Lane suggested the Board may wish to consider providing a letter stating while the Board determined the proposed site-specific amendment is inconsistent with the County Master Plan and, the Board will not object to the proposed connection since NJDEP has approved the connection. He suggested that the Environmental and Utility Committee discuss the County's response at their next meeting and then make a recommendation to the full Board at the regular February Meeting.

Chairman Navatto called for a motion to have the Environment and Utilities Committee review the draft letter stating the County's position on this request and have the full Board take action at the February 2024 Meeting. Chairman Navato asked if everybody agreed with recommended course of action and the board members unanimously responded yes.

Director Lane reported the Fox Hollow Project is active again. This project is on the boarder of Branchburg Township. As part of Readington Township's settlement with the Fair Share Housing Center, the Fox Hollow project consisting of 240 multifamily residential units would be built on a portion of the Fox Hollow golf course which is located in Readington and Branchburg Townships. This project proposed to connect to the sewer system in Branchburg Township and be treated by the Somerset Valley Regional Sewer Authority (SRSVA). The provision of sewer service to this project would set a precedent and allow for additional lower density development. The treatment plant at SRSVA is shown to be at capacity right now and to potentially be over capacity based upon the results of the draft WMP Build-out analysis discussed earlier. In July of 2020, the Board approved a letter requesting the applicant pursue additional strategies to provide sewer service to the proposed project. Director Lane will brief the Board on this project once additional information is received.

Public Comments

No members of the public were present.

Committee Reports


Committee Reports were included with the meeting packet.

Next Meeting Date

February 20, 2024 @ 4:45pm Regular In-Person Meeting

There being no further business before the Board Chairman Navatto asked for a motion to adjourn. The motion was moved by Sami Shaban and seconded by Mike Giordano. A voice vote was called and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 5:11pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Matthew D. Loper, Secretary