

WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
August 21, 2019

[Chairman's Note: There was no Recording Secretary for this meeting; only source was audio tape.]

The regular meeting of the Planning Board was called to order at 7:03 pm on Wednesday, August 21, 2019 by Chair O'Brien in Meeting Room A of the Municipal Building.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, a notice of this meeting's date, time, location and agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the township bulletin board and filed with the municipal clerk on August 16, 2019.

ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Present

Sue Appelget
Linda Geever
Andrea Mandel
Hemant Marathe
Simon Pankove
Michael Karp
Gene O'Brien

There were no public comments on non-agenda items.

MINUTES: July 10, 2019

On page 5, in the first line of the next-to-last paragraph, insert "electric vehicle" before "charging stations." Pankove moved approval with this change, seconded by Appelget. Motion approved by voice vote with that one correction.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION REPORT:

Ms. Mandel stated that the commission has been working on updating their web site. She stated that students have been helping with the solar mapping. It was noted that they are working on getting a solar certificate, also with the help of students. Ms. Mandel stated that the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition says we have some compliance issues, most notably stormwater discharge. She stated that students are helping in this regard as well. She mentioned that the Commission was having another electric vehicle exhibit on September 14th. Chairman O'Brien thanked Ms. Mandel for a very thorough report.

MASTER PLAN WORK SESSION:

Mr. Novak introduced himself as being with Burgis Associates, consultant planners for the Township. He stated that they would be discussing Maps 8, 10, 11, 13 & 14. He stated these are the last to be reviewed for new land-use plans. He stated that they are making tweaks to land uses.

MAP 8:

Grover's Mill – the plan is to modify the use to include Bed & Breakfasts.

Corner of Cranbury Rd. & Clarksville Rd. in the northeast quadrant of the township – to convert an existing older home to a B & B with apartments above. This area is already a mixed-use area. Mr. Novak stated that there has been discussion about adding a boardwalk at Grover's Mill pond that could potentially connect to Van Ness Park.

Mr. Surtees noted that since there are a limited number of older homes in the Township, that maybe converting them to B & B's would prevent someone from knocking them down and putting up big new houses.

Mr. Novak stated that B & B's are typically situated in strategic settings, such as near water.

Mr. Surtees stated that if the Planning Board was interested in going forward, it would go into a draft land use element plan and would go before Council some time in November. He also stated that the Zoning Board granted variances for the two buildings on either corner of Clarksville and Cranbury Roads so there may not be an issue with B & B's having to go back before the Board.

A question was raised about property values being affected. Mr. Novak stated that if there was a zone change it would make prices more competitive.

Mr. Surtees stated that if B&B's were permitted, they would have to register with the Township. He noted that there was a State statute that allows for tax assessors to assess them like hotels. The Township would be able to collect extra revenue through a room tax.

A discussion ensued about Air B&B's. Mr. Novak stated that short-term rentals are not currently permitted. Mr. Surtees stated there have been complaints about people renting out homes. He also stated that there have also been complaints about some of the affordable units being used as Air B&Bs. He said that is in violation of the affordable housing restrictions, which state the units must be owner occupied. Mr. Surtees stated that it is not that hard to figure out where the houses are located, what with internet advertising, etc. He stated that allowing Air B&B's would bring in revenue for the town with room taxes collected. He stated that this would be an overlay or conditional use.

Mr. Surtees stated the residents of Berrien City had attended the previous week's Council meeting. They talked about wanting Berrien City to have something that states the character of the neighborhood will not be changed, as they are mainly older homes. Mr. Surtees stated that West Windsor does not have a preservation district. Also, that Berrien City does not have any historical character. There was discussion about some of the older homes in the township, namely houses at Port Mercer behind Nassau Park, Lower Harrison back up to the Millstone river. If any of the older buildings were to be used, they would need building and zoning permits.

Ms. Mandel asked about renting rooms in a house. Mr. Surtees stated that that would be considered a boarding house and is not allowed. He said the State regulates boarding homes. Mr. Surtees stated that any rental under 90 days is considered a hotel. Mr. Surtees noted that rental of homes is permitted.

A discussion was held about the boardwalk and water usage, such as kayaking and fishing. It was noted that these uses would probably be managed by either Engineering or the Recreation Department, probably as either active or passive recreation. Ms. Geever asked if open space money would be used. Mr. Surtees stated that it would.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman O'Brien asked if there were any questions from the public and there was none.

MAP 10: (Map 9 was Berrien City):

Mr. Novak stated that this was the municipal complex, which is zoned RO, and the property to the south-west is zoned ROM-4. There was discussion about changing the zone for the municipal building to "MC" designating it as Municipal Complex.

A discussion was held about the property to the south west of the municipal complex. Mr. Surtees stated that there was approval for a 3-story, 32,000 square foot office building. He stated that they have been trying to develop that property for about 15 years with no takers. He also stated the property is environmentally constrained. He also noted that if the property gets re-zoned, they would no longer have that approval.

Mr. Surtees mentioned the fact that the Township had an agreement with the library, but the library is no longer interested.

Ms. Appelget asked about the property across from the Township and if it was in the greenbelt. Mr. Surtees stated that it would be only if it was deed restricted. He talked about the house on the property, which we own, and the fact that it is falling down.

MAP 11:

Mr. Novak stated that this area is split zoned. The north west portion is R & D and 1/3 of the south west portion is RP-10. He stated there is talk of extending the RP-10 zone to include senior housing, to meet the affordable housing requirements. Mr. Surtees talked about the GDP (General Development Plan). He stated that there is no longer demand for the R&D zone. He stated that the owners were looking to sell the property. He stated that they met with the Mayor and him to address expanding the RP-10 zone or creating a new redevelopment district. He stated that a portion is owned by Princeton University. He said that Vaughn Drive must be addressed first. This is a connector to Lower Harrison, which is a major east-west connector; this would also reduce commercial traffic on Washington Rd.

Someone (inaudible) asked if anyone can ask for a rezoning. Mr. Surtees said they could. He talked about how Howard Hughes was requesting a zone change.

Mr. Muller then stated that the State had given a one-time "sunset clause" where, if a building zoned for seniors is not occupied by seniors, it could be rezoned for non-restrictive housing.

Mr. Novak stated that the Township must have 25% affordable housing. Mr. Surtees stated that just a portion of the property would be zoned for senior housing, and the rest could be R & D. Ms. Mandel stated that the property is pretty huge. Mr. Surtees stated that it could accommodate between one and two million sq. ft. of R&D office buildings. He said we would look at all 250 acres before rezoning. He said that because of its proximity to the train station, dinky, and possible future rapid transit busing into Princeton, it would be attractive to seniors. They could also walk or bike and frequent retail facilities in the area. Mr. Surtees stated that we would be looking to capture high-end seniors who would want to have a presence in the community, but don't necessarily want to own. He stated that only the Avalon project would have retail. He stated that a memory care facility would also count toward affordable

housing. He stated that we would be working with financial consultants on this. Bob Powell is the contact for this.

Mr. O'Brien asked if Mr. Powell had looked at the Sarnoff property. Mr. Surtees stated that rather than have Mr. Powell look at it, all we would want our staff consultants to give suggestions to the Planning Board members. When the Board meets in November, Mr. Powell can explain the economic benefits or detriments and we can make a final determination. Mayor Marathe stated that this would be an economic benefit. Ms. Geevers said that it's a lot of changes. Mr. Surtees stated that the property owner is selling the property. He said they have two developers in mind, one for commercial and one for senior housing. He stated that if we rezone the property and the sale goes through, then we will designate it as a redevelopment zone.

Mr. O'Brien stated that the only issue here is whether the Board is comfortable with adding senior housing to the area now known as RP-10. Mr. Novak stated that is correct, and possibly some modifications to the R & D District.

A discussion was held about the economic development. Mr. Novak stated that that would be something that would have to involve Bob Powell. Mr. O'Brien asked if Mr. Powell had looked at the Sarnoff property. Mr. Novak said he had. Mr. Surtees stated that he wanted to make sure the Board was in agreement before calling Mr. Powell in, possibly at the November meeting. Mr. Surtees stated that Mr. Powell could explain the economic benefits or detriments of any proposal.

Mr. O'Brien asked about status of Mr. Powell. Mr. Novak stated that he has been hired by Burgis Associates.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Rimma Yacobovitch and Renata Piccione asked if the housing would be seniors only. It was stated that that was true, and there would be no school-age children residing there.

MAP 13:

Mr. Novak stated that this is in Carnegie Center in the northwest quadrant, southeast of the Route 1 corridor. He stated that we were talking about approaching Boston Properties about converting vacant property in front of Carnegie Center into a village hub, with apartments, retail, restaurants, etc. He said this might meet our fourth-round obligation for affordable housing. Mr. Novak stated that we have not approached Boston Properties about this. He stated that we did receive a letter from a representative of the Carnegie Center owner about a property directly across Route 1. This is currently zoned ROM-1. They are asking for two additional uses – assisted living and residential. This site is located across Route 1 to the northeast of Market Fair. Mr. Surtees stated that this is the Hyatt Place, directly behind Brick House Tavern and South of the Border. Mr. Surtees stated that in the future the owners may want to convert the hotel to assisted living. He stated that we would get 25% set aside for affordable housing if this were to happen. He stated that the building would not be knocked down, just converted. A discussion was held about parking and Mr. Surtees said assisted living may generate less parking.

Mr. O'Brien stated that the question before the Board is if we would be amenable to looking at Carnegie Center for possible other uses. Mr. Surtees stated that Boston Properties is having trouble leasing office space and building new office space, because the younger people want to live very close to where they

work and also play very close to where they work. Mr. Surtees stated Boston Properties is very happy about the Mack-Cali site being approved for 600 apartments.

Mr. Muller stated that this is very preliminary. Mr. Surtees stated that this would be different from the suburban growth we are used to. He reiterated the fact that in five years we will have to meet the next round of affordable housing. He stated that we have less and less ability to fulfill our affordable housing obligations.

MAP 14:

Mr. Novak stated this is designated as Bear Brook/Vaughn Drive. He said this includes two areas that we are looking at. The first is near the intersection of Bear Brook Rd. & Vaughn Dr. and along Alexander Rd. This is currently zoned ROM-2. He stated that one of the ideas was to either expand the RP-13 zone or create a new redevelopment district which would be an underlay or an overlay. He stated that it would be something that would permit town houses, providing that the lots are contiguous with one another. He stated that they would be complimentary to the new homes to the west. He stated that the other area would be closer to the Boot Straps area. He stated that he and Mr. Surtees had discussed tiny homes in this area. This would mean identifying certain lots that would be suitable for tiny homes and would encourage an eco-village. He stated it would be a low impact type of development. Mr. Surtees stated that it would be for folks who want a very small home. He said it is a minimalist lifestyle and could include community gardens. Mr. Surtees stated he has talked to one of the property owners, who is interested. He stated that there might be a real interest in this kind of living. Mr. Novak talked about a community in Fair Lawn called Radburn. He said it is a national historic landmark. It consists of smaller homes around Radburn Park and the focus is communal living. He stated that the lots are small, and you are close to your neighbor; but there is a community garden and the park and promotes community living. Mr. Surtees stated that a lot of the land around here is preserved. He stated that these lots would lend themselves to this kind of communal living. He stated that it would be about ten small lots. He stated that it could be just those few lots. Mr. Surtees stated that they are all different owners but maybe that area could be designated as communal living. Mr. Novak thought that 25% would have to be affordable. He stated that they would all be deed restricted. Mr. Surtees stated that it would be more like an artisan's village. Mr. Surtees stated that he had talked with at least one homeowner and they would like those properties to be rezoned because they are all non-conforming. He stated that perhaps we should rezone it as single-family residential.

Mr. Surtees stated that he would contact the people at the Hyatt House and tell them that we would not want residential but might allow assisted living depending on what that might be.

A discussion was held about brew pubs. Mr. Surtees stated this was not an option, because there are certain building constraints, such as ceiling height that would really require an older building. He said this would not work in the redevelopment zone because you couldn't put apartments above it. He stated that an application was being heard by the Zoning Board for the former Sun Bank building to be totally redeveloped, with retail and apartments above, as well as a daycare. He stated that there really isn't any available land in the downtown area to be developed that isn't already committed to some sort of redevelopment.

Mr. Surtees mentioned that several years ago the Zoning Board heard quite a few applications to convert warehouse space to allow recreational uses. Now there are no vacant warehouses where a brew pub could go. Mr. Novak stated that perhaps a brew pub could go into the Carnegie Center if there is a zone

change. Mr. Surtees stated that this probably wouldn't work because we would want apartments above any business.

Mr. Surtees stated that he has spoken to someone about 55 Hightstown Rd. who might be interested in the building next to Sun Bank. He said it is an old building which they would want to knock down and rebuild everything up close to the road. He stated this might be a good place for a micro- brew pub, if possible. Mr. Surtees stated another possible location for entertainment would be near Tractor Supply near Route 1. Also, the building alongside Alexander Road and the railroad tracks was cited as a possibility for a micro-brewery.

Mr. Surtees stated that he would like to have a draft land use plan to show to Council in November.

Mr. O'Brien asked if there were any questions, could they be bought up before then. Mr. Surtees stated that this would be fine.

With no other business Chairman O'Brien adjourned the meeting at 8:43 PM.

Transcribed by Barbara Watson