

EAST AMWELL PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
7:30 PM East Amwell Municipal Building
February 12, 2014 - Meeting

Call to Order, Attendance and Pledge of Allegiance

This meeting of the East Amwell Planning Board was opened on February 12, 2014 at 7:30 PM. The following notice was read, "In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, this is a regularly scheduled meeting pursuant to the annual meeting notice as published in the January 16, 2014 issue of the Hunterdon County Democrat, a copy of the agenda for this meeting was forwarded to the Hunterdon County Democrat, filed in the Township Clerk's Office and posted on the bulletin board on February 6, 2014."

Present: Roger DeLay
Fred Gardner
Gail Glashoff
Linda Lenox
Don Reilly, Chairman
Dart Sageser
David Wang-Iverson
Gail Skupien – Alt. #1
Maria Souza – Alt. #2
Planner Slagle

Excused: Rob Gilbert

Citizens' Privilege to Speak on Items not on the Agenda

Chairman Reilly opened the floor to public comment. Frances Gavigan of 123 Wertsville Road came forward and referred to the Village Study referenced in the Board's 1/8/14 minutes. She asked if the subcommittee consisted of only Planning Board members or if members of the public would be included. Chairman Reilly explained the subcommittee consists of Planning Board members. Planner Slagle added that there will be a public visioning session incorporated into the study to get input from residents and business owners which will be publically noticed. Seeing no other members of the public come forward, a motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Gail Glashoff to close to the public was unanimously approved.

Review of Minutes

A motion by Gail Glashoff, seconded by Dart Sageser to approve the Board's 1/8/14 minutes with no revisions noted was approved with Mr. DeLay and Mr. Gardner abstaining.

New Business – Other

Approval of 2014 Contract for Attorney Chris Norman and Approval of Resolution PB#2014-01

Chairman Reilly noted that Attorney Norman's rate is consistent with other Township's he looked into and he commented that the rates for 2014 have not been increased. A motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Dart Sageser to approve Attorney Norman's 2014 contract and Resolution PB#2014-01 was unanimously approved.

Discussion: The Keeping of Non-customary Animals on Residential Properties Throughout the Township – Update from Ag Advisory

Ms. Glashoff noted that the Ag Committee did not meet because of the snowstorm. Ms. Gavigan spoke up from the public stating that the Committee is collecting information and will discuss the matter at their next meeting. Planner Slagle added that she and Zoning Officer McManus have left each other several phone messages on this issue but have not yet had the opportunity to discuss it fully.

Discussion: Letter of Support for Section 319(h) NPS Grant

It was noted that Clerk Stahl had sent an email to the various Township Boards and Committees indicating that the Township Committee would be considering a motion to support the application for the grant at their February meeting and suggested any other interested parties could do the same.

A motion by Roger DeLay, seconded by Gail Glashoff for the Planning Board to send a letter endorsing the 319(h) Grant Application in support of the East Amwell Sourland Watershed Protection Plan/Non-point Source Pollution Control Project was unanimously approved.

Discussion: Grant – Non-contiguous Cluster – Update from Planner Slagle

Chairman Reilly explained that this grant is problematic for 2014 because it is a \$5000.00 matching grant and there is nothing in the Board's current budget to accommodate that, however, it can be considered for 2015 if the grant is still available.

Planner Slagle further clarified that the grant from NJ Future for non-contiguous cluster planning which means a municipality can enact an ordinance whereby if a developer owns two parcels of land within the Township that are not contiguous, they can take all of the development rights from both lots, apply them to one of the lots and preserve the other. She remarked this is similar to a clustering provision but noted it has bigger implications.

Chairman Reilly asked if someone who owns two large parcels came to us today, could the Board entertain this type of development proposal. Planner Slagle said no because the MLUL requires that the Township has an ordinance enacted specifically for such development. Chairman Reilly commented that this is different than transferring development rights because there is no receiving district. Planner Slagle stated that the Board has seen adjoining properties that have been developed but in those cases the parcels were merged.

Chairman Reilly asked if there are economic advantages for the developer to build on one site instead of two. Planner Slagle remarked that there is an efficiency of land use. Chairman Reilly expressed concern for creating an incentive to develop. Mr. Sageser remarked that he doesn't see it as being much different than the current clustering ordinance. Mr. Gardner commented that you are advantaging one area and disadvantaging another which can raise problems.

Chairman Reilly commented that the Board will have to make a value judgment toward the end of the year regarding allocating the Planners portion of the Planning Board budget unless the Township Committee wishes to expand the Board's budget to cover the grant.

Discussion: Village Study – Update from Subcommittee

Chairman Reilly noted that Mr. Wang-Iverson is the Chairman of the subcommittee. He explained that the Subcommittee met with Planner Slagle and Mr. Harrison of the Historic Preservation Committee a few weeks ago.

Chairman Reilly commented that the Subcommittee is going to review some updated maps, Planner Slagle will provide specific detail on the current uses within the Village District, the Master Plan will be reviewed so that the Subcommittee is clear on what the recommendations for the Village District are and a survey questionnaire will hopefully be finalized at the next Subcommittee meeting. It was noted that the Subcommittee is considering adding some local business owners or other people with a vested interest in the Village District to their group.

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It was noted the next Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for 2/18/14 here at the Municipal Building.

Mr. Wang-Iverson expressed that the overall goal of the Subcommittee is to develop recommendations for the Township Committee before the end of the year depicting what actions can be taken to facilitate improvements within the Village area.

Chairman Reilly remarked that he and Mr. Wang-Iverson attended the County meeting last night regarding their Economic Development Planning Initiative. He noted that they are very interested in trying to make their resources available to us. He believes they may have an idea where to direct the Board and the Township Committee as the Village Study moves forward.

Planner Slagle clarified that while the Subcommittee is asking for input from business owners and others, they are not formal members of the Subcommittee, only the Planning Board members are.

Oral Reports

FOSPC – Mr. Gardner commented that they are reviewing plans for Greenfest which will be on Saturday, April 5, 2014. He noted that various organizations are being encouraged to participate. Mr. Gardner also noted that the Committee reviewed the capital budget.

Agricultural Advisory Committee – No additional report was provided

Environmental Commission – No report given

PB Secretary – No report given

Chairman – Chairman Reilly elaborated on the County Economic Development meeting. It was noted that Committeeman Mathews, Planner Frank Banisch and Planner Michael Bolan were also in attendance at the County. Chairman Reilly explained that an analysis was done by a Planner the County hired to review economic trends and planning issues for the entire County in an effort to encourage business development.

The economic analysis showed:

1. A flat population growth over the next 5 years
2. Minority groups are growing
3. Non-minority population is shrinking
4. The 55 plus age group is growing
5. The 25 – 34 age group is growing slightly
6. There is a shortage of rental properties
7. The typical family of 4 is in decline in this county
8. There is a large inventory of 3000 -5000 sq. ft. homes which over time will not be desirable for the population groups that are growing. The empty nesters want to downsize and the younger age groups may be single people or just married couples who don't necessarily have the desire or the income to support such large homes
9. The County itself is the 4th highest household income county in the country and it's the number 1 county in NJ, driven in large part by the 55 plus age group

Chairman Reilly remarked that what he believes the County is ultimately going to recommend is that Flemington, Clinton, Milford, Frenchtown, Stockton and Lambertville are going to need a lot more rental properties and they are going to need to encourage business growth in these areas as well.

Another item discussed by the County was that large corporate centers are things of the past. Businesses are trending back to urban areas for financial reasons and for ease of transportation for their workers.

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Mr. Wang-Iverson added that the County's main focus is business development. He indicated there is money for infrastructure via the Department of Commerce but it's mostly focused on trying to revitalize business districts. He said that Hunterdon County being a rich County is a good thing but noted it makes it difficult for service type workers to live close to where they may work. He remarked this is why Planners are pushing rental and higher density units. It was also noted that the public transportation is 1/10 that of the State which is also an issue. Chairman Reilly noted that Ringoes was mentioned as an area that the County was not focused on. He said there was a clear message that housing needs to be provided for lower income households in order to have a viable, healthy economic community.

The next County meeting is tentatively planned for May.

Chairman Reilly also noted that the East Amwell School has applied for a treatment works approval on their septic system and the Board was notified as a courtesy. Mr. Wang-Iverson explained that representatives of the school had come to the Board of Health and explained there was a leak in the system and they plan to re-test it in the Spring because the belief now is that the system may not actually be malfunctioning.

Chairman Reilly followed up on the RFP discussion for Planner Banisch that was previously suggested by the Township Committee. He noted that he had done some research and West Amwell Township is paying higher rates for their Planner. He explained that Lebanon Township is paying for a *Senior Planner* whose rate is the same as Banisch Associates but in our case we are actually paying less because Planner Slagle bills the Board at an *Associate* rate. He stated the Board has always been very careful with their budget and noted the Planner's rates have not been increased in 4 years. Mr. Gardner remarked that having continuity is also important.

Open to the Public

A motion by Gail Glashoff, seconded by Roger DeLay to open to the public was unanimously approved. Frances Gavigan of 123 Wertsville Road came forward and expressed that the Black River & Western Railroad is a booming business and she suggested they may be a good source of information for the Village Study. She also noted that the Freeholders are talking about extending the rail system which may drive demand for housing stock. She remarked that if Flemington declares Hunter Hills Apartments a blighted area then all of those people will need housing. Ms. Gavigan's final comment was regarding contaminated water sources in the Village area. She remarked that septic systems are a problem and repairs or replacement is a large financial expense for the residents. Chairman Reilly commented that years ago the idea of installing a sewer system in the Village was never pursued because the residents at that time had no interest in doing so.

Seeing no other members of the public come forward, a motion by Roger DeLay, seconded by Dart Sageser to close to the public was unanimously approved.

Presentation of Vouchers

It was noted that no vouchers were listed on the agenda for payment.

Adjournment

Chairman Reilly adjourned the meeting at 8:36 PM.

Maria Andrews, Administrative Officer