

EAST AMWELL PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
7:30 PM East Amwell Municipal Building
May 13, 2015 - Meeting

Call to Order, Attendance and Pledge of Allegiance

This meeting of the East Amwell Planning Board was opened on May 13, 2015 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 22, 2015 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 May 7, 2015."

Present: Roger DeLay
Rob Gilbert
Linda Lenox
Don Reilly, Chairman
Dart Sageser
David Wang-Iverson
John Buckwalter – *Alt. #1*
Dante DiPirro – *Alt. #2*

Excused: Fred Gardner
Gail Glashoff
Peter Kneski

Citizens' Privilege to Speak on Items not on the Agenda

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

Review of Minutes

A motion by Dart Sageser, seconded by Rob Gilbert to approve the Board's 4/8/15 minutes with no revisions noted was approved with Mr. Delay, Ms. Lenox and Mr. DiPirro abstaining.

New Business – Other

Discussion: Meeting the Township's COAH Obligation

Chairman Reilly commented that the COAH discussion will be on the Board's agenda as a standing item so status updates can be provided because he indicated the Township must be ready when action is required. He remarked that several local mayors had met to discuss the issue. Mr. Wang-Iverson commented that Mayor Janice Kovach of the Town of Clinton and Mayor John Higgins of Clinton Township are attempting to regionalize the whole COAH effort instead of having individual municipalities address the requirements. Mr. Wang-Iverson stated that the group of mayors discussed hiring a lawyer and a planner who have argued before the Courts on the COAH issue. It was noted that Township Attorney Cushing is familiar with the concept of approaching COAH regionally because he represents the Town of Clinton where it has been discussed.

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Mr. Wang-Iverson remarked that he has reached out to West Amwell Township Mayor George Fisher and Delaware Township Mayor Roger Locandro to discuss a regional approach to COAH.

Chairman Reilly commented that there was also a meeting with Planner Banisch and Attorney Cushing where the sense was that a regional approach was a reasonable way to address the legislature but in the meantime East Amwell still needs to prepare their own plan to address the Township's COAH requirements.

It was noted that the Township is moving forward with the work needed to file a Declaratory Judgment by 7/8/15 that has a clear rationale for a specific number of COAH units. Mr. Sageser commented that while filing a Declaratory Judgment is probably the best option, Township Attorney Cushing did say that another option is for the Township to simply do nothing.

Mr. DiPirro remarked that in his opinion the Township must file a Declaratory Judgment because it protects East Amwell. He commented on the importance of reviewing all of the Township's options including the regional approach to COAH. He stated in his experience with the Highlands where there are TDR's and sending and receiving zones, he believes the same model could be used to address COAH as well and expressed that working with Flemington may be better than working with areas like Delaware Township and Clinton. Chairman Reilly commented that a plan must be submitted by November 8th and stated the Township will not likely have a regional approach established by that date. He added that while a regional approach to COAH may work, he believes the Township needs to move forward on establishing a good faith plan to address the COAH requirements that is in the best interest of East Amwell.

Discussion: Continued Implementation of the Village Study

Mr. Wang-Iverson explained that the Township Committee is working on drafting an ordinance to address the maintenance of vacant, bank owned properties to establish a mechanism for enforcing such things as grass cutting. He remarked that the language must be very clear because the Township does not want to pass a town wide ordinance regarding property maintenance.

Mr. Wang-Iverson also commented that the Township Committee is strategizing on how to initiate some type of community activism group to assist homeowners who can't keep up with their property maintenance.

Chairman Reilly provided a status update on the library noting that the latest letter received from the Library Commission did not invoke a great deal of interest in wanting to move back to Ringoes.

Mr. Wang-Iverson remarked that the County has performed traffic speed studies on Wertsville Road and John Ringo Road where the current speed limit is 35 mph. He stated the goal is to have the speed limit lowered to 30 mph in these areas. Mr. Wang-Iverson noted that speed studies are based on what 85% of the traffic currently travels at. Mr. Sageser stated that that theory is not logical based on safety regarding road widths and site triangles.

Mr. Sageser noted that the bond for the Clawson House was issued and stated the new windows for the structure have been ordered.

Open to the Public

A motion by Roger DeLay, seconded by Linda Lenox to open to the public was unanimously approved.

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Frances Gavigan of 123 Wertsville Road came forward and asked when the last COAH unit was established in the Township. Mr. Wang-Iverson indicated it was prior to the 2009 COAH plan. Ms. Gavigan suggested creating COAH units through farm labor housing and barn apartments. She also remarked that the Township may want to consider giving a 10 year tax credit to anyone who creates a COAH unit on their property and commented that the volume and nature of all of the preserved properties within the Township adds credibility to the unique situation that exists here.

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

Adjournment

Chairman Reilly adjourned the meeting at 8:36 PM.

Maria Andrews, Administrative Officer