

EAST AMWELL PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
7:30 PM East Amwell Municipal Building
June 10, 2015 - Meeting

Call to Order, Attendance and Pledge of Allegiance

This meeting of the East Amwell Planning Board was opened on June 10, 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 June 3, 2015."

Present: Roger DeLay
Fred Gardner
Rob Gilbert
Gail Glashoff
Linda Lenox
Don Reilly, Chairman
Dart Sageser
David Wang-Iverson
Peter Kneski
Dante DiPirro – *Alt. #2*
Attorney Chris Norman
Planner Frank Banisch

Excused: John Buckwalter – *Alt. #1*

Citizens' Privilege to Speak on Items not on the Agenda

A motion by Gail Glashoff, seconded by Linda Lenox to open to the public was unanimously approved. Seeing no members of the public come forward, a motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Linda Lenox to close to the public was unanimously approved.

Review of Minutes

A motion by Dart Sageser, seconded by Linda Lenox to approve the Board's 5/13/15 minutes with no revisions noted was approved with Mr. Gardner, Ms. Glashoff and Mr. Kneski abstaining.

New Business – Other

Discussion: The Ridge at Back Brook – Attorney David Gordon and Property Owner Joel Moore to Make an Informal Presentation

Present for the discussion was property owner Joel Moore and his Attorney David Gordon. Mr. Moore commented that over the past few months they have had some informal discussion with the Township regarding activities at the Ridge and stated that they will be filing an application but wanted to provide the full board with a brief overview. Chairman Reilly clarified that he, Mayor Wang-Iverson, Township Attorney Cushing and Planner Banisch had met with Mr. Moore and Attorney Gordon to provide guidance on the best way to proceed with their application.

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Attorney Gordon explained that the Ridge is a private golf course on 300 acres that consists of an 18 hole course designed by Tom Fazio, a 10 acre practice area, a storage barn and a 19,000 sq. ft. club house. He noted that in 2001 they received Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan Approval and in 2002 the facility opened with the clubhouse being constructed in 2004. Attorney Gordon remarked that at the time there was and intense concern over the water usage, potential traffic and how the golf course would co-exist with the horse trails. He stated that the Ridge is a substantial ratable for the Township, that they have been a good neighbor and that they have been acknowledged as a premiere private facility and as such would like to host professional events at the site.

Attorney Gordon commented that the resolution of approval expressly prohibits them from hosting professional events. He also noted the other issue they have is the frequency of the required water testing on the site. He explained that the tests cost thousands of dollars annually and since there has never been an issue with any of the water tests in the past 10 years they would like to change the requirement to once every 3 years.

With regard to the Township's ordinances, Attorney Gordon indicated he will be drafting a letter requesting the Planning Board make a recommendation to the Township Committee to change the ordinance regarding golf courses to allow guest cottages as well as the construction of a pool and tennis courts.

Attorney Gordon stated the purpose of their appearance this evening was to simply give the Board an idea of what will be coming forward. He also invited the Board Members to come to the Ridge on Monday, July 13, 2015 at 4:30 PM for a site walk so everyone can see the facility and have a better understanding of the layout when an application comes forth. It was noted for the record that Ms. Andrews will notice the site walk on 7/13/15 so there are no issues if a quorum of members is present. Chairman Reilly noted that he will not be in town on this date. Vice Chair Gilbert will be available to attend the site walk.

Chairman Reilly clarified that when an application is brought forth, a professional witness will be available to provide testimony regarding the water testing. Attorney Gordon indicated there would be. Mr. Wang-Iverson suggested Hydrogeologist Matt Mulhull share his reports with Hydrogeologist Steve Souza who can review the results as the Township's expert.

Attorney Gordon also commented that Mr. Moore will provide testimony on the hosting of public events. He indicated that they are aware the primary concern will be the traffic impact and he remarked that the Township has experience with large events and stated the County is supportive with their proposal and has expressed their ability to provide assistance with centralized, offsite parking where shuttle buses can be utilized to get people to the Ridge. Chairman Reilly commented that years ago the Township had no experience with golf courses and now a 13 year frame of reference has been established which provides a better understanding of how these facilities operate.

Attorney Norman clarified that the Ridge will be submitting an application to amend their prior site plan approval. Chairman Reilly added that the Planning Board will also hold public hearings to discuss possible changes to the zoning ordinance with recommendations made to the Township Committee if necessary.

There was some discussion on the water testing at the Ridge with Mr. Moore explaining that they were the first golf course to design and implement what they call the “stream skimmer” which allows them to take water from the Back Brook stream when it’s running above normal base flow and move it to their large irrigation lake so the Ridge doesn’t have to turn on their actual irrigation wells too often. He commented that this system cost between \$250,000 and \$300,000 to install but noted it was money well spent because it assures him a healthy golf course. Mr. Gardner complimented Mr. Moore on his diligent accounting and good business sense and commented that the Ridge was constructed to function economically and be beneficial to the environment.

A motion by Rob Gilbert, seconded by Gail Glashoff to hold a special meeting/site walk at the Ridge at Back Brook on Monday, July 13, 2015 at 4:30 PM was unanimously approved.

Discussion: Meeting the Township’s COAH Obligation – Status Update

Mr. Wang-Iverson commented that the Township Committee approved moving forward with the Declaratory Judgment at their May meeting. He indicated that the township attorney’s office is in the process of drafting the document and once it’s received it will be circulated to the Planning Board. There was some discussion regarding a joint meeting of the Township Committee and the Planning Board with it being noted for the record that when the Township Committee has its meeting the agenda will include the Planning Board’s appearance in order for them to provide input. It was noted for the record that a motion was made by Rob Gilbert and seconded by Gail Glashoff to coordinate a special meeting with the Township Committee once a date has been figured out. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Mr. Wang-Iverson also commented that tomorrow night’s Township Committee agenda includes a discussion regarding retaining Dr. Burchell to represent the Township regarding the COAH requirements. He noted the cost would be \$2000 to join the group of municipalities and in turn, Dr. Burchell would be available as an expert witness if the Township needed his representation in Court.

Discussion: Continued Implementation of the Village Study – Status Update

Mr. Wang-Iverson reported that as a result of the recent speed study in the Township, the speed limit on a portion of Wertsville Road in the Village will be reduced to 25 mph and the speed limit on John Ringo Road near Princeton Hydro will be reduced from 40 mph to 30 mph. He noted that Township Administrator Tim Matheny will be reaching out to the State to see what can be done about the speed of traffic along Route 179.

Oral Reports

FOSPC – Mr. Gardner reported that FOSSPC just issued their annual report for 2015 which includes a new preservation map. He also commented that 3 properties have been added to the target list for preservation.

Environmental Commission – No report was given

PB Secretary – No report was given

Chairman – No report was given

Open to the Public

A motion by Rob Gilbert, seconded by Gail Glashoff to open to the public was unanimously approved. Frances Gavigan of 123 Wertsville Road came forward and commented on the traffic impact to the Township if the Ridge were to host large events. She stated that she googled Trump National Golf Course while listening to the meeting discussion and they can accommodate 18,000 cars on site and 100,000 spectators. She remarked that such events often last for several days. Ms. Gavigan then commented on the

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COAH discussion and expressed support for the Township hiring Dr. Burchell. She remarked that East Amwell may be a target for COAH because it is a “transportation nexus” being surrounded by major highways and within one hour of Philadelphia and New York City. She also stated that the traffic issue within town has not been resolved because commuter traffic at 4:30 in the afternoon is still speeding through the township.

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

Adjournment

Chairman Reilly adjourned the meeting at 8:52 PM.

Maria Andrews, Administrative Officer