

EAST AMWELL TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
Reorganization Meeting – Municipal Building
January 13, 2016 at 7:30 pm

Call to Order, Attendance and Pledge of Allegiance

This meeting of the East Amwell Planning Board was opened on January 13, 2016 at 7:30 PM. The following notice was read, “In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, this is a regularly scheduled meeting and reorganization 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 January 7, 2016.”

Present: Roger DeLay
Fred Gardner
Rob Gilbert
Linda Lenox
Don Reilly – *Chairman*
Dart Sageser
David Wang-Iverson
Pete Kneski
John Buckwalter – *Alt. #1*
Planner Slagle
Engineer O’Neal
Attorney Norman

Excused: Gail Glashoff
Dante DiPirro – *Alt. #2*

New Business – Reorganization

Ms. Andrews asked for nominations for the Board’s Chair. A motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Rob Gilbert to nominate Don Reilly as the Board’s Chair was made. Hearing no other nominations, a motion by Roger DeLay, seconded by Fred Gardner to close the nominations was unanimously approved. The Board unanimously approved Mr. Reilly’s nomination and congratulated him. Chairman Reilly took over the meeting.

Chairman Reilly asked for nominations for the Board’s Vice Chair. A motion by Dart Sageser, seconded by Linda Lenox to nominate Roger DeLay as the Board’s Vice Chair was made. Mr. DeLay declined the nomination. A motion by Roger DeLay, seconded by Fred Gardner to nominate Rob Gilbert as the Board’s Vice Chair was made. Hearing no other nominations, a motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Dart Sageser to close the nominations was unanimously approved. The Board congratulated Mr. Gilbert.

A motion by David Wang-Iverson, seconded by Rob Gilbert to appoint Fred Gardner, Gail Glashoff, Dart Sageser and Roger DeLay with Linda Lenox serving as an alternate member to the Application Review Committee (ARC) was made and unanimously approved.

A motion by Linda Lenox, seconded by Rob Gilbert to appoint Maria Andrews as the Board’s Administrative Officer was unanimously approved.

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A motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Rob Gilbert to approve Resolution PB#2016-01 and the related contract to appoint Chris Norman as the Planning Board's Attorney for 2016 was unanimously approved.

A motion by Dart Sageser, seconded by Rob Gilbert to approve Resolution PB#2016-02 and the related contract to appoint Frank Banisch as the Planning Board's Planner for 2016 was unanimously approved.

A motion by Rob Gilbert, seconded by Linda Lenox to approve Resolution PB#2016-03 and the related contract to appoint Dennis O'Neal as the Planning Board's Engineer for 2016 was unanimously approved.

A motion by Linda Lenox, seconded by Rob Gilbert to adopt the Robert's Rules of Order was unanimously approved. It was noted that the Board reserves the right to recognize members of the public during public discussion when the Board believes there is a need to do so.

A motion by Dart Sageser, seconded by Linda Lenox to approve the Board's 2016 meeting schedule was unanimously approved. It was noted the Planning Board will continue to meet the second Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM.

Citizens Privilege to Speak on Items Not on the Agenda

A motion by Rob Gilbert, seconded by Fred Gardner to open the floor to public comment was unanimously approved by voice vote. Seeing no members of the public come forward, a motion was made by Fred Gardner and seconded by David Wang-Iverson to close to the public. The motion was unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes

A motion by Dart Sageser, seconded by Rob Gilbert to approve the Board's 12/9/15 open session minutes as revised was unanimously approved.

A motion by Linda Lenox, seconded by Rob Gilbert to approve the Board's 12/9/15 executive session minutes with no revisions noted was unanimously approved.

New Business – Other

Resolution of Approval: Resolution PB#2016-05: Carrega Properties, LLC – Block 12 Lot 12: 1059 Old York Road: Minor Site Plan Approval

A motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Rob Gilbert to approve Resolution PB#2016-05 was approved by roll call vote by those members who were eligible to vote.

Roll Call Vote: Fred Gardner: Yes, Rob Gilbert: Yes, Linda Lenox: Yes, Don Reilly: Yes, Dart Sageser: Yes, David Wang-Iverson: Yes, Pete Kneski: Yes. *It was noted for the record that Mr. DeLay abstained from voting because he had not had a chance to read the resolution.*

Public Hearing: The Ridge at Back Brook – Block 25 Lot 10: 211 Wertsville Road – Request to Amend Site Plan and Conditions of Approval

Present for the public hearing were property owner Joel Moore, his Attorney David Gordon and his Hydrogeologist Matt Mulhall.

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Planner Slagle explained the application is to amend a prior resolution of approval. She stated that after last month's Planning Board meeting, the applicant provided a new application with supplemental information. She commented that the new application addresses 2 modifications now, instead of 3: A change in the water monitoring plan and a change to the restriction of 250 people on the property for any event. It was noted the prior application included a modification regarding the short game area on the golf course but this aspect of the application has been withdrawn.

Attorney Gordon clarified the restriction on the 250 people is not really a restriction on the number of people on the property but rather a restriction on having an event where more than 250 people are expected which requires Township Committee approval. He stated it's really the approval aspect that is the issue, not the number of people.

Planner Slagle recommended the application could be found to be complete. Chairman Reilly added that he had received a memo from Steve Souza of Princeton Hydro that he had reviewed the water monitoring plan and indicated that he believes the modified plan is acceptable but because he was not able to attend tonight's meeting, Chairman Reilly stated the Board will not be able to hear his testimony.

A motion by Fred Gardner, seconded by Roger DeLay to deem the application complete was unanimously approved.

Attorney Gordon confirmed that the public notice was provided in accordance with the MLUL requirements. Attorney Norman indicated the public notice was provided accordingly and stated the Board had jurisdiction to proceed with the public hearing.

Attorney Gordon addressed the water quality monitoring plan and stated that Dr. Souza and Mr. Mulhall have discussed the modified plan and it has been changed to comply with Dr. Souza's recommendations. He added that Dr. Souza submitted a letter to the Planning Board giving his formal approval of the revised plan and Attorney Gordon stated he doesn't believe any further testimony is needed for the Board to take action on the matter. Chairman Reilly indicated he believes the Board will require additional testimony from Dr. Souza and encouraged Attorney Gordon to continue with his presentation.

Attorney Norman swore in all parties. Attorney Gordon clarified that Mr. Moore's testimony will address the original condition of approval from 2001 indicating if The Ridge was going to host an event where more than 250 people would be present, The Ridge needed to seek approval from the Township Committee. Attorney Gordon explained that they believe circumstances have changed in the past 14 years and they don't believe that restriction is necessary anymore.

Mr. Moore explained that The Ridge has hosted many PGA and other events over the years such as: NJ PGA Pro Am's, NJ PGA Pro President, NJ PGA Sectional Championship, PGA Fall Finale, USGA Amateur Qualifier and the USGA US Open Qualifier. He noted that none of these events resulted in over 250 people at The Ridge but he has been asked to host larger events by the PGA Champions Tour and the USGA regarding their national amateur events. Mr. Moore commented that as soon as they realize a third party approval is required, specifically the Township Committee approval if more than 250 people attend, all discussions stop. He stated these organizations have a policy that because their events are in such demand and almost every municipality in the Country would love to host one they won't spend any time or resources trying to obtain third party approvals.

Mr. Moore remarked that he believes circumstances have changed since 2001 because at that time no one knew The Ridge was going to become one of the best golf courses in the United States. He added that because of The Ridge's reputation various organizations have requested their events be hosted there. Mr. Moore added that Hunterdon County has been very supportive and has expressed that they will help organize and manage any large events. He stated Hunterdon County has offered the fairgrounds for offsite parking. Mr. Moore noted he is the Vice President of the NJ Golf Course Owners Association, President of the NJ Gold Pack and a member of the National Golf Course Owners Association. He stated he has researched this matter and cannot find one other club that has the restrictions imposed upon them that The Ridge has.

Attorney Gordon presented **Exhibit A-1**: A webpage printout indicating the Hunterdon County 4-H Fair began being held in East Amwell in 2004 when the County acquired the fairgrounds. The information was offered to confirm that East Amwell hosts at least 1 week long large event that draws many spectators.

Attorney Gordon asked Mr. Moore how many large events he anticipates hosting each year if the prior condition of approval was amended. Mr. Moore explained that these events are usually scheduled 5 to 8 years ahead of time and he would anticipate hosting only one of these types of events annually. Mr. Moore indicated that if The Ridge was asked to host a large event it may be a PGA Champions Tour, an LPGA event or a USGA event.

Attorney Gordon asked how the events work and how the number of people is controlled. Mr. Moore explained that staff, the players, the sponsors, the VIP's and The Ridge members would have access to the parking on site and the spectators would be bused in from the offsite fairground parking. Mr. Moore commented that if any overflow parking was needed he would seek space from a local farm or residence. He indicated Son Bob Farm had offered their land to be used for overflow parking. Mr. Moore stated they would stay on County and State roads such as Wertsville, Route 202 and State Highway 179.

Attorney Gordon asked if there would be any walk-ins allowed at the events. Mr. Moore said no and explained admission tickets are sold in advance based on the anticipated number of attendees which is indirectly based on the amount of available parking.

Attorney Gordon asked how The Ridge purposes to handle parking arrangements and traffic control. Mr. Moore explained that the general parking would be at the fairgrounds with all spectators bused over to The Ridge. He stated traffic control personnel would be stationed at each site: The Ridge, the fairgrounds and at Son Bob Farm if overflow parking was needed.

Attorney Gordon asked what the parking capacity is at the fairgrounds. Mr. Moore stated the County has indicated the fairgrounds can accommodate approximately 7800 cars. This was confirmed in an email from Mr. Wagner at the County. It was noted the email was part of the application submission. Mr. Moore stated he recently met with Freeholder King who stated the County fully supports The Ridge and will help with the safety and security needs associated with hosting a large event. Attorney Gordon asked how many people that amount of cars would equate to. Mr. Moore believed this would be between 15,000 and 20,000 people.

Attorney Gordon asked what the attendance is for the 4-H Fair. Mr. Moore stated the County indicated Friday night fireworks bring approximately 10,000 spectators to the site with a total of approximately 45,000 people attending the 4-H Fair over the course of the week. **Exhibit A-2** was presented, an email from Mr. Wagner at the County confirming these numbers.

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Attorney Gordon asked what size buses will be used. Mr. Moore stated the buses will be “school bus” size and he noted they have had larger buses at The Ridge for other specific events with no impact to traffic circulation on site.

Attorney Gordon asked how traffic control will be handled on the roads within the Township. Mr. Moore stated that traffic control personnel will coordinate with local, State and County police and fire personnel. He remarked the organizations that would be hosting these events have staff that manage all of these details. He noted outside professionals can be brought in if needed.

Attorney Gordon asked what the duration of these large events is. Mr. Moore stated the actual golf competition is usually 3 or 4 days but the overall activity is usual 7 days, Monday – Sunday. He estimated attendance to be about 60,000 people for the week.

Attorney Gordon asked about staffing such a large event. Mr. Moore stated the type of event determines how many volunteers are needed. He noted the regular Ridge staff would be fully engaged and the hosting organization has their own staff that only deals with these weekly events. Mr. Moore remarked that the unknown is the actual number of volunteers that will be needed. He stated the volunteers would consist of members of The Ridge as well as other local golf clubs. He noted the hosting organization’s website would help in recruiting people. Mr. Moore stated getting volunteers is never a problem because they get a free ticket to the event and gifts from the hosting organization. **Exhibit A-4** was presented, an example of the advertising done by the hosting organization to seek volunteers.

Attorney Gordon asked how many porta-potties will be needed for a large event. Mr. Moore explained that the companies which provide these facilities have a formula based on the anticipated number of attendees how many porta-potties will be needed. Mr. Moore stated that the facilities are cleaned and emptied on a daily basis.

With regard to food and beverage, Mr. Moore explained the size of the event will determine how many, if any, food concession stands will be on the property. He commented that the food and beverage available in the clubhouse and handled by The Ridge staff is not open to everyone, only the staff, players, sponsors, VIP’s and Ridge members.

Attorney Gordon asked what The Ridge will do if the County fairgrounds are not available. Mr. Moore indicated he would contact the County and work with them to try and secure an alternative parking site. He noted often schools, farms, corporate facilities and shopping centers are used.

Attorney Gordon asked if The Ridge anticipates any other large events such as weddings, conferences or charity events. Mr. Moore stated his seating areas can only accommodate 175 people. He noted that the NJ Department of Community Affairs/Bureau of Fire Code Enforcement has approved up to 397 people in the clubhouse but expressed he is not really seeking those types of events. Mr. Moore said The Ridge is a golf club, not a country club and noted there is a big difference.

Attorney Gordon indicated he had no other testimony to provide and no other witnesses to present.

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Chairman Reilly commented that since Dr. Souza was not in attendance this evening he believed it would be difficult for the Board to take any action on the water monitoring issue. He asked Planner Slagle for her comments on the testimony that was provided. She asked Mr. Moore if there would be any need for additional night time lighting. He stated nothing more is required beyond the site lighting already on the property. Planner Slagle asked about any additional signage. Mr. Moore explained that there may be additional signage to designate parking areas the day(s) of the event.

Planner Slagle asked how security will be handled. Mr. Moore noted there would be 24 hour security because of the expensive equipment on the site. He remarked most of the property has an existing fence or natural boundaries and he stated there is a front gate.

Planner Slagle asked how many bus trips it will take to get all of the spectators on site. Mr. Moore explained the buses will run a continuous loop from 8:00 AM to late morning and then there would likely be a break in the middle of the day with the bus runs starting again late afternoon. No specific number of trips was provided.

Chairman Reilly asked how many people can be accommodated just using the fairground's parking. Mr. Moore indicated between 15,000 to 20,000 people. It was noted that if the average bus capacity is 50 people that would be about 400 round trips.

Planner Slagle asked about emergency services access to the site. Mr. Moore stated he doesn't believe there will be any issue and commented there is always an ambulance on site during events. It was also noted there will be a first aid tent.

Engineer O'Neal asked if there will be any sound system for the event. Mr. Moore stated there is someone announcing names at the first tee but nothing after that.

Engineer O'Neal referred to his experience in another town and suggested a "Large Event Permit" be established. He noted the applicant is required to supply a plan with all of the necessary details. Engineer O'Neal commented that he knows the PGA has a staff that deals with these type of requirements all of the time. Mr. Moore stated he doesn't agree with having to obtain a permit. Chairman Reilly remarked that Bedminster has a special events permit where Trump National and Hamilton Farms is.

Planner Slagle clarified that the a special events ordinance is under the general ordinance of the Township, not the Land Management section, and she stated it's based on the size of the event. Attorney Gordon stated they have no issue with a special events permit, but they do have an issue with getting approval from the Township Committee because there is no specific direction provided.

Mr. DeLay asked if Mr. Moore has ever asked the Township Committee for permission to host a large event. Mr. Moore stated he has not asked because once the hosting organization hears there is a third party approval required they will not have any further discussions. Mr. Moore stressed the importance of being able to negotiate hosting big events on his own without third party approval.

Mr. Wang-Iverson referred to Bedminster and asked if the Township has the ability to deny the permit. Planner Slagle commented that she believes they can if they find the information to be insufficient but she noted the permits have strict criteria with specific guidelines so that denials don't usually happen.

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Mr. Sageser commented on East Amwell not having its own police so the Township would need to rely on some other input regarding traffic control. He said he believes the PGA would be able to recognize the limitations with hosting an event in this area.

Mr. Gardner asked for clarification on how 12,000 spectators can watch a golf play. Mr. Moore commented that The Ridge can handle many spectators because of the layout and design of the golf course. It was noted that golf is a very quiet sport and attendees at such events are polite.

Mr. Sageser commented on a specific question raised at a Township Committee meeting. He stated a contaminate in the stream was discovered last summer. He said it was a dark green water sample that was sent to NJDEP who indicated the sample wasn't collected properly so they couldn't do anything with it but the sense was that something had spilled into the stream. Attorney Gordon stated at Chairman Reilly's request, Dr. Souza had submitted a report yesterday summarizing the last 15 years of water testing at The Ridge. Mr. Sageser expressed concern that annual testing may not pick up on everything. He asked what the procedure is for an immediate test if a resident notices something.

Mr. Mulhall stated sampling as been done at The Ridge since 2000 with a total of 21 samples having been taken. He noted something has been detected twice: Once in an upstream water sample and once in the monitoring well which both resulted in the detection of broad leaf weed control which is used in ponds to keep aquatic weeds down. He stated the quality downstream has shown improvement over the past 15 years. Mr. Mulhall explained they are asking to modify the monitoring plan to address the actual chemicals used on site and sample the water every 3 years until 2021 and if no issues arise they would like to cease water sampling.

Mr. Sageser asked how periodic sampling can be considered accurate. Mr. Mulhall explained that the samples are taken to make sure that the integrated test management approach has prevented any chemicals from being introduced into the environment. He noted that pesticides and herbicides are actually controlled by the EPA.

A motion by Rob Gilbert, seconded by Pete Kneski to open to the public was unanimously approved.

Frances Gavigan of 123 Wertsville Road came forward and was sworn in. She expressed concern with the scale of the proposed events at The Ridge. She noted on the Historic Committee bus tours they fit 35 people per bus and questioned whether or not it might take more than 400 round trips to get all of the spectators to the site. Ms. Gavigan suggested seeking permission from the Township Committee for an event with 7000 or so people to see how things would work without having to amend the resolution or establish a special event ordinance. Mr. Moore commented that third party approvals preclude all negotiations. Ms. Gavigan asked if the reason for hosting such large events is financial or prestigious. Mr. Moore said both. Ms. Gavigan asked if anyone has reviewed septic capacity at The Ridge. Mr. Moore commented that no volunteers would be using the clubhouse and noted there may only be 200 or 250 volunteers on site over the course of the week.

Ilona English of 9 Runyon Mill Road came forward and was sworn in. She referred to specific herbicides and asked if they were being used at The Ridge. Mr. Mulhall indicated he didn't know about the referenced herbicides and Ms. English remarked that as a horse breeder they are dangerous to the horses. She commented that she is trying to understand why the Planning Board is giving benefits to a private business. She said the numbers of people discussed this evening take her breath away. Ms. English commented that the bridge repair ruined Runyon Mill Road because of the detoured traffic and safety

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became an issue with all of the commuters cutting through. Ms. English noted that an event at The Ridge will increase traffic at a time of the year when farmers are haying. She said the residents who live near the site will be prisoners. With regard to the fairground parking, Ms. English stated that property is an “island.” She noted the fairgrounds are located between County and State roadways and few homes, if any, are impacted by traffic. She remarked the 4-H Fair is not comparable to what The Ridge is proposing. Ms. English remarked the proposed application serves no benefit to the community of East Amwell and stated the residents should not have to suffer as a result of it.

Noreen Bailey of 129 Back Brook Road came forward and was sworn in. She questioned how East Amwell will handle the crowds. She remarked that she grew up near a large golf course and stated people do walk around when they attend events and she believes they will park on lawns in order to be closer to their vehicles. Ms. Bailey expressed concern for the traffic on Wertsville Road saying people will be driving by constantly trying to see what’s going on and noted that the safety of the bicyclists that ride on Wertsville will also be jeopardized.

Janelle Ditzel of 231 Wertsville Road came forward and was sworn in. She commented she bought her farm 16 years ago and was aware of the golf course but doesn’t believe East Amwell can handle the types of crowds being discussed this evening. She questioned the impact the traffic will have on the school, and the speeding that currently occurs on Wertsville Road. Ms. Ditzel referred to the balloon festival in Readington Township and stated when she lived there she was trapped because of the traffic. Ms. Ditzel also noted she has chain link fencing that borders The Ridge’s property and said people can easily get over it if they wanted to. Lastly, Ms. Ditzel questioned the liability insurance on Son Bob Farm for overflow parking and mentioned that she was interested in bee keeping but cannot get anyone to help her because she lives next to a golf course.

Jamie Atkeson of 201 Wertsville Road came forward and was sworn in. He asked a few questions regarding whether or not the special event permit can limit the number of events and how many entrances there are for The Ridge. Mr. Atkeson expressed that he doesn’t necessarily oppose the application and is pleased that the Board is considering model ordinances from other municipalities.

Nancy Cunningham of 14 Wertsville Road came forward and was sworn in. She clarified that the current resolution allows up to 250 people at an event and if The Ridge wants to exceed that number they must seek permission from the Township Committee. Chairman Reilly said yes. Ms. Cunningham remarked there is quite a gap between 250 people and 20,000 people. She suggested the Board review implementing permit approval or conditions on any activity that would exceed the current limit of 250 people.

Les Hamilton of 23 High Mowing Road came forward and was sworn in. He indicated he attended the meetings for The Ridge back in 2001 and expressed concern over the impact large events will have on the community. Mr. Hamilton also suggested that the water monitoring continue and not cease because he believes it is important to know what is happening in the environment.

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

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Chairman Reilly highlighted the following issues: The Board must carefully review the proposed parking on private property within the Township and bicycle safety on Wertsville Road. Attorney Gordon noted the advanced publicity for a large event such as what's being proposed would involve these types of groups (*bicyclists*) in an effort to mitigate any potential issues.

A motion by Roger DeLay, seconded by Pete Kneski to carry the public hearing to the Board's 4/13/16 meeting with no additional public notice being required was unanimously approved.

Discussion: COAH – Status Update from Planner Slagle

It was noted for the record that this discussion will be moved to the end of the agenda because the Board intends to enter into executive session.

Oral Reports

FOSPC – Mr. Gardner noted that FOSPC continues to make progress on the preservation of the Higgins property.

Environmental Commission – No report was given.

PB Secretary – No report was given.

Chairman – Chairman Reilly noted for the purposes of re-organization that there may be times throughout the year when he is approached by potential applicants for guidance on how to proceed with an application. He noted he will continue to offer suggestions like he has done so over the years.

Correspondence

It was noted for the record that there were no comments made on any of the correspondence listed on the agenda.

Mr. Wang-Iverson commented that he wished to thank everyone for their service and expressed his appreciation for everyone's dedication. He wished the Board a Happy New Year.

Open to the Public

Chairman Reilly opened the floor to public comment. Frances Gavigan of 123 Wertsville Road came forward and referenced the email correspondence provided as an exhibit during the meeting. She remarked that she hopes a log is being maintained regarding any meetings with The Ridge so there is something to go back to should someone raise an issue or concern over an individual's involvement. She remarked this is a small community and there could be a perception of a conflict of interest.

Seeing no other members of the public come forward, a motion was made by Rob Gilbert and seconded by Pete Kneski to close to the public. The motion was unanimously approved.

Executive Session: Approval of Resolution PB#2016-04 – COAH: Status Update from Planner Slagle

A motion by Rob Gilbert, seconded by Dart Sageser to approve Resolution PB#2016-04 and enter into executive session was unanimously approved.

The Board was in Executive Session from 10:22 PM – 10:41 PM.

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A motion by Rob Gilbert, seconded by Linda Lenox to return to open session was unanimously approved.

Adjournment

Chairman Reilly adjourned the meeting at 10:41 PM.

Maria Andrews, Administrative Officer