

MINUTES

Hopewell Township Land Use Board

April 18, 2018

7:00 PM

The regular meeting of the Hopewell Township Planning/Zoning Board was held on April 18, 2018.

Chairman Andersen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Public Notice was sent to The South Jersey Times for publication as prescribed by Law and posted on the Township bulletin board. All requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met in compliance with the Sunshine Law.

Chairman Andersen led the flag salute.

The following members were present:

Mr. Andersen	Mr. Caggiano
Mr. Strait	Mrs. Lewis
Mr. Tedesco	Mr. Shoemaker
Mr. Hepner	Deputy Mayor Ritter
Mr. Earnest	Mrs. Crispin

Others Present: John Hitchner (Secretary), Bob Pryor (Board Solicitor), Gordon Gross (Zoning Officer), Ryan Olbrich (Applicant), Andrea Malcom (Planner)

Approval of Minutes: February 21, 2018 Regular Meeting Minutes. *The minutes from February 21, 2018 were submitted for approval. A motion was made by Mr. Earnest and seconded by Mr. Hepner to approve the minutes. The motion was approved unanimously.*

Resolution 2018-04 - Approval of the development application of Bahri Yilmaz. *A motion was made by Mr. Hepner, seconded by Mr. Tedesco to vote on the resolution approving the development application of Bahri Yilmaz (Application 17-09). The motion was approved unanimously with Mr. Ritter, Mr. Shoemaker, Mr. Earnest, and Mr. Caggiano abstaining.*

New Business:

Item #1: Application 18-01 – Jamie Gordon & Brigit Brust – B 88 / L 11, 12 & 16 (66 & 75 Pease Ln.) - Use Variance - Ms. Gordon and Ms. Brust are proposing to utilize the property at 66 & 75 Pease Ln to host small events, ceremonies, and farm to table dinners. They are requesting a use variance. **Applicant has requested postponement of application until June 20th. No action to be taken at this time.**

Chairman Andersen addresses that the application has been postponed until the June 20th meeting and that the Board will not be taking any action on it this evening. Chairman Andersen clarifies that on the original agenda the Board was going to be looking at completeness only. Mr. Pryor states that he doesn't believe we do that for these variances and that he will inform the applicant to be ready with their notices.

Item #3: Preliminary investigation into Block 63, Lot 3 as an area in need of redevelopment.

Andrea Malcom introduces herself and states that she is here tonight to seek approval of their study's findings regarding the preliminary study on Lot 3. To recap, in 2015 four properties were identified by the

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Township as potential redevelopment sites. She states that we went through the same process as before where you look at the properties to make sure they meet the State criteria to qualify as a redevelopment area. Those parcels were studied and determined that they did qualify. It went back to the Township and it was designated as a redevelopment area. A plan was then developed through several workshops and finally adopted in 2017. Throughout most of that process Lot 3 was in private ownership. The owner passed away about a year ago and the property was donated to Hendrick's House who had no interest in maintaining the property. The Township was able to arrange a purchase of this property which is very beneficial because it is right next to the redevelopment area and it is very similar to the existing parcels. Andrea states she is going to go over why Lot 3 would also qualify for the redevelopment statute. The Township hopes that we look at Lot 3 and add it to the redevelopment area to facilitate overall growth and transformation of the area.

Andrea states the property is a little over 50 acres and will be municipally owned very shortly with the agreement of sale included in the study. The property is undeveloped and appears to have been used for agricultural purposes dating back to at least 1930 based on areal photographs. A critical point is the irregular shape of the lot with a narrow stem up to the Pike and no real visibility from the main road which is why it has likely not been developed by the private sector. Another important factor is the wetlands with the stream Barretts Run running along the west and the south. The stream actually cuts off part of the southwest corner of the lot. Altogether the wetlands area is about 1/3 of the total acreage. About 37% of the property is constrained by the wetlands. The property is zoned Highway Commercial and allows a number of uses but hasn't been developed over the years because of these constraints.

Andrea states that if we look to the criteria in the statute the one that most properties qualify under is the State Plan. The property is in a State Planning Area known as suburban planning area 2. Because of this it meets the criteria for redevelopment. Typically we look for a second qualification and for this we look at criteria "C". Criteria "C" covers 2 aspects, first that it is owned by the municipality or that it was unimproved, vacant land for over 10 years. In this case it will be owned by the municipality. Secondly it is not likely to be developed by private means due to location, remoteness, lack of access, etc. The irregular shape of this lot makes it difficult and a substantial portion of it is constrained by the wetlands. There is no real visibility because it is set back from the road. It's also outside the main commercial corridor for the township. Andrea states that all of these things together make us feel that it will be highly unlikely that this will be developed on the private side and would therefore fall under criteria "C".

Although it's not a specific criteria of the Redevelopment Law, it includes lands that even though they might not meet the criteria are essential to help the area develop. While not critical, it would be extremely helpful to this redevelopment area because by adding the parcel around the back and a potential second access it will add much more flexibility to the development options for the area. All of these things are a summary of what the preliminary investigation discusses.

If the Land Use Board were to agree with these study findings they should prepare a resolution and make a recommendation to the Township that the area be determined an area in need of redevelopment. Once the Township designates that, then the Township Clerk would need to provide notice to the DCA and the property owner. After that it becomes a redevelopment area. Andrea would also suggest that the area actually be incorporated as an amendment to the redevelopment plan that addresses the existing redevelopment area. Just to preview what we've discussed under the direction of the Township Committee there are three different parts of the plan we need to amend. One is for a potential application that would come in. It is for a wedding banquet facility. Currently our plan allows for numerous uses but does not currently include banquet facilities. Andrea points out that there is a commercial property with a potential buyer. She states that the back part of the plan

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had been targeted for senior housing and healthcare facilities. This includes a range from single family to multi-family to assisted living options all with a senior housing focus because the goal of the plan is to integrate with the existing senior center while helping strengthen the retail and banking that is already there. Those are the amendments that would need to be added to the development plan and we would add in the back piece as a larger part of the plan area. Andrea states that this would need to come after you have determined the criteria have been met and this area has been labeled in need of redevelopment.

Chairman Anderson states that the shape of the lot is not desirable to the private sector at this time. He asks Andrea what benefits would it bring by being in the redevelopment plan? Andrea states that the redevelopment process offers a lot of benefits, in particular on the financing side there is the long-term tax abatement. There is also favorability in some of the grants that come from the State. Also, a potential housing developer is looking at energy credits and may gain an advantage on the grant criteria with that. Another aspect is that once it is under Township control it typically tends to move more quickly because you have control of the property and how you structure your redevelopment agreements. The Township is in charge and is able to make things happen more quickly and for a developer, time is money. It is more of a known quality that the Township is interested in developing this and it's a real incentive. Andrea states that it's exciting because the current redevelopment area seems to be working as we'd hoped and she thinks it's already showing the benefits of that.

Chairman Andersen asks if we are planning on putting anymore infrastructure in? Deputy Mayor Ritter states that the Township was not planning on building anymore infrastructure and would be relying on private investors to handle water, roads, and sewer connections. Deputy Mayor Ritter states that if everyone is comfortable acting on this at this time we should move forward with the resolution.

Resolution 2018-05 – A resolution of the Hopewell Business Park Redevelopment Expansion Study Area. A motion was made by Mr. Caggiano, seconded by Mr. Earnest to vote on the resolution approving the redevelopment expansion study area. The motion was approved unanimously (Andersen, Caggiano, Crispin, Earnest, Hepner, Lewis, Strait, Tedesco) with Mr. Ritter and Mr. Shoemaker abstaining.

Item #2: Application 18-02 – Ryan Olbrich – B 13 / L 4 (Columbia Hwy) – Bulk Variance – Mr. Olbrich is seeking a bulk variance for a front yard set back of 84 ft where 100 ft is required and any and all other variances that may be required.

Ryan Olbrich is sworn in by Mr. Pryor. Mr. Pryor asks Mr. Olbrich why he wants to have a set back of 84 feet instead of 100 feet. Mr. Olbrich states that it would line up better with the other houses on the road in addition to placing his house closer to the center of the property. Mr. Pryor asks if there is anything behind the house that would prevent Mr. Olbrich from moving the house back. Mr. Olbrich states there is not. Mr. Hepner asks if there is a house on Lot 5. Mr. Olbrich says that there is and it is a lot closer then 100 feet from the road. Mr. Olbrich states there is nothing on Lot 3. Mr. Strait asks if there is any vegetation on the lot and Mr. Olbrich says there is not. Mr. Caggiano states that there is a house on Lot 4.01 and by allowing this variance we would be granting that neighbor a little more privacy. It is also noted that if Mr. Olbrich ever chose to put a deck off the back of his house it would allow more room for it. Deputy Mayor Ritter states that based on what he's heard he would be willing to make a motion to approve the variance. Mr. Earnest seconds the motion. The motion was approved unanimously (Caggiano, Earnest, Hepner, Lewis, Ritter, Showmaker, Strait, Tedesco, Andersen).

Mr. Shoemaker brings up the discussion that years ago we used to have a site plan committee and wonders what ever happened to it. Mr. Pryor states that it could still be done. Chairman Andersen states that

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we haven't had the level of application which requires that level of criticism. Chairman Andersen states that members of the Board typically look at the site and can report back to the Board. Chairman Andersen suggests that members take the time to look at the Pease Ln variance. It's brought up that it's private property and the applicant should give us permission to go inspect the property. Mr. Caggiano asked what was the reason for the delay with the applicant? Mr. Hitchner stated that they wanted to close on the property first before coming before the Board. Mr. Hitchner stated that their original public notice was insufficient and that the applicant needs to distribute a second notice.

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Earnest at 7:40 pm to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Hepner and approved unanimously.

John Hitchner
Secretary