

HUNTERDON COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Minutes – June 4, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Carol Hoffmann, Phil Greiner, Page Stiger, Andy Borkin, Tom Mathews, Dana Desiderio, Gabrielle Bolarakis, Richard Dodds

ABSENT: Freeholder Van Doren

STAFF PRESENT: Ken Bogen, Bill Millette, Adam Bradford, Bob Hornby, Carrie Fellows
Aaron Culton - County Counsel

Carol Hoffmann read the Open Public Meetings Act notice and called the meeting to order at 8:15 AM

"This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice has been provided by prominently posting and maintaining so posted throughout the year in the Office of the County Clerk, Hall of Records, Main Street, Flemington, New Jersey, a public place reserved for such announcements, and by mailing on or before December 17th, 2019 to The Hunterdon Democrat, The Express Times, Courier News, The Trenton Times, Star Ledger, and TAPinto, newspapers designated by the Hunterdon County Planning Board to receive such notices. Notice has also been posted on-line in the Hunterdon County News"

MINUTES OF THE MAY 7, 2020 MEETING:

Motion to approve minutes, Richard Dodds, Page Stiger seconded, motion carried.

FREEHOLDER UPDATE:

No Freeholders were present to give report.

Economic Development:

Marc Saluk reported that they have created the Hunterdon County 579 Trail, which is designed to promote farmers market, vineyards, and other agri-tourism attractions along and near the County Road 579 corridor. The associated website launched to significant attention, attracting over 10k unique visitors within the first 4 days of it going public, partially due to a very successful social media campaign. The Urban Property in Milford was approved by the Freeholders to purchase using Green Acres funding. The purchase is contingent on testing results and Borough of Milford lot line adjustments. Next steps will also include re-opening dialogue with Green Acres about creating a trail that would ultimately connect the park with Frenchtown along the river. A number of economic development grants have been approved recently, including to Milford, Lambertville, and Raritan Twp. who were specifically issued grants to proceed working with consultants to review local ordinance and procedure, and to then make changes as needed to encourage local investment. Phil asked who is performing the reviews. Marc replied that the consultants are usually their existing staff in the planning departments of their municipalities.

STAFF UPDATES:

Farmland Update:

Bob reported that he has 34 active applications. Janssen/Peace field Farm in Alexandria Township is making progress towards closing soon, with over 300 acres. The Grochowicz Farm is still in flux, we are trying to decide what funding options would work best. We are currently looking for new farms and processing applications as they come in instead of waiting on rounds. CADB Chair Dave Bond and the board approved they change at the June 18 meeting. There are going to be budget cuts at the state level, active projects will not lose funding once started, but new projects need to be aware of the current budget climate. The American Farmland Trust put out a report that US farmland is under threat. The last 15 years we have lost over 11 million acres nationwide, half to low density development with very little review. The only Right to Farm issue, Beneduce Vineyards, has been pushed to the July meeting, as they have requested a live meeting.

Planning Issues:

Adam reported that he and Ken continue to see an increase in DRC applications. The Land Development Standards are up to date with the current LDS timeline. CAD templates for section 400 need a final review from engineering and require formatting into MS Word before pages can be reconfigured to include new visual illustrations. Interdepartmental staff began drafting the proposed LDS Road Classification map and is broken down into a 3-part process during the drafting phase. Carol asked when the public hearing will take place. Adam replied that the hearing appears to be on track for a fall hearing, possibly an October date. Adam also said that the US Census report was submitted, and there have been no issues or feedback from the US Census

Bureau as of this time.

Open Space:

Bill said that the Freeholders approved the contract for the Milford river front property. Approximately 6 acres with 2000 feet of river frontage, from Bridge Street to Milford Creek. There are a few contingencies that need to be worked out: a subdivision for Mr. Urban to maintain the Mill building and Milford still needs to do updating of its zoning ordinance to allow for a park to be located within their redevelopment zone. The Rail portion is moving forward now that the contracts have been signed. POSAC meeting was held last Tuesday, they approved one application. It is a farmland easement for the Curtis Farm in Delaware Township. It is the last unpreserved piece in the Rosemont Valley, a very picturesque farming location. The owner wants to preserve than sell the farm, and this process was faster to go through for the owner. Hopefully after the sale of this property the new owners will allow access to that area and still have funding available to do so. Richard replied that the Pine Brook Farm contract has been signed, 60 acres by Horseshoe Bend Park, took 6 months to complete.

Department Head:

Carrie reported that Deer Path and Echo Hill Parks are open. The bathrooms are open from 0800 to 4pm, with enhanced cleaning protocols. Reduced parking, face masks and social distancing are being encouraged per Executive Orders. Parks staff are providing virtual programs and distance learning; virtual summer camp will be July 13th through August 18th. Rutgers is also doing a lot of virtual programs and has a new webpage; all forms are now electronic. Sandra Greci is involved in a series of wellness webinars every Wednesday at 2pm. GIS Division Head Patricia Leidner has done a lot of work on the COVID dashboard app on the County website. She is also the IT liaison. GIS has also been involved with the State Road Centerline for Next Gen 911, OEM mapping, and LDS mapping. The C1 Stream reclassification map has also been an ongoing GIS project.

Cultural & Heritage:

Carrie reported that they have a new employee to help with grant work. The State Council on the Arts Interim payments went out early to relieve organizations shut down under COVID-19 restrictions. Carol asked if there are any webinars out there to attend; Carrie replied that webinars are useful for keeping staff safe. Many of the professional conferences have gone electronic this year. We are all doing our part to keep the spread down by working remotely.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Executive Committee:

Carol said that the Committee has not met recently. Ken has not spoken to Rebecca Lunger from the County health department yet concerning possible dates in the fall for the next Breakfast Talk event on recycling. This would be a rescheduling of the cancelled May 2020 Breakfast Talk. Carrie recommended that we consider transitioning the next Breakfast Talk to a remote WebEx platform. Ken said that he would talk to Rebecca about holding a virtual Breakfast Talk in the fall. The members of the Executive Committee agreed that this was a good idea.

Committee Report:

Ken said that the DRC meeting for today has been cancelled. Carol asked for volunteers for the June 18th meeting. Dana and Carol volunteered to participate at the June 18th meeting which will be held virtually. Ken asked if there were any questions concerning the May 7th meeting, there were none. The May 21st DRC meeting had been canceled.

Supervisors Report:

There were no questions or comments regarding the May staff activity report. Ken summarized the status of the County Highlands Plan Conformance project. Ken gave an update of the project to the Freeholders at the last BOCF meeting. There are 3 major petition documents that need to be submitted to the Highlands Council for their review in order for the County to obtain Plan Conformance: 1) Self-Assessment report, 2) Highlands Plan element, 3) Implementation Agenda. These documents are being written by our project consultant Heyer-Gruel. Current status – Consultant has forwarded the draft Plan element to staff to review and supply comments and revisions. Next steps – A public meeting will be held to review the content of the Highlands Plan element and the potential implementation agenda. The element will be finalized and the Consultant will prepare a draft implementation agenda schedule. There will then be a public hearing at a regular Highlands Conformance meeting for the adoption of our petition for Plan Conformance.

Transportation:

Adam summarized the NJTPA Tech Tools Expo webinar he attended. Tom said that he had nothing to report at this time.

Old Business/New Business:

Richard said that that the state filed a brief in opposition to Penn East's request to the Supreme Court to review and reverse a

lower court's decision that PennEast cannot sue the state due to the state's right of sovereign immunity. The Supreme Court has not taken the case as of yet.

Public Comments:

Barbara Sachau from Raritan Township provided comments on various topics, including: the public's needs come first; towns should work with the public who live there to review municipal ordinances, rather than consultants; virtual programming is a misuse of taxpayer dollars; the State of NJ needs to be reopened.

Carol said that the ordinances are online for each municipality. They are there for the public to review and comment. Ms. Sachau replied that the public needs to review them. Page ended on a positive note, the "Save the Children" report; Hunterdon County is the safest place in the nation to raise children.

There was no further business to be brought before the Board. Richard made a motion to adjourn the Planning Board meeting, Page seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 9:21 AM.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Wednesday July 1, 2020 at 8:15 AM

Susan Pena for Secretary, Phil Greiner