

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING OF PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP HELD ON JULY 13, 2022.

The Regular Meeting of the Piscataway Planning Board was called to order at 7:30 P.M. on Zoom (online), Piscataway, New Jersey by Vice-Chairman Rev. Henry Kenney.

Chairperson Smith stated: IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT, ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS PROVIDED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- *Posted on the bulletin board of the Municipal Building and made available through the Township Clerk;
- *Notice published in the Courier News;
- *Notice sent to The Star Ledger;
- *Notice made available through the Township Librarians.

Thomas Barlow, Esq., states that he would like to place on the record that we are doing this meeting through an online meeting platform in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the guidelines that have been disseminated by the Department of Community Affairs, the Planning Board has tried it's best to comply with the open public meeting act and the Governor's guidelines in dealing with the current situation. In addition, the applicant whose matter will be heard this evening had the login information for the online meeting platform put forth in their notice; members of the public who wish to be heard will be afforded an opportunity as if we were in an actual, physical space. He believes we have done our absolute best to comply with the DCA guidelines and the open public meetings act.

ROLL CALL: Mayor Brian Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Rev. Henry Kenney, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders and Chairperson Brenda Smith. **ABSENT:** Mike Foster

Also present: Thomas Barlow, Esq., Ron Reinertsen, CME Associates, Laura Buckley, Board Clerk. It was determined that a quorum was present by roll call.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. SWEARING IN OF PROFESSIONALS: Ronald Reinertsen, CME Associates

6. DULY AUDITED BILLS TO BE PAID

MOTION was made by Rev. Henry Kenney to pay the bills; seconded by Carol Saunders.

ROLL CALL: Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney, Dennis Espinosa and Chairperson Smith.

7. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None

8. ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION TO MEMORIALIZE ACTION TAKEN ON JUNE 8, 2022: N/A

9. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING OF JUNE 8, 2022

MOTION was made by Carol Saunders to memorialize the minutes from the June 8, 2022 meeting; seconded by Rev. Henry Kenney. **ROLL CALL:** Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Rev. Kenney, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

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10. DISCUSSION: AREA IN NEED STUDY FOR REDEVELOPMENT FOR BLOCK 5301, LOT 14.04. ALSO KNOWN AS 1551 SOUTH WASHINGTON AVENUE, LOCATED ON MAP PAGE 53 ON THE PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP TAX MAP.

James Clarkin, PP, from 4Site Planning, LLC, is here for the presentation. Mr. Clarkin shares his screen with the Board. He states that he is showing the map at the end of the report. He remembers it as the old Paychecks Building, it's a four story, Class B office building in about a 190,000 square feet in size. It was built in 1986 and it located in the LI-5 Zone; 287 runs at its southern boarder. To the east is a residential neighborhood.

Mr. Clarkin states that he visited the site on February 3, 2022 to take photos of the existing conditions. He did research and found out that there have been no upgrades to the building since it was built in 1986. The only permits he found were for security upgrades by tenants. It is fair to say that it has remained the same since it was built. The last time the building was fully occupied was in 2005. Since that time, the decline has been steady. In 2012 it only had 60% occupancy and the decline continued; by 2016 it had gone down to 35%. After the pandemic hit, occupancy has stayed under 40%. There are approximately six (6) tenants in the building right now.

Mr. Clarkin states that he has looked at the environmental aspects and he did not find any concerns. Technically, this does count as a no-contaminated site. There is a former in-ground lift system that they removed in 2019 and when they removed it there was some small soil contamination that has been remediated. Mr. Clarkin states that it states in the Master Plan that as vacant developable land diminishes in the Township, redevelopment, adaptive reuse efforts will increase and become that much more important. Particularly within the older sections of the Township and as this site has been around since 1986, the residential area is east and was well before that, he believes this constitutes as an older area of the Township that could see some redevelopment. The In-Study is consistent with the Master Plan. The Township of Piscataway is in the Area-1 of the State Plan Map.

Mr. Clarkin states that when he was there, the parking lot was almost entirely empty. The exterior of the building did not show any signs of delamination or deterioration, but he inside conditions were much different. Signs of vacancy and non-use were found on every floor. On page 10 of the report, there are photos of the parking lot and can see how empty it was. There is a picture of the first floor west side and completely vacant. He goes over the pictures in the report floor by floor. Ceiling tiles on most floors are falling down or have been removed.

Mr. Clarkin believes that the evidence shows that this would fall under Criteria's "B" and "D" of the New Jersey Redevelopment and Housing Law. Under the "B" Criteria, significant vacancies of the building for at least two years. The vacancy in 2020 was over 50% and has continued to decline; it is over two consecutive years. Under the "D" Criteria, it has an odd design which creates these dead ends and odd office configurations. He finds it to be an obsolete and faulty layout that needs to be fixed. Since the pandemic, more people are working from home which makes this large office building obsolete. The parking lot is oversized for the number of tenants, this is excessive land coverage.

Mr. Clarkin states that it's detrimental to the general welfare of the community because productivity has worsened resulting in negative impact on the economic well being of the community. The significant vacancy of the office space over a long period is detrimental to the Township because of lost productivity and diminishing land values. In his professional opinion, the office building in the study area meets the "D" criteria.

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The study area meets the “H” Criteria which is the smart growth planning principles. We are very close to Route 287, it would promote development in an area of existing infrastructure. He believes this property falls under all three of the criteria he has discussed. Mr. Clarkin would recommend that this area be designated as a non-condemnation area in-need of redevelopment and be considered for redevelopment by the Planning Board and Council.

Chairperson Smith asks if there are any questions from the Board. Councilwoman Cahill asks if the building in total has about 40% occupancy rate right now; Mr. Clarkin agrees. Councilwoman Cahill asks if Paychecks is still using the building. Mr. Clarkin states that they left in the mid 2000s. There is a management company that operates that building; six tenants in total. Rev. Kenney states that he is familiar with the building; he was inside the building and it is pretty bad inside. The exterior seems to be in good shape.

Chairperson Smith opens it up to the public:

#1. Bob Sisk, 4635 New Brunswick Avenue is sworn in. He would like Mr. Clarkin to explain why it is a financial burden to the Town. Mr. Clarkin states that as vacancies start to increase, the productivity is lost and the highest and best use of the land is not being met. There could be better productivity and benefits towards the Township if the land is redeveloped. Mr. Sisk would like to know how many buildings in Piscataway are 50% vacant; Mr. Clarkin states that he has not done that research. The properties are not being taken over by the town. Mr. Barlow states that the Town is not taking over anything, this is a non-condemnation area. It is a designation on the property that it is right for redevelopment based on the testimony. The property owner still owns the property and can redevelop it in keeping with any redevelopment plan that may be adopted by the Township. Councilwoman Cahill states that with office space not being utilized, we lose retail; Mr. Clarkin agrees.

#2. Mithil Parikh, 4647 New Brunswick Avenue is sworn in. Mr. Parkikh states asks what does the redevelopment mean? What will be built? Mr. Clarkin states that redevelopment is a tool; it is a long process. Once the study is approved, it goes back to Council, then a redevelopment plan will be put together. Once complete it comes back to the Planning Board for approval. Mr. Parikh asks if the public has any say in the redevelopment plan. It is a public hearing and there can be public comment. Mr. Barlow and Ms. Corcoran explain the process to the public. Public portion closed.

MOTION was made by Dawn Corcoran to approve the Area in-need study for 1551 S. Washington Avenue; seconded by Rev. Henry Kenney. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Rev. Kenney, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion. * Resolution was adopted.

11. DISCUSSION: AREA IN NEED STUDY FOR REDEVELOPMENT FOR BLOCK 1701, LOT 2.03. ALSO KNOWN AS 4100 NEW BRUNSWICK AVENUE, LOCATED ON MAP PAGE 17 ON THE PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP TAX MAP.

James Clarkin, PP, from 4Site Planning, LLC, is here for the presentation. Mr. Clarkin states that this is an area in-need study for 4100 New Brunswick Avenue. He shares his screen and shows that map that is in his report. It is 11.7 acres in size and located in the M-5 manufacturing zone. South Plainfield is right across the street from this property. There is a building 100,000 square feet in size and approximately one to two stories depending where you are in the building; vast parking lot. It was originally built in 1967 and is currently home to Transpackers Solutions. This is a non-condemnation area in-need of redevelopment.

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Mr. Clarkin states that he conducted a site visit on February 3, 2022 to document the existing conditions. The main use is a warehouse and distribution facility with a small office area in it. The company receives raw materials, such as bulk powered food and ingredients, and blend them in production rooms for a final blended product. The product is then packaged and shipped out to their clients. Materials are coming in, blending them and shipping them back out.

The main component of the facility is the warehouse/distribution section which is approximately 96,000 square feet. The part that fronts New Brunswick Avenue is 3,000 square feet is the office. It holds 18 production rooms, loading docks in the back and storage throughout the facility. Mr. Clarkin states that he looked to see if there are any environmental concerns, he did not find any. There are wetlands to the west, but nothing on the property itself. The former site to the west is a known contaminated site and he believes it has gone through remediation; it appears that none of the contamination from that site has affected this site. Mr. Clarkin states that surrounding uses are a storage facility, residential areas, light industrial/commercial and the Stop N Shop.

He discusses the Master Plan Perspective, stating that as vacant developable land diminishes from the Township, redevelopment will become more important and increase particular within older sections of the Township. This area was originally developed in 1967, it is an older section of the Township and can benefit from redevelopment efforts. This study is consistent with the State Planning Policy Map; PA-Mr. Clarkin shows pictures of the interior of the building.

Mr. Clarkin states shows the Board exterior photos; you can see the size and scale of the property. Majority of it is impervious or paved surfaces that is underutilized or not needed at all. He shares his screen and shows pictures of the exterior where the employees enter the facility. There is a lot more parking than is needed for the use. There are no trucks to be queued in, no outdoor storage needed; the lot is vacant and underutilized.

This evidence lends itself to showing that Criteria "D" of the Redevelopment and Housing Law applies to this property. The extra impervious surface is overwhelming in amount and has no use or benefits to the current operation or to the Township. In his opinion, it is excessive land coverage. It is a faulty arrangement due to the unused pavement, there is no need for it. A small amount of the parking area is used and the rest just negatively increases stormwater runoff and is an undesirable characteristic.

Mr. Clarkin states that this results in a negative impact on the economic and environmental well being of the Township and it meets the "D" Criteria for an area in-need of redevelopment. He also found that the "H" Criteria, Smart Growth, also apply and it is relatively close to Route 287. There is also other development in the area where existing infrastructure can be leveraged if it is indeed redeveloped. He recommends that Planning Board and Council determine that the study area is an area in-need of redevelopment, non-condemnation, because it meets the Criteria "D" and "H".

Chairperson Smith asks the Board if they have any questions for the Board. Councilwoman Cahill states that with the amount of impervious land, the negative impact of the stormwater runoff, how long has it had this issue. What is increasing that runoff? Mr. Clarkin states that it can't percolate through the ground, it runs off of the parking lot to the closest soil it can find. Councilwoman Cahill states that this issue has been here for a long time then; Mr. Clarkin agrees. He states that he looked at aerial photos and they don't go back that far, but found it from the 1990s with the large parking lot. Usually there is storm water management which helps, but this is unnecessary. There needs to be less impervious on the property.

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Chairperson Smith opens it to the public:

#1. Brian Rak, 1247 Brookside Road is sworn in. He asks about the wetlands on the property; states it shows wetlands on the property. Mr. Clarkin states that it is on the properties edge; it is not on the developed portion of the property.

- Resolution was adopted.

MOTION was made by Dawn Corcoran to approve the Area in-need study for 4100 New Brunswick Avenue; seconded by Carol Saunders. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Dawn Corcoran, Councilwoman Cahill, Carol Saunders, Dennis Espinosa, Rev. Kenney, and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

12. **22-PB-09** **90 Hancock Road, LLC**
 Major Final Subdivision
 Block 6501, Lot 12; Zone: R-10
 90 Hancock Road
 Final Subdivision.
 Action to be taken prior to August 10, 2022
 Attorney: Richard Mongelli

Richard Mongelli, Attorney, is here to represent the applicant. Mr. Mongelli states that they are here for a final for their subdivision. Ms. Corcoran states that they have met all of the conditions from their approval. Public portion open/closed.

MOTION was made by Dawn Corcoran to approve the application; seconded by Rev. Henry Kenney. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Rev. Kenney, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

13. **21-PB-34/35V** **140 Circle Drive North, LLC**
 Preliminary & Final Site Plan
 Block 4101, Lot 3; Zone: LI-5
 140 Circle Drive North
 Applicant proposes to construct a 54,213 warehouse expansion.

VARIANCES REQUIRED:

- 21-1102** Required – 334 parking spaces
 Proposed – 101 parking spaces
- 21-1203.4** Required – 50 foot setback for a free-standing sign
 Proposed – free-standing signs located 39.5 feet from the property line
- Required – one free-standing sign
 Proposed – two free-standing signs

Action to be taken prior to July 6, 2022
Attorney: Tim Arch

Tim Arch, Attorney, is here to represent the applicant. Court stenographer present; transcripts are on file in the Community Development Office.

MOTION was made by Dawn Corcoran to approve the application; seconded by Rev. Henry Kenney. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Rev. Kenney, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

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- 14. 22-PB-13/14V M & M Realty Partners at Piscataway, LLC
Preliminary & Final Site Plan
Block 5701, Lots 2; Zone: M-2
1690 S Washington Avenue
Applicant proposes to construct two warehouse buildings.**

VARIANCES REQUIRED:

***No variances required**

**Action to be taken prior to October 10, 2022
Attorney: Dough Wolfson**

Dough Wolfson, Attorney, is here to represent the applicant. Court stenographer present; transcripts are on file in the Community Development Office.

MOTION was made by Dawn Corcoran to approve the application; seconded by Carol Saunders.
ROLL CALL: Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Rev. Kenney, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

- 15. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION** made by Dawn Corcoran to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Saunders; All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 P.M.

NEXT SITE PLAN/SUBDIVISION BOARD MEETING – JULY 27, 2022 AT 2:30 P.M.

NEXT PLANNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING – AUGUST 10, 2022 AT 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,



Laura A. Buckley,
Planning Board Clerk for Carol A. Saunders, Secretary

I certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 13, 2022, same having been fully adopted by the Planning Board of Piscataway August 10, 2022.



CAROL SAUNDERS, SECRETARY
PISCATAWAY PLANNING BOARD