

**BOROUGH OF RARITAN**  
Land Use Board Meeting  
**MINUTES**  
November 17, 2021

**CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 6:30 p.m. in the Borough of Raritan Municipal Building. Ms. Thomas read the open public meetings statement into the record.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present**

Debra Thomas  
Mayor Bray  
Councilman Carra  
Mr. Cunningham  
Mr. DeCicco  
Ms. Carra  
Ms. Goetsch  
Ms. Windrem  
Mr. Delacruz  
Ms. Sherwin  
Mr. Brown

**Also Present**

Larry Cohen, Board Attorney  
Stan Schrek, Board Engineer  
Lou Gara, Zoning/Construction Official  
Angela Knowles, Board Planner

**Absent**

Mr. Sinagra

**MINUTES**

**Motion** by Mr. DeCicco, **seconded** by Mr. Brown to adopt the revised Minutes of **August 25, 2021**, as presented by voice vote.

**Motion** by Mayor Bray, **seconded** by Ms. Carra to adopt the Minutes of **September 22, 2021**, as presented by voice vote.

**Motion** by Mr. Cunningham **seconded** by Ms. Goetsch to adopt the Minutes of **October 27, 2021**, as presented.

**ENGINEER'S REPORT**

Mr. Schrek advised that there had been no Planning Board related engineering to report on.

**PLANNER'S REPROT**

Ms. Knowles identified a survey which she related had been sent out earlier with a link to the ADA Transition Plan (part of Bloustein Study). She encouraged the Board members to fill it out and pass it along at their discretion. Mayor Bray advised that it was also on the website.

**CONSTRUCTION OFFICIAL REPORT**

Mr. Gara had nothing new to report.

#### **TRC MEETING UPDATE**

Ms. Thomas advised that there had been no TRC meetings and that there likely would not be any scheduled until after the New Year.

#### **AD HOC COMMITTEE (Cannabis Dispensaries)**

Mr. Cunningham advised that the committee would be repopulated after the New Year.

#### **PEDESTRIAN BIKE & SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Ms. Knowles advised that there had been no meetings held and that they would reconvene after the New Year.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

##### **\*Downtown Raritan Economic Development Study – Master Plan Amendment\***

*Presentation by Angela Knowles*

Ms. Knowles provided copies of the Economic Development Plan as it relates to revitalization of the downtown area (Somerset Street initially; later expanding to include the entire downtown). She explained that the components of the Plan slated for adoption were the Vision Plan, Implementation Toolbox and Public Involvement Summary.

Ms. Knowles identified the study area and referred to Downtown Raritan.com where she advised that the documents were located. She spoke at length about the process for community engagement notwithstanding the pandemic (including use of online workshops) which resulted in residents having input into architectural characteristics, uses and safety. She explained that this was all done in the hopes of bringing business to the downtown area in addition to creating a more active riverfront, pedestrian oriented Somerset Street and more multi-modal connected downtown.

Ms. Knowles provided an overview of the Plan. She identified an aerial photo of open space and spoke about ways to beautify the area and connect to the Greenway/make it more pedestrian/bicycle friendly. She explained that they looked at pedestrianizing Nevius Street and at creating a more walkable Somerset Street as well as working with the Economic Development Committee on plan implementation via owner/tenant incentives, workforce development, retention, place making and branding.

Ms. Knowles explained that the plan sets the foundation for zoning changes. She related that a look at current housing stock resulted in a suggestion that the Town consider more 3-4 family residential units that look like single family homes. Referring to the plan as a guide for future development, she related that design standards were discussed.

Ms. Knowles related that connectivity, parking, signage and facades were discussed in addition to ways in which they could incentivize utilization of the downtown businesses by local large corporate employees (by implementing a shuttle service for example).

Mr. Cohen explained that although the Board adopts the Master Plan, it is the Council who uses it to determine consistency when they are deciding if, when and what parts to implement.

Chairwoman Thomas opened the floor to public comment.

**Mike Patente** asked in which portion of town recommendations for multifamily housing would be made. Ms. Knowles explained that the study area encompassed the downtown and elaborated on same. She said they

would look at zoning to see where it could be applied/might be appropriate. Mr. Cunningham clarified that it was non-binding.

**Mark Cusati of 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue** suggested that while the presentation is for the long term, the goal should be to get people to appreciate what is there currently, citing a lack of maintenance in the subject area.

In response to the idea that the Borough should consider more 3-4 family homes, a **resident of Second Avenue [name unintelligible]** questioned zoning there. He explained that he has the only single family home left on the street. Mr. Cohen explained that he could apply for a variance to convert it. Ms. Thomas confirmed that the zoning there is indeed for single family residences.

**Rob Holland of 44 Second St.** commented on bringing business into the area. He asked what exactly is being branded since he moved to Raritan because it was known for being a family oriented town. He related that while he agrees with signage, he believes people are drawn to the anchor businesses (i.e..Esposito's and As You Like It) on name recognition alone. Ms. Thomas offered that it would benefit Main Street if done properly. Mr. Holland suggested that a permanent sign listing all places in the Borough might be beneficial.

**A resident [name unintelligible, address not provided]** commented that what is needed is proper way finding.

With respect to creating more multifamily housing, **Ms. Snyder of Second Avenue** offered that parking is already challenging in her neighborhood because of Esposito's. Ms. Knowles assured her that that parking was discussed and that some creative solutions have been considered. Mayor Bray offered that the Borough would not act without addressing this.

Mr. Cohen advised that he prepared a resolution in the affirmative to memorialize the Board's action (to amend the Master Plan in order to incorporate the three sub plans (as discussed) into the Master Plan for possible future implementation by the Borough). He read the resolution into the record as follows:

WHEREAS, there exists a Master Plan pursuant to the Land Use Act for the Borough of Raritan; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board of the Borough is designated as the agency to adopt and amend the Master Plan of the Borough; and

WHEREAS, the Borough has adopted a study known as the "Raritan Downtown Economic Development Plan," which is a conceptual plan to promote investment in the Downtown area of Raritan Borough; and

WHEREAS, there has been developed by the Borough Planner three documents as part of the Raritan Downtown Economic Development Plan, known as the "Downtown Raritan Vision Plan," the "Public Involvement Summary," and "Making the Vision a Reality, an Implementation Tool Box;" and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board desires to amend the Master Plan to include these three documents to be implemented in the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held for the implementation of those three documents to

become an amendment to the Master Plan of the Borough of Raritan on November 17, 2021; and

WHEREAS, public notice pursuant to law was provided for that hearing; and

WHEREAS, a presentation by the Borough Planner was made on the three plans at the hearing, and the Board considered any comments from the public; and

WHEREAS, the Board is desirous of amending the Master Plan to include said reports.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Borough of Raritan, Somerset County, New Jersey, that the three reports as part of the Raritan Downtown Economic Development Plan known as the “Downtown Raritan Vision Plan,” the “Public Involvement Summary,” and “Making the Vision a Reality, an Implementation Tool Box;” are hereby incorporated in the Master Plan, and the Master Plan is amended to include said three reports.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution, together with said three reports, shall be provided to the County Planning Board within thirty (30) days of the adoption of this Resolution.

**Motion** by Ms. Goetsch, **seconded** by Mr. DeCicco to adopt the resolution, as presented.

**ROLL CALL:**

**AYE:** Ms. Thomas, Mayor Bray, Councilman Carra, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Carra, Mr. Delacruz, Ms. Goetsch, Ms. Windrem, Ms. Sherwin, Mr. Brown, Mr. Decicco

**NAY:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**APPLICATIONS/HEARINGS**

- Edgewood Raritan LLC  
Block 87, Lot 9 (33 Second St.)  
*Preliminary & Final Site Plan*

Mayor Bray and Councilman Carra recused. Ms. Thomas explained hearing protocol to the audience.

**Pasquale Marago, Esq.** entered his appearance on behalf of the applicant. He provided justification for his assertion as to why the prior presentation on the Master Plan Amendment relates to instant matter. He spoke at length about a newspaper article from November 11 in which the marketing for a large rental property in town was touting proximity to Somerville and the train instead rather than Raritan itself.

Mr. Marago spoke about traffic and parking concerns, making reference to a parking issue on Somerset Street and recommendations made by Mr. Schrek with respect to same when he [Mr. Marago] was a Councilman years ago.

**Engineer, George Folk** introduced himself. Mr. Schrek reviewed temporary waivers that were granted at the last meeting. Mr. Gara confirmed that taxes were current and that he received the affidavit of corporate ownership. Permanent waivers were discussed. Mr. Cohen confirmed that the application is complete enough

for public hearing.

Mr. Marago related that the owners did not pay \$1,000 for the property as the newspaper suggested. He explained that he was sharing this information for the benefit of certain members of the public who were bothered by this.

Mr. Folk was sworn and qualified. He identified existing conditions and discussed the proposal for 16 new units in the same building façade. He testified that parking would be located on the west and south sides.

**Exhibit A1** was identified as a colored rendering of the landscape plan in the set and overall picture of proposed improvements. Mr. Folk identified the municipal building parking lot and testified that asphalt would be maintained on the south and west sides while grass would be provided to the north and east. He discussed circulation, access from the municipal lot and dumpster access.

A discussion ensued about access through the police station driveway. Mr. Folk and Mr. Marago confirmed that they were not aware whether any document existed concerning access. Mr. Schrek explained that he was not sure whether cross access was allowed. Mr. Cohen asked Mr. Marago whether any search for an easement had been done. Mr. Marago explained that they were proposing to ask the Board whether they could access it.

Ashraf Ragab, Architect was sworn and qualified. Mr. Ragab began to testify and was questioned by Mr. Schrek with regard to the lack of adequate storage and locations and type of utilities to be provided. After a brief discussion, Mr. Marago requested that the matter be carried so that they could revise the site and architectural plans in order to address the concerns of the Board.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Several residents spoke during the public comment period.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Probst

Nancy Probst, Board Secretary

**APPROVED 2/23/22**