

**CALL TO ORDER**

This Meeting of the Redevelopment Committee of the Borough of Raritan, County of Somerset, State of New Jersey, was called to order by Mayor Nicolas J. Carra in the Community Room of the Raritan Municipal Building, 22 First Street, Raritan, NJ 08869 on October 24, 2024.

The Mayor announced this meeting was called pursuant to applicable portions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate Notice was communicated to *The Courier News* and *The Star Ledger*, posted on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building, on the Borough website and made available in the Office of the Borough Clerk.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Mayor Carra, Council President Tozzi, William Cunningham, Lou Gara, Tony LoPresti, Adele Goetsch, Debra Thomas, Administrator Colvin, Engineer Brosnan

Absent:

**MINUTES**

- a. March 4, 2024
- b. March 25, 2024
- c. April 11, 2024
- d. July 1, 2024

Mayor Carra and Committee members discussed approving the cited minutes to be listed on the Borough’s website prior to formal approval; to which all members agreed.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

**OLD BUSINESS**

Downtown Redevelopment Plan: Study Update – Angela Knowles

Angela Knowles presented the Downtown Area in Need of Rehabilitation Study and explained that it builds upon the prior Sustainable Economic Downtown Plan completed through an NJTPA grant. The study evaluated whether the downtown meets the statutory criteria for rehabilitation and concluded that it qualifies, meeting at least three of the six required factors. Ms. Knowles explained that rehabilitation under state law focuses on repairing and improving existing buildings and infrastructure to prevent deterioration, rather than encouraging new construction. She also outlined potential tools available within a rehabilitation area, such as tax abatements and façade improvement programs, noting that redevelopment of specific properties would require separate plans and is not mandatory.

Ms. Knowles reviewed the procedural steps, explaining that Council must authorize the Planning Board to conduct the study, after which the Planning Board reviews the report and may recommend designation to Council. Council would then adopt a resolution to formalize the designation. A subcommittee consisting of Council and Planning Board members was recommended to help guide the process. A committee member suggested engaging property

owners before designation to understand their improvement plans, though Ms. Knowles clarified that owner outreach typically follows designation, as the designation enables access to funding and incentive programs.

The study area includes 623 parcels, approximately 25% residential, with about 780 housing units, 94% of which are over 50 years old. The area also contains several known contaminated sites and aging water and sewer infrastructure. Mayor Carra asked whether infrastructure was considered, and it was confirmed that most systems are more than 50 years old and would need upgrades to support future growth.

The committee discussed that participation in rehabilitation efforts would be voluntary and that the designation does not force redevelopment, zoning changes, or property improvements. It was suggested that the Borough consider forming a business association or chamber of commerce to assist property owners with outreach, education, and implementation, particularly along Somerset Street.

Borough Engineer Brosnan expressed support for advancing to the next phase, emphasizing that rehabilitation strategies allow the Borough to guide improvements while aligning with state requirements. He stressed the importance of transparency and early engagement with property owners. Ms. Knowles cited Westfield as an example of a municipality that successfully used rehabilitation tools through extensive public outreach and plan adjustments.

Public comments by Mr. John Murphy and Tom Brown raised concerns regarding coordination between Council and the Planning Board, business viability in older buildings, traffic impacts, and the need for traffic studies and calming measures. It was noted that the state has begun pursuing grant funding for traffic improvements and that interim traffic calming tools may be available.

Committee members emphasized the importance of clearly outlining next steps, timelines, responsibilities, and costs, and agreed that all information should be communicated clearly through the Borough website. Members acknowledged limited staff capacity and stressed the need to manage public expectations, noting that designation is a first step and that implementation will take time. The committee reaffirmed its advisory role and agreed to present its recommendations to the Governing Body, with continued coordination among Council, the Planning Board, and Borough professionals moving forward.

Agway – AINR Study – Update from Joseph Brosnan

Mr. Brosnan stated that he suggests that the borough hold off on authorizing Council and the Planning Board to continue with the study until the proper funding is in place.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None

**MISCELLANIOUS**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Debra Thomas, seconded by Adele Goetsch, the Committee moved to Adjourn the Meeting.

Recorded Vote

All in Favor

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Kimberly Mathewson  
Acting Municipal Clerk

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_