

BOROUGH OF RARITAN
Planning Board Regular Meeting
MINUTES
March 26, 2025

CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Borough of Raritan Municipal Building. The Open Public Meetings statement was read into the record.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chairman LoPresti, Mayor Carra, Councilman Tozzi, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Carra, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Brown, Mr. Gussman

ABSENT: Ms. Windrem, Mr. DeCicco, Ms. Liptak, Mr. Jayaraj

ALSO PRESENT: Matt Flynn, Esq., Board Attorney; Joseph Brosnan, PE, PP, AICP, Board Engineer&Planner; Lou Gara, Construction Official, Zoning Officer, Board Secretary

MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Murphy, **seconded** by Ms. Carra to adopt the Minutes of **February 26, 2025**, as presented.

ROLL CALL:

AYE: Chairman LoPresti, Councilman Tozzi, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Carra, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Gussman

NAY:

ABSTAIN: Mayor Carra

Mr. Jayaraj arrived at 6:34

ENGINEERING/PLANNING REPORT

Mr. Brosnan provided a status report on the Richard St. project and the work on the new Municipal Building. The Richard St. project is moving with phase 1 being complete and phase 2 under way. Painting is underway on the interior of the new Municipal Building and good progress is being made.

PLANNING

The redevelopment committee has been meeting and discussing additional redevelopment proposals.

CONSTRUCTION/ZONING OFFICIAL REPORT

Mr. Gara had nothing new to report.

RESOLUTIONS

APPLICATIONS/HEARINGS

Area in Need of Redevelopment Determination
Station Village at Raritan LLC

**77 Thompson St.
Block 61 Lot 3.01**

Mr. Brosnan explained that the hearing was not on a redevelopment plan, it is to consider if the site meets the statutory criteria to be designated as an area in need of redevelopment (AINR). Mr. Brosnan stated that the study area statutorily meets criteria A, B, D, and H. Mr. Brosnan read the statutory requirements of those sections and explained that the site meets those criteria. Mr. Brosnan stated that transit-oriented development is in section 207-118 of the Borough Land Use Ordinance and states that a B-5 zone is identified for smart growth principles and the ordinance calls out this site as a possible area that fits into this zoning designation. Mr. Brosnan stated that the Borough adopted a complete streets policy in 2011 with areas in proximity to multi modes of transportation, and along with the Regional Center, identified this area as well suited for this type of development. Mr. Brosnan advised that because this area meets several of the statutory criteria for an AINR, he recommends the planning board consider the site as an area in need of redevelopment and make that recommendation to the Council. Mr. Flynn stated that notice was served to the property owner in compliance with the local redevelopment and housing law and published on consecutive weeks in the designated newspapers at least ten days prior to the hearing. Mr. Flynn stated that this is a public hearing to determine if the subject area meets the criteria for designation as an AINR, the recommendation of the planning board will be sent to Council and if they declare the site as an AINR, possible uses of the property, and designating a developer can proceed. Mr. Murphy questioned if only meeting one of the criteria is required, Mr. Flynn responded yes and confirmed that according to Mr. Brosnan's report the site meets four of the criteria. Mr. Cunningham questioned if this would be with or without condemnation, Mr. Flynn replied with possible condemnation as that was how the governing body authorized the study to be done. Mr. Flynn stated it is ultimately up to the Council to decide if the area in need of redevelopment will include condemnation. Mr. Flynn stated that Mr. Brosnan recommends that the planning board make the determination that the area be designated as an AINR. Mr. Lopresti asked if there were any public comments. There being no comments from the public, Mr. Lopresti asked for a motion from the planning board.

Motion by Mr. Brown, **seconded** by Councilman Tozzi to adopt the resolution, as presented, to recommend to the Council that the area be designated as an area in need of redevelopment.

ROLL CALL:

AYE: Chairman LoPresti, Mayor Carra, Councilman Tozzi, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Carra, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Brown, Mr. Jayaraj, Mr. Gussman
NAY: None
ABSTAIN:

**Laura Munoz Galindo Use Variance 24-008
80 East Somerset St.
Block 111 Lot 12**

Mayor Carra and Councilman Tozzi Recused

Erica Edwards, applicant's attorney, appearing on behalf of Laura Munoz Galinda stated the applicant is requesting a use variance to convert a vacant first floor office in to two apartments. Frank Farrell, applicants engineer, was sworn in and qualified. Mr. Farrell went through the existing site characteristics and stated the area includes a mix of residential and commercial uses. Mr. Farrell stated the site is in the R-4 zone and multi-

family residential is not a permitted use. Mr. Farrell went through the bulk requirements and the existing non-conformities which are all existing with no proposed changes. Mr. Farrell stated they are proposing additional landscaping to enhance the site and mitigate storm water concerns, no change to the impervious coverage is proposed, and no proposed changes to the existing site lighting. Mr. Lopresti confirmed with Mr. Farrell that they are seeking a use variance only. Mr. Cunningham questioned if there was light spillage from the existing lighting, Mr. Farrell stated they will make sure that is the case and will work with the Board Engineer on that and the landscaping plan during construction. Mr. Brosnan requested all lighting be downward facing and confirmed with Mr. Farrell that the existing utilities are adequate. Public questions: Catherine Mastice and Martha Butterfield questioned the 10 parking spaces and Mr. Farrell and Mr. Flynn responded that the RSIS standards require 4 spaces, and the applicant is providing 10. ? Owner of 6 Granetz PI asked about the noise from vehicles, Mr. Farrell replied that the change of use will result in 50 fewer trips per week. Mr. Cunningham suggested buffering between the adjoining properties be looked at, applicant will work with the board engineer to enhance the existing buffering. Mike Patente asked if it would be owner occupied, Ms. Edwards responded that the owner's mom will reside there and the owner visits the property regularly, he also asked who will inspect the rental units and Mr. Gara responded, the Raritan Bureau of Fire Prevention inspects every two years and the State inspects every 5 years. The owner/applicant, planner, and architect were sworn. Todd Koenig, Architect testified each apartment will be approximately 900 square feet, Mr. Gara questioned a need for variance as 1000 square feet is required, Mr. Brosnan confirmed that a variance is required. Mr. Lopresti asked about sound between the units and Mr. Koenig responded that enhancements for sound would be made between all the dwelling units including the existing second floor. Mallory Clark, Planner testified that the first-floor office has been vacant for many years. Ms. Clark stated that the R-4 requires 1000 square feet dwellings, however there are zones in The Borough that require 900 square feet so this application is in line with those requirements. Ms. Clark testified about the D1 variance requirements and sited case law and discussed the positive and negative criteria. Ms. Clark stated the use variance is for a residential use in a residential zone and that this case is more about density. Ms. Clark discussed the uses in proximity to this site and stated out of 33 properties studied, 10 are existing non-conforming, mostly two-family, however the property at the corner of Granetz Plaza and Glaser Ave is a four-family. Ms. Clark stated this is an oversized site and no exterior modifications to the building are required as there are currently two entry doors, one in the front and one in the back. Ms. Clark discussed the smart growth principles and the proximity of the site to many businesses and services within a short walk as well as the train station within a ten-minute walk. Ms. Clark spoke to the positive criteria and how this plan meets purpose C advancing the principles of the Municipal Land Use Law, principle E as the density is suitable, and purpose I as enhancements will be made to the property including landscaping and buffering. Ms. Clark discussed how the proposed use of the site relates to the master plan and how the site is consistent with the master plan. Ms. Clark discussed the negative criteria and the change from office use to residential resulting in less trips to the site and also the required bulk variances. Mr. Brosnan added the variance for the size of the proposed apartments. Public Comments: Jill Brown spoke about recycling containers and commented that bags should be used to prevent recycling from being blown around in heavy wind. Ms. Edwards provided a brief summation.

Motion by Mr. Cunningham, **seconded** by Ms. Carra to approve the application with conditions, as presented.

ROLL CALL:

AYE: Chairman LoPresti, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Carra, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Brown, Mr. Jayaraj, Mr. Gussman

NAY: None

ABSTAIN:

The planning board took a recess, and the meeting resumed at 8:02

Joseph Naser (#24-007) Carried from February 26, 2025
57&59 LaGrange Street
Block 93, Lot 1&2
Site Plan

Mayor Carra, Ms. Carra, Mr. Brown recused.

Christopher D Ferrar, Esq. entered his appearance on behalf of Lagrange St. LLC and Joseph Nasser and provided an overview of the application for preliminary and final site plan. Mr. Ferrara presented a letter he received from the Somerset County Planning Board and stated they did not include any comments other than requesting submission of a final plat should the application be approved. Mr. Ferrara provided cost estimates to Mr. Brosnan. Referring to the technical review letter provided by Mr. Brosnan, Mr. Ferrara proceeded to review and respond to the items in the letter and indicated that the applicant's professionals will respond to some of the items in their testimony. Mr. Ferrara stated that no bulk variances will be required. Mr. Flynn swore in the applicant's professionals. Mr. Aly, applicants engineer, provided responses to items F, G, H, and I in Mr. Brosnans technical review letter. Mr. Aly testified regarding site lighting that the existing three streetlights along with the lights that will be provided on the buildings will be sufficient. Mr. Aly testified regarding an environmental impact that there are two large buildings with parking lots currently and there are no wetlands or flood hazard areas and there will be minimum vegetation disturbance. Mr. Aly testified to the item J in Mr. Brosnans technical review letter regarding providing contours to 100' and requested a waiver. Mr. Brosnan stated his concerns with the impacts of neighboring properties regarding storm water runoff, and stated this can be accomplished through testimony. Mr. Ferrara indicated the units, including the affordable units, will be for sale. Mr. Aly testified that due to the high water table, basements cannot be provided. Mr. Aly testified that a six foot fence along the back property line and landscaped buffers will be provided, and because there will not be parking lots, EV chargers are not required to be provided. Mr. Ferrara stated that a homeowners association would be established if the project is approved and the documents will be sent to the attorney for review and approval. Mr. Brosnan stated with regard to the waiver for environmental impact that he needs to see environmental reports, Matt Flynn questioned whether a LSRP was involved, Joseph Nasser stated that he would provide copies of the phase 1 reports. Public questions: Tom Brown asked about chemical contamination in the building, Joseph Nasser stated he would provide phase 1 reports; Jill Brown asked about debris brought into the building from another site, Joseph Nasser stated it was concrete from sidewalks removed at his other site and would be disposed of during the demolition. Ashraf Ragab, Architect, testified about the proposed buildings indicating they will be 2 stories, slab on grade, residential townhome style with pitched roofs, garages (except affordable units), and private driveways. Mr. Ragab testified to the number of bedrooms and bathrooms, the buildings will have vinyl siding, brick veneers, there will be hipped roofs with dormers and asphalt shingles, and provided a rendering. Mr. Cunningham questioned the number of cars that fit in the driveways, Mr. Ragab responded the town homes will have one car garages, and all the driveways will fit two cars. Mr. Brosnan questioned the ADA requirements, Mr. Ragab responded that the affordable unit on the first floor can be made assessable, and the second-floor unit adaptable, Mr. Lopresti questioned if the stairway is wide enough for a chairlift and Mr. Ragab responded that it could be widened. Mr. Ragab indicated the affordable units will not have laundry facilities. Mr. Murphy questioned whether the affordable units will have back doors and Mr. Ragab responded that only the townhomes will have back doors and patios. Mr. Cunningham asked about the location of garbage and recycling, discussion ensued about putting the bins in the garages of the townhomes and creating an enclosure for the affordable units. Public questions: Tom Brown inquired about cars pulling out onto Lagrange St, specifically the units to the east side of the property; Mike Patente asked if the attics will be heated and hearing yes expressed concern about conversion of the attic into bedrooms. Mr. Lopresti asked about grading, it will be discussed by the site engineer. Sharif H Aly, applicants engineer, provided an overview of the site plan, and the buildings totaling just over 16,000 square foot, and the landscaping and buffering. Mr. Aly described the size of the driveways and testified that they can all fit two cars. My Aly testified that for the storm

water regulations the project is a minor development and not subject to storm water regulations. Mr. Aly testified that swales will be built on the east and west sides. Mr. Brosnan asked that the detail sheet be revised to show the swale will run to the front and back on the east side and not permit runoff onto neighboring properties. Mr. Aly testified they could also create a berm along the tree line to ensure that no storm water runs off to the adjoining property. Mr. Brosnan asked about the sidewalk connections and there was a discussion with Matt Flynn and the applicant about Council approval to construct the sidewalk across the paper Street on the west side. The applicant advised that they would comply. Mr. Brosnan inquired about the separation of the sewer and water lines for each unit and asked for clarification. Mr. Aly testified that the sewer and water lines after the clean out and water box connection could be in the same trench and is subject to the building code requirements. In response to Mr. Brosnan's concern with the landscaping and buffering Mr. Aly affirmed that the applicant will work with the engineer to develop acceptable plans. Mr. Tozzi questioned the turning radius into the driveways with the on-street parking of vehicles, Mr. Aly testified that there is sufficient space. Mr. Brosnan questioned if there is sufficient site lighting and Mr. Aly responded that if additional site lighting is required the applicant will work with the engineer and affirmed that there would be no lighting that spills over the property lines. Mr. Aly testified that the electric to the townhomes is proposed to be underground. In response to Mr. LoPresti's question regarding privacy fences between the units, Mr. Aly proposed small privacy fences along the proposed 10'x10' patios and with the addition of patios the site would comply with the allowable impervious coverage. Mr. Brosnan recommended that revised site plans be submitted to address the comments and concerns of the board and professionals. John Chadwick, applicant's planner, testified that with the exception of eliminating the basements and adding finished attics, the plan complies with the redevelopment plan. Mr. Chadwick testified that with the improvements over the current uses of the property, single family attached residential use is a positive change to the current use of the property. Mr. Cunningham questioned the length of the driveways and if parked vehicles would extend over the sidewalks. Mr. Aly stated the driveways will be 36'-38' from the right of way and vehicles will not block the sidewalks. Public questions: Tom Brown asked about sound attenuation as the townhomes are close to the train station. Mr. Aly replied that the applicant can look into sound attenuation measures. Tom Brown questioned the turning radius into and out of the driveways, Mr. Brosnan suggested the applicant provide turning radius profiles. Mr. Flynn announced that the hearing will continue at the April 23, 2025, meeting at 6:30pm and that no further notice will be required.

The hearing will be continued at the meeting on April 23, 2025

RESOLUTIONS

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman LoPresti opened the floor to public comment. No public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilman Tozzi, **seconded** by Mr. Cunningham and unanimously carried to adjourn at 10:03.

Respectfully submitted,



Lou Gara
Board Administrator/Secretary

Approved: 