

BOROUGH OF RARITAN
TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
October 25, 2018

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. in the Raritan Municipal Building and explained that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss a potential redevelopment project on LaGrange Street.

Present for the Borough:

Rick Miller
Debbie Thomas
John Gausz
Frank Linnus, Borough Redevelopment Attorney
Stan Schrek, Borough Engineer
Angela Knowles, Board Planner

Present for the Applicant:

Sharif Aly, P.E.
Joseph Nasar (Developer)
Jack Nasar (Partner/Developer - Arrived Late)
Meredith Marcus, Esq.

Mr. Linnus explained that the properties were designated as an Area in Need of Redevelopment and provided an overview of what the next steps would be with respect to same. He identified the proposal as 4 duplexes with a total of 8 units and asked about the acquisition of the neighboring properties. Mr. Nasar related that negotiations were still ongoing. Ms. Marcus affirmed her understanding of where they were in the process. Mr. Linnus clarified that a plan must come together without Borough participation as it is a non condemnation area. A discussion ensued on the certainty of it being a non condemnation area. Ms. Knowles indicated that it was. Mr. Schrek spoke to the purpose of having a condemnation clause.

Mr. Miller offered that he wanted to hear how the Board's previously expressed concerns about senior housing would now potentially be addressed. Ms. Marcus offered that it would be easy enough to engineer, potentially making half of the units for seniors. Mr. Aly offered that the number of units could be increased by going up a few floors. Other options for incorporating senior housing and the definition of senior housing were discussed.

Mr. Schrek questioned whether a concept plan could be considered without both lots or whether it should be considered as a phased project. Mr. Linnus offered that ideally it should be considered as one Redevelopment Plan. Mr. Miller concurred, adding that this was the rationale for making the entire area [both lots] part of the Redevelopment Plan. Ms. Marcus offered that if they don't acquire it, they can take it.

Mr. Aly opined that there was no sense in separating the two lots, adding that the question was density and senior versus free market. Building style and height were discussed given the potential need for elevators to accommodate senior housing. Marketability and unit make up were discussed. Affordable Housing obligations were discussed. The nature of the Block 81 development was discussed at length.

Mr. Miller offered that the primary issue was the unit design and that formal age restriction was another discussion. Mr. Aly offered that the site would not support age restricted housing.

An extensive discussion ensued about the Borough's goal and the Developer's goals. Marketability was discussed at length. Affordable housing requirements were discussed further. Mr. Schrek suggested that they reach out to the COAH Planner, Jim Kyle. Mr. Nasar indicated that he was not looking to market them as rentals and indicated that he was planning to mix the unit layouts (anticipating 16 units) in order to cater to both young and old through the use of elevators and placement of bedrooms on the first floor as opposed to upper floors in some cases.

Jack Nasar, Developer arrived at 8:45. Options for unit layouts for seniors/architectural design (townhomes vs. duplexes) were discussed at length. Mr. Schrek offered that walkability in the town would be a draw with respect to marketability. Ms. Thomas offered that the school system was another draw.

Mr. Aly suggested that a few concept plans could be presented and everyone seemed to concur. The use of elevators was discussed. Mr. Linnus offered that they prepare two or three concept plans. Ms. Marcus suggested that they explore a three story unit with respect to amenities.

A discussion ensued about the need for a Homeowners Association and about the importance of property maintenance. Referencing the Board's work with Block 81, Mr. Miller offered that they would work with the developer on a Redevelopment Plan that would cover a lot of the issues.

The Transit Oriented Development concept as it may relate to this development was discussed, particularly with respect to parking. The next steps were discussed. Negotiations on the Rescue Squad lot were discussed.

Public Comment

Tom Brown of 18 Elmer Street identified himself as a former Board Member and resident of Raritan for 40 years. He told the applicants that they might be mistaken regarding active use of the Rescue Squad Building. Mr. Brown advised that the building is used all day on a daily basis and suggested that they look into whether they want to move out based on his conversations with long time members that he knows.

Mr. Brown identified the character of the neighborhood as critical. He spoke about the residents who lived there and stated that the Mayor "railroaded this through" because of the apartment house across the street. He spoke to longevity of the residents, off street parking, student safety because of the bus stop calling it a "critical corner."

Mr. Brown related that he liked the idea and offered that they would not get "pushback" from the neighborhood if they are townhouses for sale since the majority of the neighborhood is not comprised of rentals. He offered that density will be a main item of interest to the neighbors since this is a neighborhood of single family homes averaging 2-4 people per home and a street with only what he personally counted as 28 people living on it. He stressed that ownership as opposed to rental would mitigate the situation. A brief exchange ensued between Mr. Brown and Mr. Gausz as a result of a comment Mr. Brown made about children as they might relate to the development.

The meeting ended at 9:28.

Respectfully submitted,



Nancy Probst, Planning Board Secretary

APPROVED

1/23/19