

APPROVED: February 17, 2009

WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP COUNCIL
SPECIAL WORK SESSION V - Draft Redevelopment Plan
November 20, 2008

CALL TO ORDER: President Morgan called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

This is to advise that the notice requirement provided for in the "Open Public Meetings Act" has been satisfied. Notice of this meeting was properly given and transmitted to The Times and Princeton Packet; filed with the Clerk of the Municipality; and posted in the West Windsor Township Municipal Building at North Post and Clarksville Roads on November 13, 2008.

ATTENDEES: President: Morgan; Vice President: Kleinman; Council: Ankowitz, Borek (arrived 7:18 p.m.) Geever; Township Attorney: Herbert; Township Planning Board Attorney: Muller; Township Planning Consultant: Madden; Deputy Township Clerk: Huber

President Morgan advised that the Council has worked hard to make this process transparent and that Council received the draft Redevelopment Plan from RMJM Hillier on October 14th. He noted that the public presentation was held at Grover Middle School on October 21st. President Morgan reported that Council, the Township Professionals, and residents have attended several special work sessions to review and make amendments to the plan. He noted that the meeting this evening was scheduled for possible action, but that action will probably not take place. President Morgan advised that one of the major challenges is coordinating with New Jersey Transit on the circulation plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Susan Abbey, 5 Scott Avenue, reviewed the product to date, and noted that on page 33, District 8 which is the station and retail area, there was discussion about aligning Scott Avenue with the exit from the train station. She advised that this is not acceptable. Ms. Abbey explained that this area is used heavily by pedestrians going to and from the train station. She advised that none of the plans address the neighboring borders of the

redevelopment area and the impacts on them. She suggested that when the plan is forwarded to the Planning Board a statement be made asking them to review how the plan affects the surrounding neighborhoods. Ms. Abbey noted that the size of the project is still too large.

Ms. Susan Conlon, 98 Harris Road, agreed with Ms. Abbey's points noting that the Scott Avenue and Alexander Road proposed changes will be more treacherous for pedestrians. She inquired as to where was the comprehensive traffic plan that looks at all transportation modes and residential streets that this additional traffic will be using. Ms. Conlon stated that there is a need for a comprehensive review process before moving forward with this area.

Mr. David Siegel, 17 Berrien Avenue, agreed with most of what the last two speakers said. He advised that the new document does not review the overall concept. Mr. Siegel noted that many of the residents did not agree with the size and scale and the number of residential units of the draft that was presented a year ago. He advised that these issues have still not been addressed. Mr. Siegel noted that a cost analysis report should be done before a plan can be approved. He voiced his opposition to the redevelopment area being too dense in size.

Mr. John Koran, 5 Scott Avenue, suggested taking the realignment of Scott Avenue one step further and to close the now existing exit from the train station and only have bike and pedestrian traffic along Scott Avenue. He advised that this zone has not been reviewed enough for information on how it fits into a more regional idea to include the Maneely Tract, Penns Neck EIS area, Route One, and the Akselrad Development.

Ms. Julie Rhodes, 31 Scott Avenue, noted she has not had an opportunity to read the new plan, but wanted to reiterate about the size and scale and the effect it will have on the entire Township. She urged Council to think about the very sound principles and goals that were set by resolution.

Mr. Bryan Maher, 135 Penn Lyle Road, voiced his opposition to the increase in housing and advised that Council is failing to listen to the community. He noted that Mr. Goldin is bluffing about having the funding and noted that the Township is wasting a lot of time and resources.

Mr. Al Lerner, 67 Rainflower Lane, noted that there is still a lot of planning that needs to be done.

Mr. Marshal Lerner, 3 Sapphire Drive, noted that the Township should rethink their priorities. He advised that the economy is bad, vacant space is growing, and 2.5 million square feet of vacant office space is available in West Windsor. Mr. Lerner commented that Council needs to take a leadership position. He advised there are more pressing issues for Council to work on than redevelopment.

President Morgan suggested reviewing both the timeline and to move the plan to the Planning Board. He advised that the COAH regulations are still a concern and noted that he would want both the COAH concerns, Mr. Ankowitz's and Mr. Borek's comments, since they were unable to attend the various special sessions.

President Morgan went through the draft timeline giving various options for Council review and discussion. He advised that Mr. Jaffe noted that RMJM Hillier may need an additional two to three weeks to complete the revisions to the plan.

Ms. Kleinman noted that the Planning Board process has not been discussed and inquired about what the process would be.

Mr. Ankowitz advised that Mayor Hsueh issued a memorandum today advising that the Planning Board Chairman is ready to move the process forward.

Mr. Herbert advised that the plan can be forwarded by a referral or resolution to the Planning Board and suggested language for the preparation of a resolution.

Discussion continued regarding moving the redevelopment plan to the Planning Board.

COAH Discussion

Mr. Muller advised that the COAH regulations with respect to how the rules affect the redevelopment area are very important. He noted that he submitted an executive summary and memorandum on how COAH is affected by the current

zoning in the redevelopment area versus the proposed redevelopment plan zoning. Mr. Muller outlined his November 19, 2008 memorandum. He advised that the Township should plan ahead for the affordable housing within the redevelopment area. Mr. Muller gave various scenarios on how the COAH obligations would be generated and advised what effects the COAH regulations would have on the Township and the redevelopment area. He explained that there are other areas that need to be addressed for the redevelopment plan such as reviewing the total scale of the project, the level of infrastructure, amenities, and affordable housing responsibilities. He advised that the Township should consider what kind of downtown area the community wants.

Mr. Madden noted that current zoning has a "Mount Laurel" impact and advised that the key component is that under the current legislation all the property owners are only obligated to pay a 2.5% affordable housing fee. He explained that this fee only covers twenty percent of the obligation, which leaves the other eighty percent burden on the taxpayers of West Windsor. Mr. Madden advised that in a redevelopment area the Township is allowed to hire a redeveloper and the Township will receive redevelopment credits which help with the total COAH obligation. He noted that one of the goals was to create a vibrant town center. Mr. Muller noted that the COAH obligation is there and should be addressed now versus later to protect the taxpayers from having to pay for additional affordable housing.

Discussion ensued with Members of Council and Mr. Madden and Mr. Muller with regards to COAH obligations.

Mr. Ankowitz asked how much square footage of business is there under the current redevelopment plan.

Mr. Muller advised that under the current zoning and including the Sarnoff site it comes to over two million square feet of office/research/development, two hundred square feet of hotel space, and one hundred and four thousand square feet of retail.

Discussion ensued over the current zoning and the proposed zoning, which includes the Sarnoff Corporation and what retail currently exists versus what is proposed.

Mr. Anklowitz noted he needs to know this information so that he can base his decision on how to scale down the plan.

Mr. Madden advised that new retail would generate 15-16 affordable housing units, and that the office development is the biggest driver of affordable housing.

Discussion continued on how to reduce the affordable housing obligation, whether the scale and scope of the project should be reduced, and what the tax impact to residents could be. Discussion also took place on what the community envisions for this area.

Mr. Anklowitz advised that main street needs to connect both sides. He noted that improvements must be made to Vaughn Drive to make it a connector road. He inquired if the commercial/office is removed from the plan what components are left, and advised that the affordable housing needs to be reviewed to see how it can be reduced.

Mr. Muller advised that the reduction of the office component would reduce the number of affordable housing units required. He noted this option could be reviewed and land use decisions could be made.

President Morgan advised that commercial/office brings more traffic and "Main Street" design and construction is the responsibility of Mercer County. He explained that the Township wants less traffic, more parking, better flow of traffic along Route 571, and the continuation of work on the Princeton Junction Overlay ordinance.

Mr. Anklowitz noted he has heard rumors that the Acme property is going to be sold. He advised that if the property is going to be rezoned the parcel should be reconstructed to look as part of the proposed "Main Street".

Mr. Herbert advised that the Township has received letters from both the proposed buyer and current owner of the Acme property and they have requested that the property be removed from the redevelopment area. He noted that the proposed buyer would like to renovate the existing center.

Ms. Geevers noted that the property needs a major facelift.

Mr. Muller noted that it does not work economically to demolish and rebuild.

Discussion ensued over the Acme Shopping Center and the proposed new owner and how the proposed zoning affects the property.

Mr. Muller advised that as long as the Acme center stays within the current footprint the reconstruction could be done under the current or the proposed zoning.

Mr. Anklowitz requested that the review and approval of art work in coordination with the West Windsor Arts Council should not be written into the redevelopment plan. He understands that the Planning Board uses this organization and others within the Township as consultants but that it should not be made a part of the plan.

Ms. Kleinman noted that this statement comes from the Planning Board who uses the Arts Council on a regular basis as a consultant.

Mr. Anklowitz noted he could take hours going over the plan; however, he noted that the east and west side Main Streets do not seem to connect.

Ms. Kleinman advised that the zoning and the discussions about the "Main Streets" has always included a retail wall along the street that connects both sides.

Mr. Anklowitz advised that most residents consider downtown Princeton Junction to be between Cranbury Road and Alexander Road. He noted that in order to get public support for the plan improvements such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and landscaping needs to be made a priority for this area.

Mr. Madden advised there are a lot of good standards in the Princeton Junction Overlay ordinance. He explained that the sidewalks would be part of a public improvement program and should be specified in this document, along with lighting, and street trees. Mr. Madden noted he could work with Mr. Dobromilsky, the Township's Landscape Architect, if Hillier does not add these components to the plan.

Ms. Kleinman noted that the specifications are in the plan for various sections to include the number of benches and street trees.

Discussion ensued on making the improvements to Route 571 a priority between Cranbury Road and Alexander Road.

Mr. Anklowitz commented that the intersection of Scott Avenue and Wallace Road needs to be re-examined.

Ms. Kleinman noted the danger at intersections for bike and pedestrian traffic and suggested creating a cul-de-sac in this area. She advised that further discussion needs to take place on this intersection.

Mr. Madden advised that this is where Mr. Davies' detailed scale drawing (1/100 scale) is needed to indicate what can and cannot fit and what the traffic impacts could be.

Mr. Anklowitz requested that the section regarding the "alignment of Scott Avenue" be removed from the document.

Mr. Anklowitz inquired about why the Vaughn Drive connector has a circle and a series of side roads off of it slowing traffic down. He noted that this roadway should be designed to draw traffic away from neighborhoods where residents live.

Ms. Kleinman reviewed the changes proposed for Vaughn Drive and reviewed some of the roadway changes proposed at the Special Redevelopment Meetings that have been conducted.

Discussion ensued over retail space and what is or is not adequate for the redevelopment area.

Ms. Geevers inquired if Mr. Anklowitz supports the mixed use zoning on the west side of the redevelopment area.

Mr. Anklowitz noted he supports the mixed used, but advised that he is looking for a basis to decide on how much is needed to support the plan.

President Morgan noted that a redevelopment agreement is necessary prior to approvals being granted to give the

public the right to explain to the Council what their goals are for the plan.

Discussion continued regarding the density necessary to make the redevelopment plan viable for a redeveloper, the amount of retail space, office space, COAH obligations, and future improvements along Route 571.

Mr. Madden advised that the Township Consultants will be reviewing the plan to see who should be funding infrastructure improvements, and what infrastructure improvements are needed.

Mr. Borek urged his colleagues to continue to work diligently to come to the middle ground that works for everyone. He advised that the New Jersey League of Municipalities is working on having the COAH regulations reduced and wanted to know how this would affect the Township.

Mr. Muller advised that the Township will still have an affordable housing obligation that will have to be met. He noted that currently the New Jersey League of Municipalities has filed with the Courts amendments to the new COAH regulations. He reviewed the changes submitted by West Windsor Township regarding the new COAH regulations.

Discussion continued regarding recent court decisions regarding "Mount Laurel" and affordable housing.

Mr. Borek inquired as to when an approval is given to the Acme Property owners for reconstruction is there anyway to mandate when the project would be completed.

Mr. Muller advised that the Planning Board cannot make property owners complete the improvements within a specific timeframe.

Discussion over what upgrades are envisioned for the Acme site were reviewed and the timing for such improvements and how the Township can move these projects along.

Mr. Muller advised that there should be a consensus of members of Council who support the plan before sending it to the Planning Board.

Mr. Borek advised that the Township needs to receive the information from New Jersey Transit before moving forward. President Morgan noted that the Mayor has requested in a memorandum received today to move the project forward and asked to have it submitted to the Planning Board. He noted that the Mayor advises that various outside agencies are still reviewing the plan and that the Township Council should move the plan to the Planning Board and not wait for these agencies at this time.

Mr. Anklowitz motioned for a ten-minute recess.

Second: Borek

VV: All approved.

Meeting reconvened at 10:30 p.m.

President Morgan requested that Public Comment be heard at this point.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Brian Maher, 135 Penn Lyle Road, noted that the Township has leverage and that discussion about the redevelopment plan should continue. He voiced several suggestions on how to proceed with the project and requested that the Township contact the County regarding the status of the sidewalk improvements along Route 571.

Ms. Alison Miller, 41 Windsor Drive, noted that she has heard the same conversations regarding the COAH regulations that Mr. Borek has. She advised that the redevelopment plan should be based on the current COAH regulations. Ms. Miller voiced her concerns regarding the RMJM Hillier plan proposals. She also voiced her concerns regarding the upgrading of the Acme parcel. She noted concerns from the West Windsor Parking Authority regarding the expansion of the "Kiss and Ride" area proposed.

Mr. Al Lerner, 67 Rainflower Lane, voiced his opinion on the conversation that took place this evening. He suggested that the Council should listen to the professionals and not the residents of the Township. Mr. Lerner suggested forwarding the plan to the Planning Board when Council feels it is appropriate.

Mr. Hemi Nae, 11 Wycombe Way, voiced his opinion on the redevelopment plan and that additional work is needed to be

done and that the process should not be rushed. He noted that there has not been any solution to the traffic congestion that will be generated by this new development and that this needs to be addressed.

Mr. Marshal Lerner, 3 Sapphire Drive, noted that the current vision for the redevelopment plan fails to actively honor the wishes of residents voiced during the charrette process. He commented on his concerns regarding the impacts this size project will have on residents and that regional concerns should be addressed by the State and County agencies. Mr. Lerner suggested using caution when working with InterCap Holdings.

Mr. Jim Waltman, Executive Director, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, voiced his concerns regarding the redevelopment plan and how it could help relieve flooding problems along the Stony Brook-Millstone Rivers within West Windsor Township. He advised that he submitted a memorandum to the Council and Mayor last week regarding goals that could be achieved by this redevelopment plan regarding the environment, environmental sustainability, and open space for this 350 acre parcel.

Mr. David Siegel, 17 Berrien Avenue, voiced his concern about the impact a large number of residential units within this development would have on the Township. He also cautioned the Council about the costs of the amenities to the taxpayers and advised that traffic studies need to be performed. Mr. Siegel noted that the Council should not rush the process as previously discussed by other residents this evening.

Mr. George Martch, 30 Wood Hollow Road, inquired as to what the driving force is to move the project forward. He voiced several concerns regarding the project and the proposal before Council. Mr. Martch advised that if there is no fundamental reason to rush the project, the Council should slow down and continue to review the plan.

Motion to move the clock to 11:05 p.m.: Anklowitz

Second: Geever

VV: All approved

Ms. Janet Lerner, 67 Rainflower Lane, expressed her views on moving the redevelopment plan forward and not to delay. She supports housing within the redevelopment plan.

Mr. Bob Akens, 32 Windsor Drive, advised that the Council is not being completely honest with thinking the redevelopment area can be sustained with less than 1,000 residential units and that the Council needs to accept this factor so that the retail will be supported as proposed. He advised that the commuters are not being considered within this plan. Mr. Akens suggested that as the Council reviews the plan thought should be given on how the plan helps the current residents or future residents of West Windsor. He advised that the density of the project will cost the taxpayers of the Township. Mr. Akens suggested setting the housing component as low as possible.

Motion to extend the clock to 11:10 p.m. Geevers

Second: Kleinman

RCV: NAY Anklowitz

aye Borek

aye Geevers

aye Kleinman

aye Morgan

Ms. Geevers asked President Morgan to write his comments down and forward them to the Township professionals and Council members for review prior to the next meeting.

President Morgan suggested that the Council continue discussion of the redevelopment plan at the next Council meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn: Borek

Second: Anklowitz

VV: All approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Sharon L. Young
Township Clerk
West Windsor Township