

**Borough of Watchung
Planning Board Reorganization Meeting
February 19th, 2013**

Minutes

Salute to the Flag

The Chair called for a roll call. Present at the call of the roll were:
Speeney (X) Schaefer (X) Haveson (X) Ellis (X) Pennett (X) Boyd (X)
Beck-Clemens (X) Mobus (X) Nehls (X) Desnoyers (X) Hartmann(X)

Chairman Speeney indicated there was a quorum to conduct business. The Chair stated that this meeting was being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 of the open public meetings law and proper notification of this meeting has been made.

Also present was Walter Lane of Somerset County. Mr. Lane is Supervisor of Transportation Planning at the County. Bobby Weldon, and Weldon Attorney Bill Butler were also present. Mr. Lane was present to go over a concept plan for the Weldon Quarry property. This concept plan was created by a grant to Somerset County access and mobility study. This study identifies transportation needs and evaluate marketability and other criteria.

Mr. Lane gave a background as to how this study came to be. Mr. Lane said that grants were given to Counties to do studies which will lead to projects. They identify sites that are undeveloped or underutilized. Somerset County narrowed the sites given down to 25, and then from that 25 sites, down to 7. Weldon Quarry, which incorporates approximately 200 acres is one of the 7 sites chosen to study. Mr. Lane explained they are about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the study. They also look at what transportation issues and off track improvements need to be developed for these sites.

The draft recommendation shows 3 options for redevelopment of the quarry site. Concept A based on existing zoning. Concept B is based on a mixed use concept. Concept C is more of a hybrid of both A and B.

Economic development and traffic impact were looked at. Mr. Lane said they are meeting with the board for some initial feedback. The final report must be delivered by June. There will also be a public meeting and the final draft will be presented at a future Planning Board meeting. Concept A showed existing zoning. Concept B showed more of an entertainment, lifestyle center along with some office space and a hotel. And Concept C was more of a village center with some affordable housing included. Mr. Lane had renderings depicting the three concept plans. Mr. Lane said that all three drawings had set aside land for the existing use of the quarry continue their business there.

Chairman Speeney said that the existing infrastructure could handle concept A. He said

he was concerned that if the town went in a direction of higher density, and if significant infrastructure improvements had to be made, the town might be obligated to pay for those improvements. Mr. Lane said that there are possibilities of other monies from county or state sources that might be available. Mr. Lane explained that until the board had some kind of idea of what they want to see on that site, the amount of infrastructure improvements needed are hard to estimate. This is why he wanted a feel for what the board's initial opinions were, in order for them to hone the details. Mr. Haveson suggested they look at the worst case scenario in order to see how much a plan would have to be scaled down. Chairman Speeney said that he felt they should stay away from homes and residential situations. He said that 1-2 million square feet was doable. Mrs. Schaefer said that people are getting back to the family unit and to basics, and having an area where people could walk around, see a movie shop would be something that would be attractive to people in this economy. Mayor Mobus said that these improvements are going to cost a fortune, and until the I-78 Diamond Hill Interchange has been addressed, the concepts don't really matter because without the interchange, it can't possibly work. Mr. Lane said that the Diamond Hill Interchange would be part of the project, and such a project might be the catalyst needed to spur the Interchange project. Mayor Mobus said that the Diamond Hill Interchange would open up the whole eastern end of the county.

Chairman Speeney asked Mr. Butler if he had any comments or questions. Mr. Butler asked Mr. Lane if Concept A is existing zoning. Mr. Lane said yes. He asked if this concepts met the OC ordinance. Mr. Lane said it's more of a summary. Mr. Butler said that the dimensional statistics on the drawing are stricter than the actual overlay zoning that exists. He asked Mr. Lane if the proposal is shown is recommending the current zoning be stricter. Mr. Lane said that this was not the intention. Mr. Butler said that in the study done 10 years ago, the infrastructure improvements were major issues. He mentioned the Berkeley Heights meeting to approve a five star hotel. He said that Berkeley Heights approved that hotel in an hour and 30 minutes. It hasn't been built yet due to the economy, but it was an example of how quickly things can turn. Mr. Butler said that in the OC zone, environmental challenges were mentioned. He asked what those challenges were. Mr. Lane said that it was the quarry. Steep slopes were an issue. Mr. Butler said he assumed that Concept B and C were not currently in the ordinance. Mr. Butler asked Mr. Linnus regarding off-site improvements whether the developer would have to pick up approximately 60% of the improvements. Mr. Linnus agreed that off-site pro-rated benefit analysis did not include the word traffic, and that the town might indeed get hit with the price of those traffic improvements. Mr. Butler said that they were there to listen, he thought the presentation was very good, and that if the Board holds more meetings on this topic, they would be happy to attend. Mr. Ellis thanked Mr. Butler for his comments. Chairman Speeney said that this topic would be on the calendar for the March 19th meeting and that both Mr. Butler and the Weldons were invited to attend.

Mr. Bob Weldon came to the microphone and said that they are mining towards Bonnie Burn Road and don't have any plans to get any closer to Bonnie Burn Road. Mr.

Haveson asked about the "traffic improvement district" and whether or not we have one in the Borough. Mr. Linnus said that would refer to local roads and that the Mayor and Councilman could take this question back to Al Cruz and ask whether or not the Borough has that in place.

Mrs. Schaefer will convene a subcommittee meeting the first week in March to discuss ideas from board members.

Mr. Linnus said that regarding the Open Public Meetings Law, that the communications go directly to the board clerk, who will forward them straight to the subcommittee.

Hearing no more discussion, the Chair adjourned the meeting until the March meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Taylor
Planning Board Clerk