

MINUTES OF THE PLANNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING OF PISCATAWAY TOWNSHIP HELD ON OCTOBER 13, 2021.

The Regular Meeting of the Piscataway Planning Board was called to order at 7:30 P.M. on Zoom (online), Piscataway, New Jersey by Chairperson Smith.

Chairperson Smith stated: IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT, ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS PROVIDED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

- *Posted on the bulletin board of the Municipal Building and made available through the Township Clerk;
- *Notice published in the Courier News;
- *Notice sent to The Star Ledger;
- *Notice made available through the Township Librarians.

Thomas Barlow, Esq., states that he would like to place on the record that we are doing this meeting through an online meeting platform in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the guidelines that have been disseminated by the Department of Community Affairs, the Planning Board has tried it's best to comply with the open public meeting act and the Governor's guidelines in dealing with the current situation. In addition, the applicant whose matter will be heard this evening had the login information for the online meeting platform put forth in their notice; members of the public who wish to be heard will be afforded an opportunity as if we were in an actual, physical space. He believes we have done our absolute best to comply with the DCA guidelines and the open public meetings act.

ROLL CALL: Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Gabrielle Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Carol Saunders, Dennis Espinosa, Rev. Henry Kenney and Chairperson Brenda Smith.

ABSENT: Michael Foster

Also present: Thomas Barlow, Esq., Laura Buckley

It was determined that a quorum was present by roll call.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

5. SWEARING IN OF PROFESSIONALS: Steven Gottlieb, CME Associates

6. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: Mr. Barlow states that application #10 on the agenda, 20-PB-06, Nathan A. Yates, has been postponed until November 10, 2021. Also, # 11 on the agenda, 21-PB-09/10V, Paul Rabouin, has been Postponed until November 10, 2021 with no further notice required.

7. ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION TO MEMORIALIZE ACTION TAKEN ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2021:

- (a) **21-PB-22/23V** **100 Springfield Avenue, LLC**
Preliminary & Final Site Plan; Bulk Variance
Block 4601, Lot 9; Zone: LI-5
100 Springfield Avenue
Application was approved.

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MOTION was made by Carol Saunders to memorialize the resolution; seconded by Rev. Kenney.

ROLL CALL: Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

- (b) **21-PB-25/26V** **Henry Hinterstein**
Minor Subdivision & Bulk Variance
Block 8301, Lot 1.01; Zone: R-10
1201 Brookside Road
Application was approved.

MOTION was made by Carol Saunders to memorialize the resolution; seconded by Rev. Kenney.

ROLL CALL: Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

8. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES FROM THE REGULAR MEETING OF SEPT. 1, 2021.

MOTION was made by Carol Saunders to memorialize the minutes from the September 1, 2021

meeting; seconded by Rev. Kenney. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

9. DISCUSSION: In-Need Study to discuss whether Block 6702, Lot 6.02, 40 Kingsbridge Road, meets the criteria to be determined as a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment.

James F. Clarkin, IV, from Site Planning is sworn in to do the presentation. Mr. Clarkin shares his screen with the Board. He shows the aerial of the property near Centennial Avenue and Route 287. The property known as Block 6702, Lot 6.02 also known as 40 Kingsbridge Road is located in the LI-5 zone with 6.64 acres in size. It has a single one story 77,152 square foot structure on it. There are two parking lots with 232 parking spaces combined between them covered by solar panel canopies. There are two access drives for ingress and egress with a loading dock in the rear of the property.

Mr. Clarkin states that the building was previously used by Deutsche Bank as a disaster recovery office space. The space was purchased by the Bank in 1996, they made a number of improvements to it over the years to be used as a disaster recovery facility. If a major disaster happens and they can't use the main facility in New York City or another city location. Mr. Clarkin states that because of only being used for disasters, it sits vacant. The office space is mostly empty or used sparingly by Deutsche Bank employees during a normal business work week.

Mayor Wahler states that he would like to give a little background on this site. He states that this is the major recovery site for Deutsche Bank for 911. After 911 they transferred about 1,200 employees to that site, they were there for about a year and change until they had another site down near Wall Street. Deutsche Bank handles the transfers for the Federal Reserve, the New York stock exchange didn't get up and running for four days after 911 and they were waiting for Deutsche Bank on Kingsbridge to get operation because all of the people work in conjunction with the New York stock exchange. Once they were up and running the stock exchange got up and running.

Mr. Clarkin states that it was used during 911 and then again during super storm Sandy; the building can handle between 1,200 and 1,400 employees at one time. The building contains a cafeteria, air

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conditioning, two generators for backup power as well as the solar for power and energy in case the grid went down. He looks at the New Jersey DEP mapping tool to make sure there are no issues with wetlands; none were found. There are no endangered species found on the site either. The only item that came up was NJDEP has an environmental management system which is a data base tracking for a property. Two things came up, one was an air permit for the two generators and the other was a permit for underground storage tanks; no issues in reference to any environmental concerns.

Mr. Clarkin states that the property is in a LI-5 Zone where the surrounding land uses are light industrial, warehouse, commercial, office, hotels. Directly south is the Verizon office facility and other office spaces. The Master Plan was reexamined back in 2020, it definitely discusses the importance of redevelopment in the Township but does not talk about this property specifically. In general, the reexamination reports does discuss redevelopment in multiple sections. The study area was originally developed in 1976 and most of the buildings in the area were built around the same time. This is an older section of Piscataway Township and the study area can benefit from redevelopment efforts.

State Planning classification area is Planning Area 1. Mr. Clarkin states that during his site visit on July 8, 2021, it was a weekday prior to 5 pm during normal business hours. Both parking lots were almost entirely empty, he counted about 5 to 10 cars and when he went inside he saw a total of four (4) people which included a security guard, the building manager and two employees. He states on page 10 the Board can see pictures of the inside of the facility that he took on that day. He explains the pictures to the Board, long tables down the length of the building, cafeteria and some offices. The pictures show significant vacancies and based on the information from the building manager, it shows a discontinuance of the use.

Mr. Clarkin reads into record the statute for Criteria B of the law states in reference of the discontinuance of the use of a property/building. He finds that the disaster facility at 40 Kingsbridge meets two of those state qualifications. The photographs show a discontinuance of the use; an office building can't function without their equipment, phones, computers, etc. In addition, the network is down so the office does not function as it was originally intended. Mr. Clarkin asked the building manager why there weren't more employees at the facility and he states that during the past few years no more than 60 people during the week will be on site for the duration of the week, no daily. In his professional opinion, the facility has been significantly vacant for over two years. Criteria B can be applied.

Under Criteria D, there are three of them that this would fall under. The Covid pandemic really has shown how these kinds of facilities are ineffective. The ability to work from home has made this facility obsolete. With the sharp downturn for the use of office space has proliferated and made large office spaces and office parks more vacant. With the trend of technology in the past decade, this will only continue. In his professional opinion, the same applies to a large disaster facility such as the one on the subject property. Therefore the facility on Block 6702, Lot 6.02 is obsolete. The condition of the property is detrimental to the general welfare of the community because reasonable productivity has ceased resulting in a negative impact on the economic being of the community.

In his professional opinion, the buildings primary use is functionally obsolete and in need of redevelopment due to economic deterioration from lack of activity. Finally, Criteria H, the smart growth Planning principles can be applied to the property. Specifically, the fact that the study area is within a light industrial use area in proximity to Route 287. It really has great existing infrastructure to preserve the character of the community and help it's redevelopment should the Board and the Council find that it does qualify.

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Mr. Clarkin states that based on his study and conclusion, it is recommended that the Planning Board and the Township Council determine that the area is in need of redevelopment because it meets Criteria B, D and H of New Jersey's local and redevelopment housing Law. The study area meets three (3) of the eight (8) Criteria to qualify as a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment.

Chairperson Smith asks if there are any questions from the Board. Mayor Wahler states that it's not just here in Piscataway Township but the entire 287 corridor where office buildings are going by the wayside and the pandemic just helped. Any commercial real estate agent in New Jersey will tell you that office/warehousing is basically the type of facility is a dinosaur. They have to rethink how the corridor is going to look in the future. We are not the only Town going through this, Franklin, Bridgewater, all of the Towns going through 287.

Councilwoman Cahill asks about the solar panels on the roof. She would like to know what opportunities on the area. Mr. Clarkin states that he would like to see them stay, but it is up to the development that comes in. Also, it depends on the age of the panels. Panels have a typical 20 or 30 year life cycle and they degrade over time. The developer would have to talk to Deutsche Bank to acquire the panels and test them to see if they're worth keeping or recycled. Maybe they can be stored and used. Councilwoman Cahill states that she knows that some of them are about a decade or so old or a little older. She would like to know if there is a right-of-way for Route 287 on this property; he is not aware of any. Research needs to be done to see who owns the land and if there is a right-of-way for the expansion of the 287 corridor.

Rev. Kenney asks how buildings are on the facility. Mr. Clarkin states that it's just one building on the property, the other buildings are just in close proximity. Chairperson Smith asks if the other properties next door are vacant. Mr. Clarkin is not sure, but it will be looked into. No other questions from the Board. Public portion open/closed.

MOTION was made by Ms. Corcoran to approve the In-need study for 40 Kingsbridge Road to be determined as a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment; seconded by Chairperson Smith. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

Mr. Barlow states that in anticipation of the discussion items being approved by the Board, they have received a copy of the resolution for review. Chairperson Smith asks for a motion on the resolution.

MOTION was made by Ms. Corcoran to approve the Redevelopment plan for Block 6702, Lot 6.02; seconded by Rev. Kenney. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

12. DISCUSSION: AMENDMENT TO THE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 800 CENTENNIAL AVENUE; BLOCK 6703, LOT 2.02; SIGNS.

Mr. Barlow states that this amendment is for the redevelopment plan at 800 Centennial Avenue. Under the previous approval, they are only allowed to have one facade sign per building. They are requesting to have one sign per tenant in the building. Council has sent it over to the Planning Board for discussion. Dawn Corcoran states that the zoning ordinance didn't take into account that it could be a multi-tenant building. Capping it at six (6) would be sufficient and it probably would not get that high. There could be up to six different signs but only on the building itself, not freestanding. Public portion open/closed.

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MOTION was made by Rev. Henry Kenney to approve the approved the amendment to 800 Centennial Avenue; seconded by Ms. Carol Saunders. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

Mr. Barlow states that he has crafted a resolution for this amendment being approved by the Board, they have received a copy of the resolutions for review and get back to Town Council in time. Chairperson Smith asks for a motion on the resolution.

MOTION was made by Ms. Saunders to approve the amendment resolution for 800 Centennial Avenue; seconded by Ms. Corcoran. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

13: DISCUSSION: To Retain 4Site Planning, LLC to provide professional services to prepare an Area in Need of Redevelopment Study for Block 5301, Lot 14.04; Also known as 1551 South Washington Avenue.

Mr. Barlow states that this discussion is to retain 4Site Planning, LLC to prepare an area in need of redevelopment study for Block 5301, Lot 14.04 located at 1551 South Washington Avenue. Township Council has asked the Planning Board by resolution on September 14, 2021 referred to the Planning Board that they had a proposal from 4Site to do a redevelopment study for this property and the funds were available for this study to go forward. It would just be a resolution from the Planning Board to retain them for the study. Chairperson Smith asks for a motion to retain 4Site Planning to do an in-need study for redevelopment for Block 5301, Lot 14.04.

MOTION was made by Rev. Henry Kenney to approve the retention of 4Site Planning for Block 5301, Lot 14.04; seconded by Ms. Carol Saunders. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

Mr. Barlow states that he has crafted a resolution for this being approved by the Board, they have received a copy of the resolutions for review and get back to Town Council so they are aware and the study can be started. Chairperson Smith asks for a motion on the resolution.

MOTION was made by Ms. Saunders to approve to retain 4Site Planning for Block 5301, Lot 14.04 in-need study; seconded by Ms. Corcoran. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion

14: DISCUSSION: To Retain 4Site Planning, LLC to provide professional services to prepare an Area in Need of Redevelopment Study for Block 1701, Lot 2.03; Also known as 4100 New Brunswick Avenue.

Mr. Barlow states that just as the last one, the Town Council has asked the Planning Board to look into retaining 4Site Planning, LLC to prepare an in-need study for Block 1701, Lot 2.03 known as 4100 New Brunswick Avenue. Funds are available for the study to be done. Chairperson Smith asks for a motion.

MOTION was made by Rev. Henry Kenney to approve the retention of 4Site Planning for Block 1701, Lot 2.03; seconded by Ms. Saunders. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn

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Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion.

Mr. Barlow states that he again has crafted a resolution for this being approved by the Board, they have received a copy of the resolutions for review and get back to Town Council so they are aware and the study can be started. Chairperson Smith asks for a motion on the resolution.

MOTION was made by Ms. Saunders to approve to retain 4Site Planning for Block 5301, Lot 14.04 in-need study; seconded by Rev. Kenney. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran-Gardella, Dennis Espinosa, Carol Saunders, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith voted yes on the motion

15. DULY AUDITED BILLS TO BE PAID

MOTION was made by Councilwoman Cahill to pay the bills; seconded by Carol Saunders. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Wahler, Councilwoman Cahill, Dawn Corcoran, Carol Saunders, Dennis Espinosa, Rev. Kenney and Chairperson Smith.

16. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION made by Rev. Henry Kenney to adjourn; seconded by Ms. Corcoran; All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 P.M.

NEXT PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP BOARD MEETING – OCT. 27, 2021 AT 2:30 P.M.
NEXT PLANNING BOARD REGULAR MEETING – NOVEMBER 10, 2021 AT 7:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura A. Buckley
Planning Board Clerk for Carol A. Saunders, Secretary

I certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 13, 2021, same having been fully adopted by the Planning Board of Piscataway on November 10, 2021.

Carol Saunders, Secretary
Piscataway Township Planning Board