

Hightstown Planning Board
 Regular Meeting
 March 9, 2015
 7:30 pm

OPEN SESSION

Fred Montferrat called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. and read the Open Public Meetings Act statement: "Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, pursuant to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231. Said notice was sent to the Trenton Times and the Windsor-Hights Herald, and is posted in the Borough Clerk's office."

Flag Salute

Roll Call

	PRESENT	ABSENT	LATE ARRIVAL
Mr. Lane		✓	
Mr. Montferrat	✓		
Mr. Stults	✓		
Mr. Hansen	✓		
Mr. Mulleavey	✓		
Mr. Searing	✓		
Mayor Quattrone	✓		
Mr. Musing	✓		
Ms. Colavecchio	✓		
Mr. Balcewicz, Alt. #1	✓		
Mr. Honsel	✓		

Also in attendance: Sandy Belan, Planning Board Secretary; Gary Rosensweig, Planning Board Attorney; Tamara Lee, Borough Planner; Carmela Roberts, Borough Engineer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Montferrat asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Stults made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Mulleavey seconded. Mr. Montferrat asked for a roll call vote to approve the agenda.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Montferrat, Mayor Quattrone, Mr. Stults, Mr. Hansen, Mr. Searing, Mr. Musing, Mr. Mulleavey, Ms. Colavecchio, Mr. Balcewicz and Mr. Honsel voted yes. Mr. Lane was absent. **Motion passed 10-0.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Montferrat asked if there were any corrections or comments on the minutes of the January 12, 2015 Regular meeting. Seeing none, Mr. Montferrat asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Balcewicz made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Stults seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Montferrat, Mr. Stults, Mr. Hansen, Mr. Searing, Mr. Musing, Mr. Mulleavey, Ms. Colavecchio, Mr. Balcewicz and Mr. Honsel voted yes. Mr. Lane was absent. Mayor Quattrone abstained. **Motion passed 9-0, one abstention.**

Mr. Montferrat asked if there were any corrections or comments on the minutes of the February 9, 2015 Regular meeting. Seeing none, Mr. Montferrat asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Stults made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Balcewicz seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Montferrat, Mr. Stults, Mr. Hansen, Mr. Searing, Mr. Musing, Ms. Colavecchio, Mr. Balcewicz and Mr. Honsel voted yes. Mr. Lane was absent. Mayor Quattrone and Mr. Musing abstained. **Motion passed 8-0, two abstentions.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Montferrat opened the floor for any public comments regarding anything that is not on the agenda.

Susan Chow, 101 Bank Street, Hightstown, NJ – Rug Mill Redevelopment

Mr. Rosensweig – You or your attorney have spoken with Mr. Underhill, Council Attorney, Mr. Chin and myself. We recommend that you deal with Borough staff on this matter. Once you make application, the Planning Board will meet and discuss your application.

At this time, Mr. Stults recused himself.

Ms. Chow – I have three questions to pose to the Board.

Mill Redevelopment Plan – If I purchase the property do I have a few years to comply with the redevelopment plan? Mr. Rosensweig – response - no. The redevelopment plan does not provide for that.

Is there any expiration on the redevelopment plan? Mr. Rosensweig – No, like zoning it does not expire.

Does the redevelopment allow for the construction of single family homes? Mr. Rosensweig – only multi family.

At this time, Mr. Stults returned to the meeting.

There being no further comments, Mr. Montferrat closed the public portion of the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Downtown Design Standards Manual – Rick Pratt, 214 Stockton Street and Chairman of the Historic Preservation Commission presented an overview of the proposed Design Standards Manual.

A copy of the Design Standards Manual was distributed to each Board member for their review. The Board reviewed the document page-by-page.

Mr. Pratt - The goal is to have some guidelines and someone to oversee the downtown area not just the Historic District. Currently, there is no formal procedure to handle questions and concerns. Should the Historic Preservation Commission or the Borough Office handle these issues?

Mr. Musing – Why does the HPC feel that stronger guidelines are necessary? Mr. Pratt gave some examples of property owners who have not complied.

Mr. Montferrat – It should go through Borough office first.

Mr. Montferrat – Mandatory items should not just be overseen by the HPC but should also be reviewed by the Planning Board. When we talk about mandatory items, it usually refers to the Historic District when we are receiving grants.

Ms. Lee – It should be required within the Historic District. Once the form based zoning is adopted, the policy may be extended to other areas.

Mr. Montferrat - We may send this document to a subcommittee for a more thorough review. Once completed and approved, it will be added to the Master Plan and Re-Examination report.

Mr. Rosensweig – Before this gets to an ordinance, a public hearing would be held to add the Design Manual to the Master Plan and Re-Exam Report, and then an ordinance would be adopted.

Mr. Hansen – question use of shall vs. should?

Ms. Lee - This becomes part of the Master Plan which is a policy document. Policy tends to be a little less strict than ordinances. Stricter language would be used in the ordinance.

Mr. Rosensweig – This would be for any new construction in those two zones.

Ms. Lee – The whole purpose of the form based zoning is to preserve and enhance the character of the downtown. The big picture is promoting Hightstown as a “destination” and one of the things that make it a destination is the historic character. Therefore, the architecture is important. That is why the form based ordinance and the design guide is important. I think the design guidelines are great, and I can imagine what the form based ordinance will do. I think there is a gap between this and the future ordinance because we don’t know how we are going to apply it yet. Are we talking about any construction, whether it needs a site plan or not? This may be something you want to do, but it would require an additional ordinance. The Design Manual would become the basis for a code, but not necessarily translate directly into the code. The guidelines listed in the document could be part of the code. These are very standard guidelines also used by the State. The front part has to do more with process which needs to be further developed.

Mr. Stults – These guidelines are to maintain the historic character of the Borough. Trying to be more user-friendly and let people know that we want your business in Hightstown. However, strongly suggest that they maintain the residential/historic character of the area.

Mr. Montferrat – Once you get into the ordinance, it will contain stronger language.

Mr. Balcewicz – HPC could review and give recommendations, but not necessarily mandatory.

Mr. Honsel – In other historic towns are the rules mandatory or suggested? In Princeton they are mandatory.

Mr. Rosensweig - It took Red Bank a long time to develop their historic district.

Ms. Lee - Rocky Hill adopted an historic ordinance last year. Certain projects that face public streets are mandatory others are not. Classified major and minor/public or private.

Mr. Montferrat –That is a great way to do it-- major/minor or public/private. Large developer would be required to meet the guidelines. Planning Board would hear the case if they wish to seek any relief from the ordinance.

Mr. Musing – It would be nice to see what some other towns have done.

Ms. Lee – This is not an ordinance, it is only a policy document.

Mayor Quattrone – I do not think that Hightstown can afford to chase away potential businesses or residents. We should work with them and offer guidance regarding the historic character.

Mr. Pratt – 126 Stockton removed a bay window – this is the first house in the Historic District. The residents were required by the court to come to the HPC. Spoke with the homeowners and several members of the HPC volunteered to work with the homeowner to restore the front back to its original character.

Mr. Stults – Residents don't know what is required or who to contact. We need to inform the residents and businesses that the HPC and ARC are available to work with the homeowners and businesses.

Mr. Pratt – Once this document is approved, copies should be distributed to residents in the Historic District, to real estate agents and added to the website.

Discussion of the two new perpendicular signs (12 Farms and Metro PCS) in the downtown area. They are visible to drivers and pedestrians as well as being very attractive and historic in character.

Mr. Montferrat – The entire document should be in a form which the Planning Board is comfortable with before it is appended to the Master Plan.

Mr. Montferrat appointed a subcommittee to review the “Downtown Hightstown Design Manual”– Lee Stults, Ryan Rosenberg, Downtown Hightstown Board, Dimitri Musing, Harold Mulleavey, Tamara Lee and Fred Montferrat. The subcommittee will plan to meet within the next two weeks.

Mr. Rosensweig - Notice 48 hours in advance of the date and time of the subcommittee meeting and the subject to be discussed.

Mr. Pratt – Membership East Windsor-Hightstown Historic Society - \$20 per person membership. Encourage membership. The application will be emailed to Planning Board members.

NEW BUSINESS

Main Street Redevelopment Plan Revised – Mr. Stults – Proposed Council changes are in red. The existing plan was written for the prior developer.

Mr. Rosensweig – The Board has copies of Memorandum dated March 9, 2015 re the Main Street Redevelopment Plan – Amendments per Council Resolution 2015-52 Compare to the Re-examination Report/Master Plan 2014.

The Planning Board reviewed the Main Street Redevelopment Plan per Council Resolution 2015-52 and find it to be substantially consistent with the Re-examination Report /Master Plan 2014.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Montferrat, Mr. Hansen, Mr. Searing, Mayor Quattrone, Mr. Musing, Mr. Mulleavey, Ms. Colavecchio, Mr. Balcewicz and Mr. Honsel voted yes. Mr. Stults abstained. Mr. Lane was absent. **Motion passed 9-0, one abstention.**

OLD BUSINESS

Subcommittee report – Residential Business – The subcommittee met with the Zoning Office, Mr. Schmeling on Saturday. Mr. Schmeling provided a draft regarding residential businesses, which the Planning Board will review at the April meeting.

Residential Business – Mr. Searing – more complicated than we originally thought – two issues (1) dentist office (does not seem to be a lot that can be done at this time). When resolutions are written they should be more detailed and specific as to what is permitted, etc.; (2) permitted residential business is more complicated.

Mr. Rosensweig – If you make a finding and represent to a Planning Board what you are going to do, those representations are binding. Every detail is not necessarily included in the respective resolution. If you make the presentation, the plans are reviewed by the engineer and planner before they are signed by the Chairman and Secretary.

Mr. Balcewicz – Mr. Schmeling has written a letter to the dental office to pursue this further. The Planning Board has no enforcement power. The Zoning Officer should follow up and inspect and get the necessary information he needs (floor plan, number of employees, permits, etc.). As the enforcement officer, he is responding to a resident's concern. The zoning officer has sent two letters requesting floor plan and paperwork. To date he has not requested an inspection.

Mr. Rosensweig – The Planning Board has no enforcement power. It must go through the Zoning Officer.

Mayor Quattrone – Once we receive a complaint from a resident, the appropriate department should follow up and respond. The Mayor will talk with Bill Schmeling regarding inspection of this property.

Mr. Balcewicz – Bill Schmeling has put together a list of home base businesses. Several details need to be clarified. The Board will discuss this at the April meeting.

PROFESSIONAL REPORTS

Ms. Roberts – The plans for the removal of the sycamore trees were advertised. The bids will be received on Wednesday, March 11th.

Mayor Quattrone– JSP&L – tree removal – the tree surgeons will take the trees to the ground. The Borough would be responsible for grinding the stumps. JCP&L – in other towns the Boy Scout's sell the firewood as a fund raiser for their troop.

Mayor Quattrone congratulated Carmela Roberts on the Transportation Alternatives grant in the amount of \$331,000 for Peddie Lake Dam Pedestrian Bridge awarded to the Borough this week. He also commended Ms. Roberts in crafting the grant application for the Safe Streets to School Grant (\$275,000). Both grants were awarded by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

The Safe Streets to School Grant will fund improvements to Stockton and Joseph Streets. The existing sidewalk and curb along Stockton Street are severely deteriorated, creating a hazardous condition for pedestrians. The improvements will extend on Stockton St. from the intersection with Oak Lane to a point approximately 100-ft. east of the intersection with Summit Street. In addition, curb will be installed along the entire length of Joseph Street, sidewalk will be installed on the west side, and the roadway will be repaved to accommodate the new sidewalks and curbing. The improved sidewalks and curbs will make the project area ADA compliant and create a safer area for students walking or biking to and from school.

Mr. Rosensweig – The Planning Board should not be meeting with applicants on a pre-application basis. They must make formal application to the Planning Board.

Mr. Stults moved to adjourn. Mr. Searing seconded. All ayes. Meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandy Belan
Planning Board Secretary