



MEETING MINUTES MERCHANTVILLE JOINT LAND USE BOARD

Borough Hall Council Chambers
1 West Maple Avenue, Merchantville, NJ 08109
Tuesday, December 10, 2019, 7:30pm

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chairman Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:30pm and advised that the meeting was being held in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. All persons present stood for the pledge of allegiance.
2. **ROLL CALL.** Ms. Wuebker called the roll.

<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class I</u>	<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class III</u>	<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class II</u>				
Benjamin	Brennan	DeSimone	Fiume	Fitzgerald	Lammey	Licata	Stewart	Uricchio	Woods	Wuebker
	X			X		X	X	X	X	X

Ms. Wuebker, Community Development Director, and Mr. Madden, Board attorney, were also present.

3. **OLD BUSINESS**

- Approval of Meeting Minutes - Mr. Woods made a motion to approve the November 12, meeting minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Stewart.

<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class I</u>	<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class III</u>	<u>Class IV</u>	<u>Class II</u>				
Benjamin	Brennan	DeSimone	Fiume	Fitzgerald	Lammey	Licata	Stewart	Uricchio	Woods	Wuebker
	X			X		X	X	X	X	Abstain

- Approval of Resolution – Mr. Fitzgerald made a motion to approve Resolution # 2019-4 regarding the application of Amy Rominiecki and Marshall Downing, 28 South Cove Road, Block 32, Lots 11, 11.01 for a Variance to Install a 6' Fence in the Rear Yard of the Property. The motion was seconded by Mr. Licata.

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	X			X		X	X	X	X	Abstain

Mr. Lammey entered Council Chambers at approximately 7:45pm.

Chairman Brennan inquired about Council Resolution R19-80. Ms. Wuebker explained it has been tabled until the Board concludes the Master Plan Reexamination Report analysis, as that sets forth the policy for any proposed zoning ordinance changes. It is anticipated the Board will make recommendations to Council once Reexamination Report is finished.

- Master Plan Reexamination.

Ms. Wuebker recapped where the Board left off at the last meeting. She prepared some changes since the last meeting, based on requested changes, which she summarized.

Board members discussed whether residential use would be appropriate on first floor in secondary commercial areas of the downtown. Examples were discussed such as Chestnut Station Apartments, which is located in B-1 district. East Park Avenue formerly had residential/office structures on them. Vacant area on East Chestnut does not directly front on the street – it fronts on the multi-use path. There was a discussion about not specifying that first floor residential use is a desired or intended use in B-1 - - that if residential uses occur, it should be as a result of a site specific variance or redevelopment project in the B1. There was a discussion about redevelopment plan approval process. Board members felt better for the applicant to bear the burden of explaining why it's beneficial and consistent with goals, rather than making it a default 'yes' in the master plan. Another Board member concerned that it could otherwise lead to displacement of existing storefronts with residential uses. It was the consensus of the Board to edit that section to remove the residential use reference, but keep the 'office' language. The Chair discussed how commerce is changing so beneficial to allow office on first floors.

Ms. Wuebker explained that one part of the statutory criteria for the Reexam report is whether any Redevelopment Plans should be incorporated into the Land Use element. The Board discussed incorporating the 2008 redevelopment plan amendment regarding building height as an addendum to master plan. With regard to the 2016 Redevelopment Plan Amendment, the Board agreed that since it is likely going to be amended again, it would be prudent to wait. Once it is amended, then it can be incorporated, if deemed appropriate.

The Board concurs that the concerns about harmony of new construction fitting in to existing downtown fabric has been somewhat reduced because ordinance was changed to reduce the maximum building height, people aren't as afraid of change as they were in the past, etc. Several board members felt that the 3-story, 48' height language should be expounded upon to add more criteria, so that that a variance would not be sought to get 4 stories with a flat roof. 48' does not typically correlate to 3 stories. Board member suggested that the Ordinance language may want to speak to the maximum height of the eve, or ridge, or some other projection; concern about scale on streetscape. It was discussed that a restaurant could be higher than 12' on the first floor. Part of Board's role in this Reexamination is to recommend any needed changes to development regulations to Council for consideration, so Board could put something in Reexamination Report with suggested language. There is already language in the Master Plan design guidelines that recommend step back or use different materials in order to mitigate the perceived impact of building scale on the streetscape for taller buildings.

Ms. Wuebker explained that she removed the section describing the physical condition of the PNC Bank building as a Board member concerned that it could be interpreted as the Board signifying that the building should be demolished; since that particular section of the draft report did not address policy it was decided to remove it. Board members discussed the building. The Historic Preservation Plan Element identifies the building for preservation and any application to demolish it should be evaluated for a Certificate of Appropriateness on its own merits. There are existing standards in regulations to evaluate when that would be appropriate.

There was a discussion about solar panels in historic districts and the need to incorporate guidelines into the Z.O. for evaluating applications for C.A. The Chairman asked if anyway to include requirement that HPC review new residential infill dwellings in residential zoning districts. Ms. Wuebker indicated that

currently none of the residential districts are considered locally designated historic districts, which is what gives you the ability to regulate it. The few recent applications for new residential construction went to HPC because it was a condition of their variance approval; otherwise would not have authority to require it. Ms. Wuebker believes it would likely require extending historic districts to residential neighborhoods if Borough wants to ensure that new infill will fit in with existing historic character, but defers to Board Solicitor. The Chairman discussed that only would want to do that if could limit the review to specific changes, like new construction, rather than something less significant like change of paint color of shutters.

The 2007 Master Plan recommended a parking study. Some strategies were implemented. The Reexam report recommends allowing for shared parking. A Board member expressed concerns about the off-set formulas and how to control shared parking. Ms. Wuebker stated there would need to be easements in place, but there are defacto shared parking lots already (like church, CVS, school) and on-street parking is shared. While there is not a lot of opportunity to create new parking lots in Merchantville, we don't want to prohibit it. For Master Plan, it can be general policy recommendation to encourage shared parking. For Zoning Ordinance, it can be more specific about it – can look at other comparable communities to see examples of how they address shared parking regulations. Also she discussed evaluating all the curb space to make sure it's being productively used – such as south side of Maple Avenue. The report also recommends that a traffic engineer conduct a circulation and parking study along Chestnut Avenue.

Issues 4 and 5 are similar –revitalization and stabilization of the West End and Chapel/Centre Gateway Areas. In West End, there were several joint studies conducted with Pennsauken and Camden. The report recommends incorporating those studies into the Land Use Plan Element. They have been uploaded to the google drive. Nothing controversial in there. Board members asked about prior recommendations of locating a community facility to the West End so there would be a presence in the West End. Ms. Wuebker explained that the police department is currently in a position where need to make changes to comply with requirements of state law, which will involve either modifying the current municipal building or possibly needing to locate somewhere else. Locations in the West End have been superficially been discussed, but money is an issue. A Board member discussed how it's tremendously expensive to retrofit a building for those purposes.

The Centre/Chapel area has improved. Buildings at Chapel and Magnolia have been demolished. Visibility at that intersection is important and should be monitored during future development. There was a discussion about 177 S Centre Street windows are boarded up. Ms. Wuebker said she'll check on it.

Under Supplemental Topics – the draft report recommends updating Z.O to be consistent with procedures and standards in MLUL. There are some housekeeping measures. Storage of Recreational Vehicles is being abused. The Ordinance should be amended to clarify how many you can have, how close it can be parked to a neighbor, what type of surface it needs to be parked on, etc.

For circulation topics, there was discussion about speeding on streets and feel that speed humps have worked. Discussion about Centre Street being changed to double lines, rather than dashed lines when County redoes road in spring. Chestnut needs better road striping to direct traffic properly. A Board member requested that something be included in the report about the need for mid-block crosswalks in the west end near 606 and auto repair shop to connect residents to storefronts across the street to be safe. Maple is a County Road. Ms. Wuebker will ask County whether more crosswalks are feasible in that area. Discussion about tree limbs blocking crossing lights in some areas. One of the circulation recommendations is to realign the multi-use path so that it will no longer be on-road. When the County works on Centre Street in the spring, it is hoped that the project will be included. The problems at that intersection were discussed.

There is new law that requires towns to plan for electric vehicle charging stations by identifying proposed locations in the Master Plan. The draft report suggests one in front of municipal building, one in the Verizon parking lot, and one in the West End when a new parking lot is developed. Ms. Wuebker asked if anyone felt strongly about any other locations to let her know. The report also recommends a jitney feasibility study. Trying to expand multi-modal travel opportunities. One of the things that Merchantville lacks, that other communities have, is public train transportation that makes it easy to get around and into Philadelphia. It could take riders to nearby patco station.

Stormwater Management Plan update is also recommended, as discussed at previous meetings, due to new DEP regulations. The draft report also formally incorporates the Borough's Fair Share Housing plan, which is the court settlement agreement with Fair Share Housing Center for 5 units. The Agreement will be attached as an exhibit to the report. Board members received a copy of it on google drive. While Borough Council approved it, it has not formally adopted by the Planning Board yet.

Once changes made, the document could go to public hearing. Ms. Wuebker will send around a final re-write. Board members discuss reorganization date. Most members could not make the 14th. It will take place on January the 21st with February 11th for public hearing. There will be a couple new members. One of the Council members will no longer be on the Board, given election to Council. Mr. Benjamin will no longer be on the Board. It was decided to keep at 7:30 pm for the time being. Mr. Madden said he already noticed for January 14th, but he will readvertise for the 21st. Ms. Wuebker has not received any applications for 2020 yet.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their efforts this year and wished everyone happy holidays.

4. ADJOURNMENT. The Board adjourned approximately 8:50pm.