

SEPTEMBER 7, 2017

MINUTES

HIGHLAND PARK REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
HIGHLAND PARK BOROUGH HALL
221 South Fifth Ave.
Highland Park, NJ

Call to Order

The Highland Park Redevelopment Agency Meeting was called to order in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by Mrs. Baruh at 7:34 PM. Mrs. Baruh indicated the location of the fire exits.

Roll call

Present	Mrs. Baruh, Mr. Fechter, Ms. Levinson, Mr. Perlman, Mr. Solomon arrived at 7:36 pm,
Absent	Mr. de Villa, Mr. Wong
Agency Professionals	Mr. Baumann, Agency Counsel, Jim Constantine, Planner
Council Liaison	Susan Welkovits, Council President arrived at 7:45pm-9:00pm

PRESENTATIONS:

-Anton Popov

Popov's Attorney provided the financial feasibility of the project as previously requested. He said they met with the screening committee in an attempt to come up with a project that was supported by the Redevelopment vision; a traditional looking main street building, mixed use with retail on the bottom front and apartments in the rear as well as on the second floor, the apartment in the rear is handicap accessible eliminating the need for an elevator.

Anton Popov said that there would be four apartments on the second floor and one on the first floor. He said that the plans are not final and was open to suggestions.

Mr. Perlman said that he knows in the past that Mr. Popov was looking at five apartments upstairs and having retail on the first floor. Mr. Popov said that due to the lay out and the need for a handicap accessible apartment there was a need to put one apartment on the first floor. He said that there would also be a one-bedroom apartment upstairs with limitations on the number of windows, etc.

Mr. Perlman asked if the ground floor apartment complied with the Redevelopment Plan? Popov's Attorney indicated in order to completely comply and have all apartments on the second floor you would need an elevator.

Mrs. Baruh said that she does not know that it is in violation of the Plan but would look into it and advise. She reminded the Commissioners that they have already amended the Plan once in connection with this project in order to provide for a setback change and some other aspects, and unless anyone has a significant objection to the downstairs apartment, the apartment is intended to comply with other legal requirements.

Mr. Solomon said recognizing that this is a very constrained property, and recognizing that we want to see a development happen on this property and that if we are overly particular there would be no development on this property and he believes that this is something they should be okay with.

Mr. Perlman said he agreed although in the Plan it is not a permitted use. Mr. Baumann said that the Plan indicates that residential units cannot occupy the ground floor.

Mrs. Baruh said that this would require an amendment to the Plan, she asked Popov's Attorney if he would get her a copy of the State regulation. Popov's Attorney agreed.

Mr. Baumann said that he would send a request for an amendment to the Council for this property for one accessible apartment on the ground floor. All agreed.

Mr. Constantine said that the Screening Committee on seeing this plan made some recommendations architecturally, there are some issues related to the site plan. The Screening Committee was pleased with where the building was going architecturally but there are some minor issues to resolve but they felt comfortable enough to not have to see it again. He said that it was recommended at the Screening Committee to keep the project moving, and tie parking with the time for Certificate of Occupancy. He said that Popov knows he needs five off-site parking spaces. He said that they have had conversations with the Church lot around the corner but if that does not work out, there is an alternative site but this could take months.

Ms. Welkovits said that the apartments were all two bedrooms and now they were all one bedroom before. Mr. Popov said that they were all two bedroom but oddly shaped, because the building is close to the property line there is a limited amount of windows that he can put there. The apartment in the back was moved to the left side because there was a window issue; they have to be egress windows.

Mr. Constantine asked Mr. Popov if he could make any of the two bedroom apartments a one bedroom. Mr. Popov said in theory yes but the space is there.

Mr. Constantine said that it was recommended to hedge and edge the parking lot, and get a couple more trees to try to get that at the edge. He said that this was not his property, and the question is do we engage the adjoining property owner, and if the property owner was willing in the benefit of improving the corner.

Mrs. Baruh asked if there was going to be planting along the back of the property. Mr. Popov said that there was going to be a vinyl fence and a trash enclosure.

Ms. Welkovits asked about the mechanicals. Mr. Popov said that all of the mechanicals will be on the roof and not visible from the street.

Mr. Constantine asked that Mr. Popov's architect dash in where those units are and if needed could provide rooftop screening.

Mrs. Baruh said that in order for the Agency to prepare a redevelopment agreement we will need specific information about on how the building will be built so they can ensure that is what is going to happen, a contractual obligation to build the way it is agreed upon by everyone. Popov's Attorney said aside from the Redevelopment Agency, typically it would go to the Planning Board and presumably get approval and then you would submit working drawings that

would be reviewed by the Zoning Officer to ensure it complies with the approvals and then the only way to go vary from the working drawings is approval from the Code Official.

Mr. Baumann said that he would include the plans with the agreement and asked Popov's Attorney to provide him with the plans. Popov's Attorney agreed.

Popov's Attorney said he would get a list of materials from the architect and submit that to Mr. Baumann, along with the information on the handicap issue.

Mr. Constantine indicated that there was one other site issue with handrails because of the grading issue to get to the ground floor. He said that the grading now rises up from the lower alley up towards the door and same on the other side and believes Bruce Koch needs to be brought in and talk to the applicants Engineer. He suggested having the Borough bring the neighbor in and explain that we want to clean up the whole corner. He said that they spoke about this at the Screening Committee, it is not a significant area in the front but leaving the neighbors as it is, with drainage issues and that is forcing some of the humping; ideally if you could go all the way back to the parking lot you can handle the grading for the whole area. He said that we are not asking the neighbor to spend to penny it would all be done by the applicant.

Mr. Fechter asked if there was a basement. Mr. Popov said that there was a basement, with a boiler, depends on the tenants, the HVAC unit can go downstairs for the one apartment on the first floor, maybe washer and dryers down there to save room in the apartments.

Mrs. Baruh asked Mr. Popov how long he thought it might take to accomplish and cost. Mr. Popov said he hopes about 1 year and approximately \$750,000 total.

Mr. Perlman asked what the rents would be. Popov's Attorney said that there would be one COAH unit as required but rents have not been determined as of yet. He asked if the Borough had a COAH Ordinance, and assumes there is a 15% set aside which is the general standard so we would have to produce one low/moderate income unit.

Mr. Constantine asked Mr. Baumann before this could come back for a formal action; there are other things he still needs to resolve in the plans and the amendment needs to occur. Mr. Baumann said it could be approved with contingencies.

- Park Valley Development

Mrs. Baruh said that Park Valley Development would like to present their qualifications but were unable to attend the meeting tonight.

Approval of minutes of previous meetings

-June 15, 2017

It was MOVED by LEVINSON and seconded by SOLOMON that the June 15, 2017 minutes with changes be approved and with a voice vote by all present, the June 15, 2017 minutes were approved.

Resolutions

HPRA R2017-17

Approval of Access Agreement with Classic Cleaners, Block 173,

Lot 43, 46 and 49

It was MOVED by LEVINSON and seconded by SOLOMON that HPRA R2017-17 be approved.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
Nays – None

There being five (5) ayes and no nays, HPRA R2017-17 was approved.

HPRA R2017-18 Resolution of the Highland Park Redevelopment Agency
Authorizing an Extension of the Conditional Redeveloper's
Agreement with Highland Park Development Partners LLC
(Tantleff)

It was MOVED by SOLOMON and seconded by PERLMAN that HPRA R2017-18 be approved.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
Nays – None

There being five (5) ayes and no nays, HPRA R2017-18 was approved.

HPRA R2017-19 Approval of Bills List

It was MOVED by LEVINSON and seconded by PERLMAN that HPRA R2017-19 be approved.

ROLL CALL: Ayes –Fechter, Levinson, Perlman, Solomon, Baruh
Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, HPRA R2017-19 was approved.

Chairperson and Committee Reports

--Treasurers Report

Mr. Fechter said that the total operating budget for the year is approximately 60% spent and is on track. He said that the escrow accounts were in good shape. In the operating account, there is approximately \$12,000 and in the escrow is approximately \$19,000. He said that there was \$25,000 transfer of funds to cover half the Agency's year. He said that the Agency was on track and everything looked good.

--Popov Project - None

--Tantleff project

Denise Nickel, Economic Development Representative, Middlesex County Office of Economic and Business Development, Department of Business Development and Education said that the Brownfields Interagency Task Force that is now called the Brownfields Interagency Work Group and has existed for about 20 years. She said that they feel that they are not working with communities soon enough and seeing the same types of errors being made over and over so they

are trying to start with towns sooner in their projects. It is still required that some kind of state of federal funding has to have been committed to the project before they get involved and Highland Park is perfect in that regard. Highland Park is the first community with which they are going to experiment with program. They work project by project, the municipality or the redevelopment agency presents the project, including the resources lined up to date, and they want you to speak about the obstacles and problems and errors. They want to use the people that they bring to offer advice, technical assistance, try to think about how their department, office or program can help, when they would kick in, what kinds of things you might need before. It is supposed to be a dialogue, in general they are not open to the public, they are meetings where just the agency, their staff, and federal and State agencies. This particular one they are doing is a little bit different, they have both Perth Amboy and Highland Park presenting the same day, it is being held October 3, 2017 at the Fire Academy in Sayreville, NJ. Perth Amboy will be presenting in the morning, they are much further along with their particular projects and they had met with a group last year some time and they are coming back for a "tune-up" talk, then the group is taking a tour through Perth Amboy, through their various redevelopment projects, then there will be a lunch. After lunch, Highland Park will present and that is open to other municipalities within Middlesex County that might be either starting development projects. In her experience, she represented for Milltown because they did not have any staff at all, and she presented for them and there were federal entities that were there and what came out of that, which started as beginning project with this brownfields assessment grant of \$200,000, which was, shared with four other communities and that evolved into millions.

Mrs. Baruh said that they would be presenting the Tantleff project. She said that she cannot attend on October 3, 2017 and has asked Randy Solomon as Vice Chair to attend, Debra Tantleff as the developer will also be attending.

Ms. Nickel said she would be present to assist wherever she is needed. She said that Teri Jover and Stacy Kaplan are preparing the presentation, she will just be advising them on that. She said that all Commissioners are welcome to attend; you could go to all or just part of it. The Perth Amboy portion starts at 9 am and right after lunch around the 1pm Highland Park will present. Afterwards there will be networking time to meet with individual agency members, and ask questions. She said that the time has not been pinned down precisely but would get that information as soon as it is made available and invitations will go out to everyone.

Mrs. Baruh said as Stacy is proceeding to put this thing together with Teri, Denise and everybody, it would be circulated so people can put in their comments.

Ms. Nickel said that part of it is for the Agency and staff people to understand some of the programs so when you are reviewing a proposal you can have a better understanding, and when you understand all the pieces, you can think more flexibly when you are reviewing the proposals.

--Borough Square Project - None

--Other Borough Initiatives - None

Public Comment

Mrs. Baruh opened the floor to the public.

Gary Pfeffer, South 11th Avenue, asked if the Agency actively go after Developers or do you review developers as they come to you.

Mrs. Baruh said that the Agency certainly do review developers that express an interest in Highland Park, people call Borough Hall and they are referred to the Agency and assuming that they want to do something that is consistent with the town, they are happy to talk to someone. The Agency has gone to various places where developers meet and let our needs be known.

Gary Pfeffer asked if there was a PR that spoke about the demographics of Highland Park and why we are so great and his business provided them to the developers and then followed up with phone calls and invited them to tour the town. He thinks that it would be a more proactive way of doing things perhaps then waiting for them to come to us.

Mrs. Baruh agreed and indicated that they have done those things, the communications department in the Borough does prepare pieces that present all the wonderful features of the town, and those pieces have been provided at various meetings and conferences. The main issue is when a developer expresses an interest in the town, the person may have to acquire a property that they are able to develop or identify one that they are interested in and go ahead and acquire it.

Mr. Solomon said that the Agency has powers that are defined by the legislature and responsibilities and duties and those all have to do with kind of a reactive mode, when someone shows up we have to treat them in a certain way but then it is up to the Agency as volunteers to do whatever we can think of to be proactive and recruit people. He said that they have done various things throughout the years and we are open to any new suggestions to recruit more developers.

Mrs. Baruh said that as an example on the agenda tonight is Park Valley Development who has approached us, interested in developing in Highland Park but unfortunately, they could not make it to the meeting tonight.

Gary Pfeffer indicated that he has been a resident for 30 years and he sees other towns moving along much quicker than Highland Park.

Mr. Solomon said that every town is different and that could be in zoning, ordinances, tools, demographics, and Highland Park had some particular challenges one being that most of the properties are very small and would be a lot of effort for a developer to assemble them and acquire them to get a large enough one to develop. He said many things are needed to get to be a good partner to a developer and to see these things through were not in place 10 years ago but are certainly in place now. He said that they are in a pretty good position now, and worked hard to figure out what we were not doing that needed to be done and we are still working through some of that.

Gary Pfeffer asked why that information was not put out to the public so we can get excited about it. Mr. Solomon said it is all the meeting minutes from the agency are put on the web site

for anyone. At one time we proactively put out a press release to let people know but there is no longer a local paper and there is no reporter in the room we have proactively tried to get the word out a few times but for the most part we are grinding away at trying to get developments done.

Ms. Welkovits indicated that the presentation tonight was the old international foods and the developer is quadrupling the space which is going to produce a lot more traffic in that area, the other extraordinary important thing that happened this evening is that the cleaners on the Avenue which we know to be contaminated and is preventing further development from that site, we just won a grant, this team with the help of Denise Nickel, help from the County is the first team that ever won any money to do that. She introduced the new Borough Planner Jim Constantine who has created a screening committee; he knows developers and giving advice before they come in front of the boards and invest a lot of money in plans.

Gary Pfeffer said that he has been following the international foods project for ten years. He said that he thinks that there are some buildings that would sell if they could get out of what they are in. Ms. Welkovits said that there are developers that want to just hold on to something for a little while.

Mr. Constantine said that there are a half a dozen developers now that are touching base with the screening committee, we are interfacing with them and thinks there are some things that are out there that want to land and that's new information and new news in Highland Park and that is good news.

There being no one further, public comment was closed.

Mrs. Baruh said that the next meeting is in October and she would not be available asked the Clerk to poll the members for their availability to ensure a quorum.


Hearing of New Agenda Items: None

Action on Any Other business: None

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Jennifer Santiago
Agency Clerk