

JUNE 2, 2016
Council Chambers-Borough Hall
221 South 5th Ave.
Highland Park, NJ 08904
The Highland Park Redevelopment Agency
Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting

Call to Order

The Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Redevelopment Agency was called to order in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by Chairperson Baruh at 7:35 pm Mrs. Baruh indicated the location of the fire exits.

Roll Call

Present	Mrs. Baruh, Ms. Levinson, Mr. Perlman, Mr. Solomon arrived at 7:35 p.m., Mr. Fechter, Mr. de Villa arrived at 7:38 p.m.
Absent	Ms. McDonald
Agency Professionals	Mr. Baumann, Agency Counsel
Council Liaison	Mr. Phil George, Council Liaison

Approval of minutes of previous meetings

April 7, 2016

Mrs. Baruh indicated that they were sharing their clerk with the planning board, zoning board so the minutes are a little delayed. She noted one correction on page 4 should read Michael Leff Agency intern, senior at Torah Academy of Bergen County, and few minor corrections.

It was MOVED by LEVINSON and seconded by SOLOMON that the April 7, 2016 minutes with corrections be approved, with a voice vote, one abstention by Mr. Perlman the April 7, 2016 minutes were approved.

Mrs. Baruh indicated that the minutes of May 5, 2016 were not complete for this meeting.

Chairperson and Committee Reports

--Popov project

Mrs. Baruh said that the Popov project is related to the International Food Market which is owned by Mr. Popov, the sub-committee for the Popov project is headed by Mr. Perlman and they met with Mr. Popov and his architect to review the plans and the general appearance. The Architect is going to try and incorporate so that the plans more closely adhere to the plan.

Mr. Perlman said that Mr. Nicholas also from Main Street was in attendance and he would follow-up with Popov.

--Tantleff project

Mrs. Baruh indicated that there was no update at this time.

--Borough Square project

Mrs. Baruh said that they would be meeting with the New Jersey Main Street Organization next week, along with the members of the sub-committee. She indicated in attendance would be Bob Fechter, Jenni Chapman, Rebecca Hersh, Paul Lanaris as well as herself. . They had applied for

planning support with the New Jersey Main Street Organization and are eager to see what they have to say. She indicated that she would update everyone after the meeting.

--Other Borough Initiatives

Mrs. Baruh indicated that the Borough had hired a new Borough Planner, Jim Constantine. She said that he comes highly regarded and the Agency has met with him. Mr. Constantine is getting to know Highland Park and our concerns. She said that expects to meet with him in the next few weeks to try and bring him up to speed on the happenings within Highland Park.

Mr. Solomon said that it was going to be really nice to have one Planner that is serving the Borough, the Planning Board and the Agency.

Mr. George said that he agreed with Mr. Solomon and that this was something that had been in the works since sometime last year.

Mrs. Baruh said that there would be a meeting with him and Mr. Constantine comes with ideas and are gratified with their earlier interactions with him.

Mr. Perlman asked if there was going to be an opportunity for the rest of the commissioners to meet with Mr. Constantine.

Mr. Solomon said that when the Agency is ready to have Mr. Constantine come to the Agency meeting it would make sense to have a detail discussion about the Agencies needs ready.

Mrs. Baruh said that she wanted to ensure that their time is used efficiently.

Mr. Solomon asked Councilman George what the budget was for the Planner. Mr. George indicated that there was a not to exceed amount but did not know the exact amount but getting him up to speed and the meet and greets will absorb that budget fairly quickly. He indicated that the amount was changed because he was being brought on mid-year and indicated that that amount would probably need to be increased for the next year.

Mrs. Baruh said that those were the basic updates on the projects

Public Comment

Mrs. Baruh open the floor for public comment

Johnathan Lerner, 228 Magnolia Street, indicated that the last two months the web-site has not been updated with the minutes of the meetings and asked if there had been meetings. Mrs. Baruh said that there had been meetings.

Mr. Lerner asked why the web-site has not been updated. Mrs. Baruh indicated that the minutes are based on the actual recordings of the meetings and then transcribed by the clerk and there is one clerk for Planning, Redevelopment and Zoning and she may be running a little behind. They had just approved April minutes so they should be posted shortly and we are now only one month behind.

Mr. Lerner asked if anything could be done to keep it more current, you have an assistant and its 90 days and a lot happens in 90 days. Mrs. Baruh indicated yes but the clerk is working as fast as she can.

Mr. Lerner said that he didn't know if that is an acceptable answer.

Mr. Solomon indicated that it was not their call and they tried to cut our budget this year as an agency, the clerk works for the Borough no the agency so it a time of declining budgets general speaking.

Mr. Lerner indicated that this should be informed.

Mrs. Baruh said that they felt the same why and they have spoken to the Mayor and she is aware.

Mr. Solomon said that he thinks what they can say is that the Agency has no authority or control over it, but what they could do is relay to the Mayor and Administrator that another resident came in with concerns over the minutes and that is all they could do. He indicated that his comments should actually would be best directed at the Mayor because the Mayor is the one who has the authority to control that.

Mr. Lerner said that he would let the Mayor know and that 90 days is unacceptable. Mrs. Baruh and Mr. Solomon indicated that they were in total agreement with Mr. Lerner

Seeing no one further, the public portion was closed.

Action on any other business

Mrs. Baruh indicated that one small thing came up and wanted to give everyone a sense of what goes on when talking with developers. It is very important that the Agency describe themselves using the same language that their competitors do. She said that one of the things that was discovered was is that there are two numbers that are important to developers, one is the percentage that assessed values represent of market values, and that percentage in 2016 in the Borough of Highland Park is 42.8% and the other number that is important is the actual tax rate. They are looking around to see how different Highland Park is in comparison to others, they are getting feedback from developers that Highland Park is a little different.

Mr. Fechter indicated that one number is meaningless without the other, and indicated that right way would tax dollars paid per a market value.

Mrs. Baruh indicated that the real issue is how the developer thinks about it. Mr. Fechter said that would be the only way to apples for apples.

Mr. Solomon said that when you build something new it is assessed at market value, and they are applying the same rate that they apply to everyone. If your base is undervalued you then jack up your rate to get the tax number needed, rate x base. If someone comes in with a new piece of property then they are getting assessed at current market value.

Mrs. Baruh said that this was something that they were looking into and this was just an example. She indicated that the Redevelopment Plan covers all of the redevelopment areas and in some towns there is a separate development plan for each parcel and they want to make sure that they can highlight for the developers.

Mr. deVilla asked about the area in need of rehabilitation. Mrs. Baruh said that she had nothing on that and nothing has happened at the Agency level.

Mr. George said that he brought it to the Borough Council several times to identify targets and there was a general consensus that all of the Raritan Avenue stretch as well as Woodbridge through to the Edison border to be included for consistency. He said that there was a possibility that it will have to be revisited again and to include all the properties that are potentially there. He said that the Borough seems to be moving in the direction of identifying the area in need of redevelopment as opposed to individual properties. Joe Baumann did a memorandum which was shared with Borough Council indicating that this process was highly cost effective. He indicated that this something that needed to be done would probably be done by the Borough with the Agencies recommendation and then the Planning Board for their recommendation within 45 days and it can be acted on. He indicated that he has Council advised of the process and the cost. He indicated that if the Agency sent to him a resolution indicating that the Agency and Subcommittee has reviewed and recommends that the Borough Council consider applying the determination of an area in need of rehabilitation to the entire business district area from Adelaide Avenue to the Edison border.

It was MOVED by FECHTER and seconded by SOLOMON that a Resolution be adopted regarding an area in need of rehabilitation: "Resolved that the Highland Park Redevelopment Agency recommends that the Borough Council consider applying the determination of an area in need of rehabilitation to the entire business district area from Adelaide Avenue to the Edison border.

ROLL CALL: Ayes: Mr. Perlman, Ms. Levinson, Mr. Solomon, Mr. deVilla, Mr. Fechter, Mr. George
Nays – None

There being six (6) ayes and no nays, the Resolution was approved.

Mr. George indicated that he would follow up with the Borough Council.

It was moved by Mr. Solomon and seconded by Mr. Fechter with voice vote the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Santiago

Jennifer Santiago
Agency Clerk