

November 5, 2015
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 7:32 pm. Mrs. Baruh indicated the location of the fire exits.

Roll call

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| Present | Mrs. Baruh, Dr. Andrews, Mr. Guttenplan, Mr. Solomon (7:35pm), Mrs. Levinson |
| Absent | Ms. McDonald, Mr. Perlman |
| Agency Professionals | Kevin McManimon |
| Council Liaison | Mr. George |

Approval of minutes of previous meetings

October 5, 2015

There was a motion from Dr. Andrews with a second from Mr. Guttenplan and with a voice vote the minutes were approved.

Chairperson and Committee Reports

Chairperson Baruh announced that the certification of the 2014 audit would be carried to the next meeting. The auditors will make a presentation of the commissioners at the December 3, 2015 meeting.

Mrs. Baruh announced that the 2016 budget is being prepared. Mrs. Baruh said that the agency is asking the borough for approximately \$50,000.00. Mrs. Baruh will review the budget at the December meeting.

Mrs. Baruh reported that she has had a number of conversations with people about the two proposed redevelopment projects but it is very early in the process. There are also possible opportunities for development on the South side of Raritan Ave.

Public Comment

Mr. Simcha, 59 North Fifth Ave. asked how many stories are proposed for the library site. Mrs. Baruh, said that one proposal is to develop a parcel on Raritan Ave. and move the library to that site. The existing library building will remain the same size all development will be interior. This project is in very early stages. Mr. Simcha is opposed to the project.

Susan Casino, 19 North Fifth Ave. asked if it is worth posing questions if nothing is definitive. Mr. Solomon said the developer has presented a concept but the agency has not approved a plan. Ms. Casino asked if the agency was in favor of the plan.

Mr. Solomon said it was a reasonable concept. Mrs. Baruh said no approval for a plan was granted.

Mr. McManimon said a conditional redeveloper status does not convey any rights to a developer. The designation of a conditional redeveloper is a recognition that what was submitted is worthy of further discussion.

Mrs. Baruh said that the proposal is consistent with the redevelopment plan that was approved in 2005. The library is not part of the redevelopment plan; the transaction between the library and the developer is not part of redevelopment. The redeveloper had a suggestion to include a new library on the first floor of the proposed Raritan Ave. project. The library is in need of upgrades and this would be an opportunity for the town to have a new library. A new library would be larger. Ms. Casino asked if some of the upgrades could be done in the existing library. She asked about parking. She said parking is limited on North Fifth, and asked where the additional parking for residential development would go. Mrs. Baruh said that no plan would be approved without sufficient parking. Mr. Solomon said that if there is a proposal there would be parking studies and traffic studies. Ms. Casino asked what the time frame for such a project would be. Mrs. Baruh said it could take several years. Ms. Casino said that she does not want to live next to an apartment building; she said it would change the dynamic of the neighborhood.

Mr. Simcha 59 North Fifth Ave. said he would not like to have an apartment building next to his home.

Cheryl Rosenbluth, 17 North Fifth Ave. is opposed to converting the library into apartments, because she stated it will lower property values; add to congestion, noise, over population, and it will decrease the quality of life for the neighbors. She said there is a distinction between library patrons and residential overnight parking. She said parking will impact the quality of life for people in the neighborhood and the construction process will be noisy. Mrs. Rosenbluth said that North Fifth is a narrow street and construction vehicles will block traffic on the street. She asked if the high school has been contacted. Mrs. Baruh said the Mayor is in discussion with the high school principal. Mrs. Rosenbluth said the construction will be disruptive and unsafe for students. The location of the library across from the high school is convenient for teens. She asked who decided that the library needs a new home; she would like the town to vote on whether or not the library needs a new home. She said she does not believe it is fiscally responsible to sell the library, if the library is in poor condition it should be repaired. She does not think that a library on the main street is appropriate. She did not think that this matter was advertised appropriately. She asked why the link to the minutes was not accessible. She would like updated information about the proposed development provided.

Mr. Vijay, 39 North Fifth Ave. said that he does not like the process that was used for approving development at the library. He asked for more transparency about development.

Mr. Solomon said that currently the conditional developer does not own the site but when there is an actual development plan all information will be available.

Mr. Buch, 100 North Fifth Ave. said the library is next to the high school, and students meet at the library, he does not think that students will walk to Raritan Ave. to use a library. He said that Raritan Ave. is a busy street and he would not send young children to a library on Raritan Ave. He said even Middle School students also use the library, he thinks the current location of the library is the best location.

Ms. Utasi, 47 North Fifth Ave. said she agrees with what other people have said and she would not want the library to move. She said the traffic is very bad on North Fifth Ave., she objects to the proposal to change the location of the library, she said the library was redone too long ago.

Mr. McManimon said that there will be numerous opportunities for the public to comment on any development, and no formal action will be taken without public input. This project is at the very beginning of the process and will have public meetings before the planning board, the redevelopment agency and the borough council.

Ms. Casino asked what happens with tonight's information. Mrs. Baruh said the meetings are open and there is a flow of information, Mr. George the council liaison will report back to the council. Mr. Solomon said that the developer has to acquire properties and then there will be a formal proposal where the public can present their concerns before the Redevelopment Agency votes on it. Ms. Casino asked how the public can be kept current. Ms. Baruh said the meetings are open, and information is on the website.

Mr. Iannacome 19 North Fifth Ave. said that the discussion only dealt with Raritan Ave. but not the library. Mr. Solomon said the library is not within the Agency's jurisdiction. Dr. Andrews said that the Agency is tasked with the areas that were deemed to be in need of redevelopment according to the plan that was prepared in 2005. A proposal for the library will be the responsibility of those who are in charge of the library, the borough council and the library board. Mr. Iannacome asked if there will be a second set of meetings for the library. Mr. McManimon said that the library owns the property and they will take action on any proposal as will the planning board. He asked about the square footage of the library. He asked for information about a conditional redeveloper? Mrs. Baruh said that a developer can approach a town with a redevelopment plan and can ask to include properties that may not be in the redevelopment area as part of the plan. Mr. Iannacome asked how the library was incorporated into the proposal; the library is not a tax ratable. Mrs. Baruh said the goal of redevelopment is to increase the tax base. Mr. McManimon said that usually a developer will buy property subject to receiving approvals.

Cheryl Rosenbluth, 17 North Fifth Ave. asked why the library was brought into the proposal. Dr. Andrews said the proposal on Raritan Ave. includes apartments on the ground floor and retail spaces are also proposed. She said that renters do not pay taxes and she asked if any consideration was given to the fact that renters do not pay taxes. Mrs. Baruh and Mr. Solomon both discussed the Agency's commitment to tax positive projects.

Mr. Solomon said that if the proposal doesn't meet the Agency's criteria it will be denied. Mrs. Rosenbluth asked if the development on Raritan Ave. will be rental or condo, Mrs. Baruh said the proposal was for rental units.

Mr. McManimon said the developer will not do the proposed project unless the project is within the jurisdiction of the Agency.

Resolution HPRA R-2015-09 Resolution Certification of the 2014 Audit and Resolution HPRA R-2015-10 Bills list are carried to the December 3, 2015 meeting There was a motion to adjourn from Dr. Andrews and at 8:48 pm the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Reh,
Agency Clerk

Approved: December 3, 2015