

BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK
MAYOR & COUNCIL REDEVELOPMENT MEETING

221 South Fifth Ave.

Highland Park, NJ

November 26, 2019 at 7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Redevelopment Entity was called to order in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act by Mayor Brill Mittler at 7:12 pm. Mayor Brill Mittler indicated the location of the fire exits.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler, Council Members, Elsie Foster-Dublin, Matthew Hale, Stephany Kim-Chohan, Susan Welkovits arrived at 7:13 pm

Absent: Councilman Fine, Councilman George, Special Counsel Baumann,

Professionals: Planner Jim Constantine, Borough Administrator Teri Jover, Deputy Clerk Jennifer Santiago

PRESENTATIONS: None

MINUTES:

July 16, 2109 Regular/Executive Session

It was MOVED by KIM-CHOHAN and seconded by WELKOVITS that the minutes of July 16, 2019 Regular and Executive Session be approved

ROLL CALL: Ayes – Foster-Dublin, Kim-Chohan, Welkovits

Nays – None

Abstain - Hale

There being three (4) ayes, no nays and one (1) abstention, the July 16, 2019 Regular and Executive Session minutes were approved.

RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution R2019-04 Executive Session – Downtown Property Acquisitions.

It was MOVED by HALE and seconded by WELKOVITS that Resolution R2019-04 be approved.

ROLL CALL: Ayes – Foster-Dublin, Hale, Kim-Chohan, Welkovits

Nays – None

There being four (4) ayes and no nays, Resolution R2019-04 was approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Brill Mittler open the floor for public comment, there being no one public comment was closed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- Project Updates:

- **31 River Road**

Borough Administrator Jover said that 31 River Road received Planning Board approval and there is a Redevelopment Agreement in place and they are doing everything they said they would do, as apart of their approval they will be exploring enhancements to the Borough such as parking, stripping on Lincoln Avenue, as well improvements near the Environmental Center parking area although that is still being navigated, and meeting the affordable housing obligation. It is her understanding they are looking to start as soon as the weather allows.

Councilwoman Foster-Dublin said that she has been getting a lot of emails from people saying the trucks are coming and destroying the roads on Cleveland. The concerns we are seeing now she would like to have them addressed with this property before we get to that point.

Administrator Jover said that there was a lot in the redeveloper agreement that gives the Borough some teeth on that, even addressing dust, noise, trucks and it is confident that they will be good neighbors as the project moves forward.

Mr. Constantine said that he did hear from one of the neighbors when he was out at the site, that the demolish was going well.

- 137-139 Raritan Ave (Popov)

Borough Administrator Jover said the Popov project is slowly making progress and as we get closer to the end of completion as part of their approval they are required to find off-site parking to meet the obligations. They also have an affordable unit that is included and they will be working with the affordable housing administrative agent on the establishment and registration and screening.

Mayor Brill Mittler indicated to the Borough Planner that she has received compliments on how nice the look and feel of the building and how well it fits in with the rest of the neighborhood and thanked him for working on this project with him.

Councilman Hale suggested having a copy of the drawings of what it is expected to look like on the fence so as people are driving by they can see it. Ms. Jover said that she would look into this.

Councilwoman Welkovits asked if the drawings could also be on the web-site for everyone to see.

Mayor Brill Mittler said that to Ms. Welkovits point, the downtown has a lot of 50x100 lots, as a selling tool to other developers or people who own property down Raritan who have approached us that they interested in doing something for their buildings to be able to show them what can happen from a little piece of property. Borough Administrator Jover said in the reexamination is a nice overview, she likes the ideas and would look into that.

○ **130-134 Raritan Ave/ Off-site parking requirements**

Borough Administrator Jover said that 130-134 was right across the street to the Popov project, there was an amendment to the redevelopment plan.

Mr. Constantine said the Popov site was only able to develop because the Borough was willing to be creative and create a parking solution, if not it would still be undeveloped. This is the challenge of all those small sites. One of the provisions both in the reexamination and land use plan element in the Master Plan is a recommendation to prepare a walking management plan that evaluates parking needs in relation to leveraging revitalization and fill-in redevelopment particularly on smaller properties. Develop strategies that include right sizing parking requirements to actual demand, and we now know that there a lot of one car or no car households in Highland Park. Covering shared parking and cooperative parking arrangements and permitting off-site parking as a strategy to develop smaller properties. He said that it was previously an issue with the 130-134 Raritan site as well and he prepared a couple sets of maps. He said that the site is located across from Popov and he also highlighted the Bergen Auto site and also identified a few parking possibilities. 130-134 has 4,000 sq. ft. of commercial space tucked into the grade, with 4 levels of residential above it for 16 units with affordable units. The eight foot alley stems and then 18 parking spaces behind as well as a dumpster. One of the commitments that were made was to have a meeting with the park place neighbors and they had that meeting in October in Borough Hall. The biggest concern that the neighbors have about development is the tortured access and after the meeting broke he went with the neighbors to look at it for about an hour and brainstorming on about walking it and talking about things that can be done on Park Place with adding some sidewalk. It was very clear that there is really nothing we can do to make it less friction and less impact to the neighbors. One of the neighbors asked what would happen if we increased the building and eliminated the parking and suggested talking to some of the neighbors and what was received was an open embrace from the neighbors to explore that idea further. The concept that was floated was the building would double to 32 apartments and in the back the idea of a small pocket park available to all resident, there would no longer be any parking, they still need solid waste and recycling, so there may be a truck a couple of times a week, the alley could be textured paved that is mostly walked on, so this idea that the parking problem, that the neighbors perceived, would be eliminated. The other aspect of it is that the resident's access and stress becomes Raritan. He said when the redevelopment plan was amended it allowed for windows on the fifth floor, and there are all those cars in the back and you see the closest home which is not directly behind it, but off to the side , it shows a larger building with additional trees with the secret little pocket park would be at the rear versus the parking lot. Some of the neighbors said that they would be delighted to have this little park rather than a parking lot, they are very supportive of investment and revitalization, infill and redevelopment, Park Place is already very tight but the idea of sixteen cars even if they may not being going in and out all of the time is an added distribution so the neighbors said that we would be supportive of this idea.

Mayor Brill Mittler asked if that would close up the alley way. Mr. Constantine said other than for solid waste which will need to be serviced from the rear. He said that front door for everyone would now be on Raritan Avenue.

Ms. Foster-Dublin said that now that we have extended the building and there is going to be windows, more spaces for apartments or business and asked if there would be more affordable.

Mr. Constantine said yes and we rounded up the affordable requirement on the site to 6 units so it is more than 15%. He thinks that one of the issues, the residents would not be going in from the rear any longer, so their address is Raritan and thinks that the fact that there isn't direct parking probably further attracts households that are coming with two cars.

Mayor Brill Mittler said by putting the pocket park in the back will it be enclosed. Mr. Constantine said that was a design issue to get to and thinks the neighbors in that area could benefit from the park as well and that was what was discussed as a possible amendment to the redevelopment plan.

Councilwoman Foster-Dublin asked with the pocket park concept would Park Avenue be able to use, would it be visible for public safety reasons. Mr. Constantine said that there will be residents in the building with windows and do have a rear door, so there will be eyes on the par, there would be lighting. He said other unique thing about this site you have to custom craft things to fit in small sites, we asked them to terrace back from the street so is there is a view of New Brunswick, and there is a green space in the back that is really quiet, there is a lot of diversity and what you would not have here is your car park next to your building.

Borough Administrator Jover said that the thing that all of these projects have in common, is that we have to get creative about off-site parking and in some cases residential permit parking clearly any building here is going to impact Park Place, Walter, River etc. are experiencing pressure points and we are going to have to look at that. This is not going to be a one size fits all, in the case of River Road they were able to meet their obligation but it is tighter then what we are used to and we are looking into that because there are a lot of concerns from neighbors. It is not just this project this is going to be the case as you go down all of the opportunity locations we are going to have to get creative and not burden the each site with the parking requirement, do it site by site.

Mr. Constantine said that it comes down to a livability and vision issue, and having a parking management plan. He said that he has always been convinced that there needs to be parking meters along Raritan Avenue. There is a whole series of issues with parking, resident parking in neighborhoods where there are challenges. He said one of the provisions in the current redevelopment plan is to have parking within a 1,000' because we recognize they may need additional parking and this is the same provision at the Popov site. There is the church lot which is 27 spaces and he thinks there is an interim parking solution, meaning until we reach a parking study and leaning towards needing some public resources for public parking and infrastructure somewhere off Raritan Avenue. Borough Square is a redevelopment site but there is surface parking, the Third Avenue public lot that has a wonderful sign that says "No Parking 2AM-6AM, it is waiting for some occupancy and the ability to generate some revenue by perhaps having residents park there. There are also other surface lots that are potentially available. He thinks there is an interim solution until they can find a long term solution to parking because that is the challenge. The applicants are asking for direction, do we proceed with what we have and the neighbors will never fully be happy with the result or do we shift course and work with the Borough to work towards this type of strategy. He said that was one other mechanism that might come into play with parking which could a pilop program, payment in lieu of parking, we have a provision that allows that in Metuchen and Rahway. They have parking decks downtown and they basically to get sites that are too small to accommodate parking they will redevelopment and the developer will pay for parking, no parking on site you are paying for it within the public facilities and those funds are used to pay for the parking infrastructure which is now recognized

as a public resource, parking is lot is not seen as a private lot here and there, it is seen like, streets, and sewer and water, as a part of your infrastructure. If you do it right in key locations and then try to allow for those benefits.

Mayor Brill Mittler said that there was sort of a precedent that we are going to have to address if we do a PILOP with other developers, apparently years ago there was a hand shake agreement with the Borough, the Police Department and Artsonia Management to allow Artsonia to park in the Borough parking lot across the street from the building and the deal was that they would have to be out of the lot by 9AM. If we are going to start working with Developers on this PILOP that would be something we would have to revisit with Artsonia as well. Mr. Constantine said that this gets into a parking plan which could include overnight parking, among others and it is a changing science that evolves over time.

Councilman Hale asked about the Church lot. Mr. Constantine said they initially asked the Developer to reach out to them, and have not been successful. He said that he would like to have them park in a public lot on an interim basis, once the private lots start to become privately dedicated to parking for a new building we have lost them for decades.

Mr. Constantine said this is one of those rare incidences where we might be able to have a win win from a number of stand points.

Ms. Welkovits said that they spoke about bicycle storage and a nice feature to have would be a bike rack in the back and a bike lane to the park with a potential one-way. She said that there is a plan to make Magnolia and Benner one-way streets. Mr. Constantine said that it becomes a bike friendly way to live.

Ms. Foster-Dublin said that she liked the concept with the garden with the neighbors on Park Avenue having to that garden, and that there are more affordables. She said that she can see the parking being an issue during inclement weather. Mr. Constantine said that was something that needed to be worked out.

Mr. Constantine said that you would want a mechanism that is much more formal to direct where they go, and it is understood that the interim parking issue needs to be resolved, and then long term.

Mayor Brill Mittler said to Ms. Foster-Dublin's point, if we were really in love with the development and wanted to keep the off-site there is the possibility in city they have a spot in front of the building that is a 10 minute spot, for dropping off kids and groceries. Mr. Constantine said that comes in a parking management plan. The Master Plan is saying it is time to go to the next level and do it, and is key if you really want to achieve the vision of a vibrant downtown.

Mr. Hale said that he generally likes the idea of a garden instead of a parking lot and suggested moving forward.

Mr. Clarkin - ?? said that they would prepare plans and come back in with that and thanked the Council for considering this project and looked forward to working with the Borough.

- **433 Cleveland Avenue Redevelopment Plan status**

Mr. Jover said Looney Ricks Kiss have started working on a redevelopment plan for those sites at the end of Cleveland Avenue, they are incorporating a traffic study into that plan. She has not seen a draft yet but knows there something coming soon and would like the opportunity to share the draft with the Council and have a presentation to the Council as the Redevelopment Entity that would include the concerned neighbors and the Planning Board. The Cleveland Avenue corridor is in the Land Use Element and we certainly want to see that adopted. She said they received a lot of feedback on Cleveland through the Master Plan process.

- **New date for December redevelopment meeting**

Ms. Jover said that the December meeting will need to be rescheduled or cancelled. She said that they could get the draft plan out in advance.

HEARING OF NEW AGENDA ITEMS: None

ACTION ON ANY OTHER BUSINESS: None

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jamie ?? – said that she could not find the agenda on the web-site. Ms. Jover said that it is there under the Council agenda's.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion made by Councilman Hale, seconded by Councilwoman Welkovits and carried by affirmative voice vote of all Councilpersons present, the meeting adjourned at 8:19 PM to go into Executive Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Santiago
Deputy Clerk