

**BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK
MAYOR & COUNCIL REDEVELOPMENT MEETING**

221 South Fifth Ave.
Highland Park, NJ
July 19, 2022 at 7:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER

A Regular Meeting of the Highland Park Mayor and Council Redevelopment Entity was held via Zoom, on Tuesday, July 19, 2022, and was called to order by Mayor Brill Mittler at 7:00 PM. Annual Notice of this meeting was provided to The Home News Tribune, the Star Ledger and the Highland Park Planet on January 5, 2022. In addition, notice of this meeting via zoom was emailed to The Home News Tribune, The Star Ledger and the Highland Park Planet on July 15, 2022 and was posted on the Borough website at www.hpboro.com and on the bulletin board at Borough Hall, 221 South Fifth Avenue, Highland Park, NJ on July 15, 2022 and has remained continuously posted as required by law.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler, Council Members, Canavera, Foster, George, Hale, Hersh and Kim-Chohan
Absent: Jim Constantine, Planner
Professionals: Special Counsel Joseph Baumann, Borough Administrator Teri Jover, Borough Clerk Jennifer Santiago

Discussion Items:

- Downtown Redevelopment RFP - Recommendation for Tract C

Mayor Brill Mittler indicated that downtown redevelopment is one of the five key policy building blocks upon which goals of her administration has been built. The Borough has issued an RFP for several plots downtown the response has been more than encouraging and tonight will be discussing our recommendations for Tract C.

Mr. Baumann, Esq. said that the development community lots of time to get back proposals and the result was thoughtful proposals that were reviewed and analyzed and the result of that effort is a recommendation that the Borough conditionally designate the Garden Homes team led by Brett Tanzman. He mentioned that he has worked with this firm several times over decades, it is a family run business and has the capital stack to make projects happen. They are creative but most importantly work closely with the municipality, comes in and works with the municipality and the community to get what the municipality and community like and they have proven that to the municipality with an existing project in town.

Mr. Baumann, Esq., said nothing official was happening tonight, this process is done very carefully and very slowly and try to give as much time as we can to the public to be part of the process but have to match the balance of making sure that we are confidential along the way. One of the reasons, the proposal made by Garden Homes is great, its not the proposal that we were prepared to recommend, there is a lot of work to be done to get to a point where we have something that we could recommend to the public. Every project he has done in the State of New Jersey has to happen in a confidential way in order for the governing body and the professionals to succeed to provide fiduciary responsibility which is to get the best deal, and if we don't we have another developer to go to and that is always a possibility. He indicated that the conditional redeveloper that will not be voted on tonight will give Mr. Tanzman an exclusive right to negotiate for the redevelopment of this tract. Mr. Baumann, Esq. provided the steps to be taken and recommended a conditional redeveloper agreement with Garden Homes.

- Presentation by Garden Homes

Brett Tanzman said he was honored to participate in the process. He is a Principal with Garden Homes and a member of the Wolf Law firm. Garden Homes was founded in 1954 and continues to be a family-run business controlled by the Will family with a long history of working together successfully with municipalities on development and redevelopment projects throughout the State, region and country. The organization has developed a mix of uses including but not limited to office, retail and housing of various product types and maintain a philosophy of holding properties for the long term, managing our own properties and are committed to managing to the highest standards, we look at it as a partnership with the Borough on any project. He said the prospect of deepening our work in Highland Park is special because his grandparents and parents lived in the Borough on both the North and South sides and his whole family has immersed themselves in the fabric of the Borough both civically and culturally, six generations of his family have lived in the Borough. He said that he would love to continue to build in Highland Park where together we can all do something really special.

Mr. Hersh asked Mr. Tanzman to speak on public engagement process around the Frederick, specifically in addressing the concerns of the area residents and how you successfully navigated that. Mr. Tanzman said it started day one, a phone call, outreach and said he would love to meet. We have closed on the property, putting a face to a project breaks down barriers, having conversations and listening. We met at the Environmental Center and a candid discussion, let everyone air it out and from there everyone has his contact information to the extent that there were issues we heard about it directly.

Mr. Baumann, Esq., explained what a conditional agreement was, the developer now funds an escrow account and that is how the professionals are paid. This will give the developer an exclusive period during which we will negotiate with them and only them to successfully negotiate in good faith an agreement. It is for 6 months although not uncommon for that to get extended.

Mr. Hale asked Mr. Baumann, Esq. to explain the legislative process. Mr. Baumann, Esq. said they will have a resolution for the governing body to consider approving that agreement at the next meeting, and at the end of that process we will have a community meeting where we will reveal the project, the agreement, terms as done in the past, giving the public an opportunity to weigh in before we move to adopt and after that they still have to make an application to the Planning Board before they can actually build their project.

Public Comment

Mayor Brill Mittler opened the floor to the public. Ms. Jover indicated that there were 27 attendees.

Mary Botteon, 709 Madison Avenue, said she wanted to make sure everyone was aware of some issues that exist here in Highland Park that may have not been disclosed to you and ultimately affect all of us. She expressed concerns with the draw on property taxes with the six pot shops and an unlimited number of marijuana dispatch offices with our very limited commercial area is One of the shops is being proposed across from your potential structure and another one proposed for only 390 feet away. For more information on how marijuana businesses adversely impact residential and commercial property values please email mbotteon@verizon.net. She also spoke about parking issues for any structure at Tract C and many residents do not support an above ground parking deck and the RFP does encourage underground parking as a way to mitigate the impact of parking and hope you make that investment. She spoke about the

Farmer's Market and the plans for a public space which we already have at the Farmer's Market, many residents are concerned about safety issues with the closing of South Third Avenue for municipal space and feels that a portion of that Farmer's Market municipal lot and Welkovits pavilion and would be a huge plus for the community.

Terry Rosenberg, 32 Skyview Terrace, asked how you chose Garden properties. Were there a whole bunch of people and you just decided to pick them since they built the Frederick. Mr. Baumann, Esq., said several proposals were received for the three tracts, there was a subcommittee that analyzed it and considered everything from their history in New Jersey and Highland Park, ability to perform their specific proposal and the committee recommended them for this Tract, and recommendations have not been made for the other two Tracts A and D. Ms. Jover said that there is a section on the website www.hpboro.com under Government, Redevelopment there are sub areas, there are maps, the Redevelopment plan, etc. Tract C is the farmer's market area including some other properties that the Borough owns. She suggested reaching out to her at 732-819-3789 or tjover@hpboro.com and she would be happy to help.

Dr. Ramesh Pandey, River Ridge Terrace said that he wanted to compliment the Mayor and her staff for doing a great job, keep up the good work. He mentioned that sadly he is having some financial problems so he may be moving out. He doesn't know where he will go, his apartment is in foreclosure, and he is a senior citizen and would like to stay here in Highland Park. Council Member Hersh indicated that Mr. Pandey can reach out to any of us and we can follow-up with resources relating to his housing situation. He referred him to the Borough website, rental assistance, and indicated if anyone is facing housing instability please reach out to any one of us directly. Councilwoman Canavera said he can also reach out to Senior Housing and to reach out to her and she will help him get in touch with someone.

There being no one further, the Mayor closed public participation.

Adjournment

There being no further business, there was a motion by HALE and seconded by FOSTER the regular meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Santiago
Borough Clerk