

BOROUGH OF HIGHLAND PARK
MAYOR & COUNCIL REDEVELOPMENT MEETING

221 South Fifth Ave.

Highland Park, NJ

January 30, 2024 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 Foster at 7:01 pm. Annual Notice of this meeting was provided to The Home News Tribune, the Star Ledger and the Highland Park Planet on January 5, 2023 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 and has remained continuously posted as required by law.

Mayor Foster led the flag salute.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Foster, Council Members Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Postelnik

Absent: Councilman George and Councilman Kim-Chohan

Professionals: Special Counsel Joseph Baumann, Borough Administrator Teri Jover, Borough Clerk Jennifer Santiago

Discussion Items

- **810 North 2nd Avenue**

Borough Administrator Jover said 810 North Second Avenue is a single parcel on the north side of town next to the railroad line. It came to her attention a while back when it went up for sale. It is a lab building legacy, from kind of the light industrial corridor that kind of used to be in that area. The County Economic Development reached out because they were looking at the property for some sort of lab or life sciences but it was not adequate. She indicated that she was approached by a couple investors from town who had an idea for an adaptive reuse for the site, they posted escrow to cover the cost of the Borough's Planner to meet with them, go over some ideas for the site. We landed on an adaptive reuse of the building for residential, somewhere in the order of five apartments might be possible. We are looking at either the continuation of a non-conforming use if a lab were to come in but frankly it has been on the market quite some time and don't see that happening. If someone wanted to do something there it would be a variance and they would have to go before the Zoning Board of Adjustment without any certainty on the outcome. We have landed on the redevelopment option, small-scale redevelopment plan that would accommodate adaptive reuse of the building for residential as a possible way to move forward. That idea was brought to the Economic Development Committee and there was general support, this is an opportunity to enhance a deteriorating site, provide additional housing and adaptive use is something we haven't done in a long time in Highland Park. If the Mayor and Council are interested in pursuing this we can engage LRK to assist with the plan and we would notify the neighbors and we would go through normal redevelopment and thinks it would be very beneficial to the Borough although a small scale project.

Councilman Hale indicated that we have spoken about this for a while its part of the Master Plan, infill development, it is a manageable project and it is a building that would have likely sat there and this gives us the opportunity to create something out of a shell. This fits the neighborhood and would be subject to affordable housing requirements.

Council President Hersh asked what the benefits would be the benefit of redevelopment versus a zoning application. Borough Administrator replied we get more control over the final product and we can hold the developer more accountable to our expectations.

Joseph Baumann added this is called a scattered site. We have a redevelopment plan that doesn't change and we'll have control for commencement completion design standards and to go before the Planning Board.

Councilman Postelnik asked the Borough Administrator how long the property has been vacant. Borough Administrator Jover replied two years or longer.

Councilman Postelnik asked if there has been any other interests in the property. Borough Administrator Jover answered not to her knowledge. She mentioned that she has a draft proposal from LRK that she would like to put on the next agenda with your permission. Mayor and Council agreed.

- **Tract C update**

Borough Administrator Jover reported we are working on a public meeting to talk about Tract C. She noted that there has been some progress on design but there are still different perspectives from the developers. At the public meeting we would like to present any amendments needed to the Redevelopment plan as well. We are waiting for a response from the New Jersey Department of Transportation from our last submission on the South Third Avenue Pedestrian Plaza proposal and the street intersection permit.

Mayor Foster added we're hoping that this will be done in the first quarter of this year.

Resolutions

Resolution 2024-01

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the Borough Council is of the opinion that such circumstances exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Borough Council of the Borough of Highland Park, in the County of Middlesex, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from the closed session at close of tonight's open session.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
Executive Session – Executive Session regarding:
 - (1) Redeveloper Negotiations – 420-424 Raritan Avenue
 - (2) Redeveloper Negotiations – 433 Cleveland Avenue
3. It is anticipated at this time that the above stated subject matter will be made public when these matters are resolved or as soon thereafter as it is deemed to be in the public interest to do so.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.

It was MOVED by HALE and seconded by CANAVERA that Resolution 2024-01 be approved.

ROLL CALL: Ayes- Canavera, Hale, Hersh, Postelnik
Nays – None

Absent: George, Kim-Chohan

There being four (4) ayes and no nays, Resolution 2024-01 was approved.

Public Comment: (3 minutes per speaker)
Mayor Foster opened the floor to the public.

Jessica Hunsdon, Montgomery Street, asked what the zoning is for 810 North 2nd Avenue. She also wanted to know what the benefits would be for the owner. Borough Administrator Jover answered regarding the zoning we will answer more definitively when we finish the study. As for the benefit they get more security as to what they build and what they can do with that property.

Jessica Hunsdon then asked who approached the Borough regarding the Redevelopment plan? Mayor Foster replied it was not the owner, it was a perspective purchaser that lives in town.

Mary Forsberg, 317 Denison Street, she is interested in the property at 433 Cleveland, it seems that no one has paid any taxes since 2008. It is two separate listings, one is as a pumping station. What does that do, who owns it and why don't they pay taxes? Business Administrator Jover answered we have an existing Redevelopment plan and agreement. It's where the school is being built and we'll be discussing a matter regarding that in executive session later. The pumping station is borough property but maintained by MCUA, that's why it pays no taxes. 431 Cleveland Avenue is the big school that is being built there.

Mary Forsberg asked what is 433 Cleveland Avenue. Borough Administrator Jover answered that they consolidated some properties, the matter we're discussing is related to the school.

Mary Forsberg asked it would be tax exempt. Mayor Foster replied that they have not discussed it as of yet. It's a tax exempt area.

There being no one, Mayor Foster closed public participation.

Adjournment

There being no further business, there was a motion by HALE and seconded by CANAVERA regular meeting adjourned at 7:25 PM to go into executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Santiago
Borough Clerk