

MINUTES - PLANNING BOARD

Workshop meeting of May 3, 2017

The meeting of the Cranford Planning Board was called to order by Ms. Murray on May 3, 2017 at 7:34 P.M. in Room 108 of the Municipal Building, 8 Springfield Avenue, Cranford, New Jersey. Ms. Murray announced in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Open Public Meetings Act, the Westfield Leader or the Star Ledger had been notified and the agenda posted in the municipal building as required.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Ms. Murray
Ms. Anderson
Ms. Steinbach
Ms. Feder
Mayor Hannen
Commissioner Dooley
Ms. Pedde

Members Absent:

Mr. Chapman
Mr. Taylor

Alternates Present:

Ms. Didzbalis

Alternates Absent:

Mr. Aschenbach

Also present:

Mark Rothman, Esquire; Ruthanne Della Serra, Interim Administrator/Scribe, Ron Johnson, Zoning Officer, Madeline Colandro, Interim Assistant

2. RESOLUTIONS OF MEMORIALIZATION

NONE

3. MINUTES

Motion to adopt the minutes of the workshop meeting of April 20, 2017 was made by Mayor Hannen, seconded by Ms. Anderson and passed on voice vote.

4. COMMUNICATIONS

1. NJ Planner March/April 2017 edition distributed to members of the Board

5. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Ron Johnson, Zoning Officer introduced Ruth Nicholas, Zoning Office Assistant to the Board members. Her experience was presented to the Board.

6. WORKSHOP PORTION

A. Discussion of Goals & Objectives and Master Plan Re-examination.
Goals and objectives of Board that was requested of Ron Johnson. Draft proposal presented to the Board and requested input from the members. Important #9: Land Use Ordinance - Further review is needed in sections to identify areas more efficiently and address. Goal is to make the ordinance easier for the general public to understand. Definition section needs to be more specific with duplicate definitions eliminated. Process would be to compile subjects into a list through information collected i.e. calls or applications and revise accordingly. Possibly definition section first and progress outward from there, most pressing items first. Board should be provided with document in workable format. Request that Board members review the ordinance online and note areas for improvement. Please advise Mr. Johnson by email. Draft list was distributed to members, is not in order, and will be reviewed at next workshop.

Master Plan Re-examination procedure and process - Explains the process/procedure, requirements and steps to be taken to achieve. Would like the process to be more community inclusive. Summit used a process with bulletin Board containing post-its where community individuals could leave notes with their thoughts and comments, which resulted in one of the best Master Plan reexaminations. Would like to mimic, Summit has a re-examination website that can be reviewed. Summit hired a firm to handle this aspect. Members requested to review the Summit website and please advise if there are any comments and/or questions.

Would like to implement an interactive flood zone/plain map that will be easier for residents or interested parties to access. Mr. Johnson will handle this project thru use of existing maps and use of google maps. Will pin point whether a property is in a flood area or not. FEMA maps are not user friendly. From there will move on to an interactive zoning map, where individuals can access bulk requirements, etc.

B. Review of proposed ORDINANCE NO. 2017-04 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF CRANFORD, CHAPTER 136 LAND DEVELOPMENT, pursuant to the Abandoned Property Rehabilitation Act (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq.), the

Township Committee of the Township of Cranford has the power to establish an Abandoned Property List and to establish and adopt specific municipal powers that are authorized to municipalities under the New Jersey Abandoned Property and Rehabilitation Act, N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq., (the "Act").

Commissioner Dooley advised ordinance has been introduced by the Township Committee. Is a post-Sandy creation based on State law and is 9 pages that exactly mimic the State statute. Since it authorizes the Township the option of taking possession and control of property, it is necessary to be as specific as possible. Focuses on residential not commercial properties; does include mixed uses if 2/3 residential. Discussion as to poverty stricken or disabled individuals and whether the ordinance would apply – no, as the property would not meet the specific criteria of being abandoned more for 6 months and vacant for 6 months before any action could be taken. Then the Township would have the option, not mandatory, of taking possession through court proceedings. Does apply to foreclosed bank owned properties. Previously, the Township could only enforce property maintenance ordinance, this provides more options. Township would recoup its expenses (lien filed) and when the property is sold, lien holders would be paid out of proceeds. Specific criteria as to when properties can be deemed abandoned and vacant: Fire Department keeps track of abandoned/vacant properties due to their area of concern; no utility services; not paying taxes and other verifiable facts rather than neighborhood notification. Subjectivity versus objectivity – statute has its own section that defines "nuisance".

Unpaid taxes – number of organizations purchase tax sale certificates and company is reimbursed when taxes are brought up to date, however, at times, the process repeats – taxes not paid, tax sale certificate issued again.

Rehabilitation section – Discussion as to whether the ordinance could be less broad rather than written – any loopholes? Does not believe anyone has challenged the State statute (2014 or 2015). Rehabilitation entity could not be forced upon the municipality.

Main driver is that without the proposed ordinance, the municipality is unable to do anything except for maintenance ordinance on abandoned properties while proposed ordinance provides for more mechanisms and options for the town to proceed. Will need interpretation from Township Attorney whether this applies to vacant land where house was demolished.

Motion to recommend that the Township Committee adopt ORDINANCE NO. 2017-04 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF CRANFORD, CHAPTER 136 LAND DEVELOPMENT, pursuant to the Abandoned Property Rehabilitation Act (N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq.), the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford has the power to establish an Abandoned Property List and to establish and adopt specific

municipal powers that are authorized to municipalities under the New Jersey Abandoned Property and Rehabilitation Act, N.J.S.A. 55:19-78 et seq., (the "Act") as written was made by Ms. Anderson, seconded by Ms. Steinbach with the following voting in favor of the motion: Ms. Murray, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Steinbach, Ms. Feder, Mayor Hannen, Commissioner Dooley, Ms. Pedde and Ms. Didzbalis.

- C. Discussion of procedures re: Resolution requesting the Planning Board to evaluate certain properties on North Avenue to determine if they should be designated as an area in need of redevelopment or rehabilitation.

Properties are from west of Riverside to Bar Americana on both sides of the street. Number of properties are in less than repairable state, Swan cleaners being one. Township purchased MD TV and parking lot. Before Township takes any action regarding this property, would like to have a plan in place to make certain this does not happen again. Need to ensure the North Avenue entranceway looks as the South Avenue entrance does with a complete plan in place. No one's business is being asked to leave, wish to have design standards in place to move forward. Need to review previous studies, and determine what aesthetics would be preferred. Planner will provide overall design and provide concept. Rather than just sell the properties, believes better to have input from the Planning Board to determine what the standards should be. Area was previously considered for designation in 2006, but was abandoned.

Process discussed - planner would be hired to investigate, make recommendations to committee, incorporate affordable housing obligations, etc. Planning Board would make determination if area is in need of redevelopment/rehabilitation. All that is being requested at this time is for planner to be hired to perform investigation and prepare a study.

Motion to request the Township Committee authorize the obtaining a Planner to perform an investigation of certain properties on North Avenue and prepare a study to determine if they should be designated as an area in need of redevelopment or rehabilitation was made by Ms. Anderson, seconded by Ms. Feder with the following voting in favor of the motion: Ms. Murray, Ms. Anderson, Ms. Steinbach, Ms. Feder, Mayor Hannen, Commissioner Dooley, Ms. Pedde and Ms. Didzbalis.

7. PUBLIC PORTION

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was regularly made, seconded and passed. The meeting concluded at 8:47 P.M.