

The Minutes of the Special Workshop Meeting of the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford, County of Union, State of New Jersey on **August 23, 2021** at **7:00 p.m.** remotely and by electronic means.

THIS MEETING IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE “OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT” AS ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY E-MAILING THE ANNUAL SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS TO THE WESTFIELD LEADER, THE UNION COUNTY LOCAL SOURCE, THE STAR LEDGER, AND TAP INTO CRANFORD, BY POSTING SUCH ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE ON A BULLETIN BOARD IN THE TOWN HALL RESERVED FOR SUCH ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE FILING OF SAID NOTICE WITH THE TOWNSHIP CLERK OF CRANFORD. FORMAL ACTION MAY BE TAKEN AT THIS MEETING.

Present: Mayor Kathleen Miller Prunty  
Deputy Mayor Brian Andrews  
Commissioner Jason Gareis  
Commissioner Thomas H. Hannen, Jr.\*  
Commissioner Mary O’Connor

Absent: None

Commissioner Hannen arrived to the Workshop Meeting at 7 :04 p.m.

Administrator Jamie Cryan and Township Clerk Patricia Donahue were present.

Deputy Mayor Andrews, Township Attorney Ryan Cooper and Ms. Annie Hindenlang (the Township’s Consulting Planner) of Topology NJ LLC were present (via video teleconference).

Mayor Miller Prunty expressed her gratitude that the previous-day storm did not result in problems for Cranford.

### **Public Comments**

Mayor Miller Prunty opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing no further comments, Mayor Miller Prunty closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

### **Update - Draft 750 Walnut Avenue Redevelopment Plan**

Mayor Miller Prunty spoke about the recent survey completed by members of the public regarding the number of stories pertaining to the proposed residential development at 750 Walnut Avenue. She stated that the Special Master (associated with the Township’s Affordable Housing plan with Fair Share Housing Center and Hartz Mountain Industries Inc.) had allowed for an extension of time in the Redevelopment Plan process to accommodate the survey. Mayor Miller Prunty stated that there were 553 responses to the survey, specifically noting that 392 responses favored a four (4)-story design and 161 responses favored a five (5)-story design. Ms. Annie Hindenlang stated that the Redevelopment Plan would be updated based on the survey results.

Commissioner Hannen made a motion that the 750 Walnut Avenue Redevelopment Plan include the survey’s community input regarding the number of stories, specifically that the building height would be four (4) stories high with no parking underneath. Each member of the Township Committee voted yes to Commissioner Hannen’s motion.

Mayor Miller Prunty stated that the Township would continue working on the Redevelopment Plan for 750 Walnut Avenue. She noted that future components for consideration would pertain to Green Space and parking. Mayor Miller Prunty stated that the Township would now conduct its own traffic study for the area.

### **Public Comments**

Mayor Miller Prunty opened the public comments portion of the meeting and asked if there were any questions or comments.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place - inquired about when would there be information pertaining to 1) the warehouses, and 2) entrance and exit information regarding 750 Walnut Avenue.

Ms. Gina Black of 34 Columbia Avenue - inquired whether the Township could expect more “push-back” from Hartz Mountain Industries, Inc. (Hartz). Township Attorney Ryan Cooper responded.

Ms. Christine Bradley of 107 Herning Avenue - inquired whether a decision had been made regarding a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT). Mayor Miller Prunty responded that a decision had not been made regarding a PILOT agreement.

Mr. Toby Baba of 131 Mohawk Drive - inquired about the PILOT including what would be the consequences if the Township did not authorize a PILOT. Mr. Cooper responded that Hartz has maintained that a PILOT (agreement) was essential. He stated that a PILOT agreement would occur after a Redevelopment Plan.

Ms. Christine Bradley of 107 Herning Avenue - inquired what would happen if the (authorization) of a Hartz PILOT agreement did not occur. Mr. Cooper stated that while he couldn't state what would exactly happen, he believed one of two options was possible: 1) the Special Master would mediate, or 2) Hartz would go back to “Court”.

Ms. Rita LaBrutto of 104 Arlington Road - stated that the Township's May 6th 750 Walnut Avenue presentation included a residential development description with five (5) stories. Mr. Cooper responded that Hartz wanted five (5) stories but the Township wanted four (4) stories. She inquired if the next draft would include information about schools. Ms. LaBrutto inquired if some of the units could be designated for (people whose) ages were 55 plus years. Mayor Miller Prunty stated that meetings would be held with the Board of Education. Ms. LaBrutto stated that the Township Committee should know information regarding 750 Walnut Avenue and how it related to the number of expected children. Ms. Hindenlang stated that a financial impact statement is requested with a PILOT application. Discussion ensued. Mr. Cooper spoke about the challenge faced, i.e., what is the outcome which would have the least impact. He stated that the first iteration involved a plan with 900 homes. The second iteration involved a plan with townhomes. The current plan represented the fewest number of Affordable Housing bedrooms and market-rate bedrooms. Commissioner Hannen asked Ms. Hindenlang about the evaluation method Topology uses for number of students.

Ms. Christine Esposito of 11 Behnert Place – asked a traffic-related question.

Mr. Toby Baba of 131 Mohawk Drive - asked a traffic-study question. He spoke about one (1)-way traffic and a cul-de-sac.

Ms. Lydia Allen of 751 Walnut Avenue - inquired about a proposed park as well as a crosswalk. Ms. Hindenlang spoke about ways to slow traffic. Ms. Allen asked Mr. Cooper about his legal experience. Mr. Cooper responded.

Ms. Jessica Orr of 7 Mitchell Place - spoke about the safety issues on Walnut Avenue. Ms. Hindenlang stated that there were ways to slow traffic. Ms. Orr inquired about the ultimate decision-maker for traffic issues on Walnut Avenue. Ms. Hindenlang responded that the decision maker pertaining to Walnut Avenue was the County (of Union). Further discussion ensued.

Ms. Anne Marie Bornstad of 17 Pershing Avenue - inquired if the entrance and exit to 750 Walnut Avenue would only occur from Walnut Avenue, i.e., were there alternate options to consider. Mr. Cooper stated that due to the locations of the train tracks and golf course, the entrance and exit to 750 Walnut Avenue would have to be from Walnut Avenue. Further discussion ensued including discussion that 1) some residents had concerns that the entrance and exit to 750 Walnut Avenue would be at Lexington Avenue (Commissioner Hannen) and 2) that the traffic study should not be limited to the assumption of an entrance and exit to 750 Walnut Avenue from Walnut Avenue (Ms. Bornstad).

Ms. Angela Leary of 4 Behnert Place - requested that the occurrence of the upcoming Walnut Avenue traffic study not take place on a Sunday. She then spoke about input into the draft Redevelopment Plan and specifically spoke about snow removal and trash removal.

Ms. Lydia Allen of 751 Walnut Avenue - stated that the previous traffic study was inept.

Mr. Julian Smalls of 741 Walnut Avenue - stated that he was concerned regarding on-street parking. He inquired about permit parking on Walnut Avenue. A brief discussion ensued.

Ms. Christine Esposito of 11 Behnert Place - inquired about the green space. She inquired whether there was an example of this public (open) space. Mr. Cooper responded that the developments at both Riverfront and Birchwood had green space.

Ms. Angela Leary of 4 Behnert Place - inquired if the proposed commercial site at 750 Walnut Avenue could be developed. Mr. Cooper responded that Hartz Mountain could not develop the designated commercial area.

Mr. Toby Baba of 131 Mohawk Drive - inquired about the legal document associated with 750 Walnut Avenue. Mr. Cooper spoke about the function of law and RDP (Realistic Development Potential). Mr. Baba inquired about a timeline and if a PILOT was agreed to, whether additional years could be sought, i.e., sixty (60) years.

Ms. Rita LaBrutto of 104 Arlington Road - inquired whether parking on Walnut Avenue should not be allowed. Various members of the public at the Workshop Meeting responded parking should be allowed. Ms. Annie Hindenlang of Topology stated that the Traffic Study would occur between the Plan and the Redevelopment Agreement.

Mr. Don Smith of 21 Oneida Place - referenced the Green Space and Public Space area and inquired who would be responsible if there was an injury on the Space. Ms. Hindenlang responded that with the creation of a public space, an Easement Agreement is usually drawn up which sets the terms of public access.

Ms. Jessica Orr of 7 Mitchell Place - inquired about decreasing the square footage of the commercial area.

Ms. Ann Marie Bornstad of 17 Pershing Avenue - noted the number of parking spaces (1.5) associated with an one (1) bedroom unit, and inquired 1) how that translated and 2) how could “we protect ourselves” once lease agreements occurred. Mayor Miller Prunty stated that the Redevelopment Agreement would specify the number of guest spaces and owner spaces. Ms. Hindenlang stated that she didn’t know how this matter would be enforced.

Ms. Christine Esposito of 11 Behnert Place - inquired if the commercial area would be included in the Traffic Study. Ms. Hindenlang responded that it would.

Ms. Angela Leary of 4 Behnert Place - inquired about the length of commercial vehicles. Ms. Hindenlang stated that the County has oversight over this matter. Mr. Cooper briefly elaborated about the permitted uses in a Redevelopment Plan.

Ms. Christine Esposito of 11 Behnert Place - inquired about zoning (uses) of the area and whether they were the same. Mr. Cooper stated that the uses were listed in the Township’s May 6th presentation. Ms. Hindenlang briefly spoke about one change, i.e., a change from 40 feet to 60 feet.

Ms. Dawn Beresford of 706 Lexington Avenue - inquired whether there was something in place to prevent trucks from driving down Lexington Avenue. Mr. Cooper responded that something could be put in place.

Mr. Tom Sherman of 18 Colin Kelly Street - stated that a truck drove down his street during the previous year and ripped something off of his house.

Mr. Robert Ramirez of TAPinto - inquired which area would be developed first at 750 Walnut Avenue, i.e., the commercial area or the residential area. Mayor Miller Prunty responded that the Township did not know.

Ms. Jessica Orr of 7 Mitchell Place - inquired whether about the May 6<sup>th</sup> presentation and the uses. Mayor Miller Prunty responded.

Mr. Julian Smalls of 741 Walnut Avenue - inquired whether the berm would still remain. Mayor Miller Prunty stated that the berm would remain.

Mr. Toby Baba of 131 Mohawk Drive - inquired about the shrinking of the road and input from the community. Ms. Hindenlang responded that the Township could make a road request but the approval for a road request would have to come from the County.

Mayor Miller Prunty stated that there would be another Town Hall Meeting pertaining to 750 Walnut Avenue.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Miller Prunty closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

On motion of Commissioner Hannen, seconded by Commissioner Gareis and passed, the Township Committee adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Donahue  
Township Clerk

Dated: August 23, 2021