

MINUTES - PLANNING BOARD

Workshop meeting of August 19, 2020

A public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board was called to order by Ms. Murray on August 19, 2020 at 7:39 p.m. via **Google Meet**. Ms. Lenahan announced in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Open Public Meetings Act, the Westfield Leader and the Star Ledger have been notified and the agenda posted in the municipal building as required. Formal action may be taken.

1. ROLL CALL

Members Present Via Google Meet:

Ms. Murray
Ms. Pedde
Dr. Chapman
Mr. Cossa
Ms. Didzbalis
Ms. Feder
Mayor Giblin
Deputy Mayor Prunty

Members Absent:

Mr. Taylor

Alternates Present via Google Meet:

Ms. Kellett

Alternates Absent:

Mr. Walton

Also present via Google Meet:

Jonathan Drill Esq., Jason Bottcher, Zoning Officer, Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator
Nick Dickerson, Board Planner, Michael Ash, Esq. Special Counsel

Members of Public

See attached list

2. RESOLUTIONS:

Application # PB 20-003

Loft Homes LLC

194 North Avenue East

Block 314, Lot 5

After discussion, a motion to adopt the Resolution of Memorialization as amended, was made by Deputy Mayor Prunty, seconded by Ms. Pedde and passed by roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Murray, Ms. Pedde, Mr. Cossa, Ms. Didzbalis, Deputy Mayor Prunty, Ms. Kellett

Opposed: None

3. MINUTES

None

4. COMMUNICATIONS

None

5. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC HEARING –

1. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Ms. Murray called a public meeting of the Cranford Planning Board to order on August 19, 2020 at 8:00 p.m. via **Google Meet**. Ms. Lenahan announced this meeting is in compliance with the “Open Public Meetings Act” as adequate notice of this meeting has been provided to the Westfield Leader and the Star Ledger with the agenda specifying the time, place and matters to be heard having been posted on a bulletin Board in the Town Hall reserved for such announcements and the filing of said agenda with the Township Clerk of Cranford. Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

2. FLAG SALUTE

3. ROLL CALL:

Members Present Via Google Meet

Ms. Murray

Ms. Pedde

Dr. Chapman

Mr. Coosa

Ms. Didzbalis

Ms. Feder

Mayor Giblin

Deputy Mayor Prunty

Members Absent:

Mr. Taylor

Alternates Present via Google Meet:

Ms. Kellett

Alternates Absent:

Mr. Walton

Also present via Google Meet:

Jonathan Drill Esq., Jason Bottcher, Zoning Officer, Kathy Lenahan, Board Administrator
Nick Dickerson, Board Planner, Michael Ash, Esq., Special Counsel

Members of Public
See Attached List

4. **Public Hearing on the Area in Need of Redevelopment Study (Condemnation Redevelopment Area) for the so-called North Avenue Study Area consisting of Block 193 Lots 6.01, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14 on the Cranford Tax Map. Upon the conclusion of the hearing, the Planning Board may determine whether to recommend to the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford that the above referenced properties should be designated as a Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment.**

Mr. Ash stated testimony will be given regarding certain properties on Block 193 as a condemnation redevelopment area.

Nick Dickerson, Board Planner, appeared and was sworn in. His credentials were presented to the Board and he was accepted as an expert in Planning.

Mr. Ash reviewed the following documents that would be placed into the record:

Mr. Dickerson's report titled *Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment Investigation* dated July 2020 marked as PB1, a PowerPoint presentation marked PB2, written correspondence from Barbara and Frank Krause marked PB3 and written correspondence from George Steinbach marked PB4. Mr. Ash also reviewed the 8 steps of the redevelopment process, the responsibilities of the Planning Board and the timeline of the study.

Mr. Dickerson reviewed his PowerPoint presentation which included:

Eligibility of a property in a redevelopment area;

Statutory Criteria;

Properties included in the study area;

Items that were reviewed (tax maps, Master Plan, Reexamination Plan, PD records, tax building, zoning and assessor's records, environmental records, etc.);

Reviewed each property, its features and identified the criteria classification;

Reviewed the conclusions and recommendations.

His recommendation was that the individual sites do meet the criteria for designation as an area in need of redevelopment.

Ms. Ash's questions to Mr. Dickerson ascertained the following:

Under redevelopment law only one criterion needs to be met for a property to be eligible to be included in a redevelopment area. Each property in the study area is included under multiple criteria under the redevelopment law. His opinion as a professional

planner, is that all properties in the study area are eligible for inclusion in the redevelopment area.

Ms. Murray asked if the Board had any questions for Mr. Dickerson or Mr. Ash.

There were no questions from the Board.

Ms. Murray asked if the Public had any questions for Mr. Dickerson, the following appeared:

William Mathes - 351 First Street, Westfield – Asked about “H” criteria and did all the properties meet that criteria. Asked about other properties in the Downtown Core.

Mr. Dickerson stated that is correct, a property has to meet only one of the criteria.

Mr. Ash stated Mr. Dickerson only reviewed the properties included in this report and not every property in the Downtown.

Rita LaBrutto – 104 Arlington Road – Asked about diverse ownership criteria and about contiguous properties. Asked about a flood zone and these particular properties. Asked about stagnate or unproductive properties and about the surface lot and towns’ activities. Asked about the alternate in the Affordable Housing plan for the 8 affordable units.

Mr. Dickerson stated there are different items to be addresses in Criteria E. Reviewed the limitations on some of the lots. Stated this study is to establish if the area meets the criteria. Stated the 2018 Housing Element has multiple options available.

Frank Krause – 20 Pittsfield Road – Asked about Lot 6.01 and the events and activities on the site. Asked about building a 4-story site and what is the public ‘s role in this proceeding.

Mr. Ash stated this is no proposal for a 4-story building. If a redevelopment plan is prepared, there would be a public hearing for public comment regarding the future use of the area.

Margaret Mok – 27 Ridge Road, Greenbrook. Stated she is the owner of Lot 10 & Lot 13. Asked about criteria “H” in the study.

Mr. Dickerson explained criteria H and discussed Smart Growth Planning Principles.

There were no other questions and the matter was referred back to the Board.

Mr. Ash read Mr. & Mrs. Krause (PB3) and Mr. Steinbach's (PB4) letters into the record.

Mr. Krause appeared and was sworn in. Stated he did write the letter.

Ms. Murray asked if the Public would like to make any comments, the following appeared:

Mark Spencer – 101 Forest Avenue – appeared and was sworn in. Asked if the property owners could cure the deficiencies would the criteria be removed.

Mr. Ash stated the study is as the properties existed during the analysis. If deficiencies were cured it would not change conclusions of report. Deficiencies are more of a planning prospective than cosmetic in nature.

Bill Mathes – 351 First St. Westfield – appeared and was sworn in. Stated he is an architect in NJ. He will be providing factual testimony on Lots 10 & 13. Stated building on Lot 13 is similar to others in the Downtown. Solid construction, brick façade. Apartments have been renovated. There are two apartments. AC is window units. Impervious surface is because it is a parking lot. Flooding would be a de minimis amount. In his opinion, it is weak criteria. No grounds for condemnation. There are six income producing units. Building is in use 24/7. Viable business. Does not see the rationale.

Rita LaBrutto – 104 Arlington Road – appeared and was sworn in. Stated the designation of redevelopment is a political grab. Planner's criteria is a stretch, these are viable businesses, not unproductive or stagnate. Criteria could be used for any of the properties in the Downtown. Town needs to do something with their own property. There is an alternative for affordable housing. Only MDTV fits the criteria. Smart Growth could be applied to the whole Downtown. Taking peoples' businesses for 8 units. Should be able to go to a Planning Board meeting, meetings that are controversial should be in person and could be in the Community Center. Hope next steps are in person and can participate.

There were no other comments and the matter was referred back to the Board.

5. DELIBERATIONS OF Area in Need of Redevelopment Study (Condemnation Redevelopment Area) for the so-called North Avenue Study Area consisting of Block 193 Lots 6.01, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14 on the Cranford Tax Map.

Ms. Murray reviewed the testimony.

Board comments consisted of the following:

Question before the Board is very narrow. Thorough presentation. Report has met the burden. In favor of recommending to the Township Committee. Agree report supports

that the properties meet the criteria. Opportunity to consider what this area of Cranford can be. Hope the Town will work with property owners. In favor of the recommendation.

Motion that the Planning Board recommend to the Township Committee of the Township of Cranford the above referenced properties should be designated as a Condemnation Area in Need of Redevelopment was made by Ms. Pedde, seconded by Ms. Kellett and passed on roll call vote:

Affirmative: Ms. Murray, Ms. Pedde Mr. Cossa Ms. Didzbalis Ms. Feder, Mayor Giblin, Deputy Mayor Prunty Ms. Kellett

Opposed: Dr. Chapman

6. PUBLIC PORTION

None

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn the meeting was regularly made, seconded and passed. The meeting concluded at 10:57 p.m.

Kathleen Murray, Chair