

February 18, 2010

A regular meeting of the Allendale Planning Board was held in the Municipal building on February 18, 2010. The meeting was called to order at 8:10 p.m. by Mr. Sirico, Vice Chairman, who announced that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act were met by the required posting and notice to publications.

The following members answered roll call: Mr. Barra, Mr. Bernstein, Mr. Sirico, Ms. Sheehan, Mr. Sasso, and Mr. Walters. Mr. Quinn, Mr. Herndon, Mr. Fliegel, Mr. Yevchak and Mr. Zambrotta were absent. Also present was Mr. Dunn, Board Attorney.

On a motion by Mr. Bernstein, seconded by Ms. Sheehan, the minutes of the work session of December 14, 2009 were approved as submitted. On a motion by Mr. Barra, seconded by Mr. Bernstein, the minutes of the regular session of January 21, 2010, were approved as submitted.

Mr. Sirico brought up the subject of the retaining wall on West Orchard St. that is replacing the railroad tie wall that was discussed during the Board's approval of the plans for the A & P Shopping Center. Mr. Sirico said the wall is cement color as opposed to the burgundy color of the transit authority wall. There was a question of whether the wall should be painted or stained to match the rest of the retaining wall from the transit area. Mr. Sirico said he believes that it should be stained to match. Mr. Walters questioned whether it is the Board's job to comment on this detail. He asked whether they deviated from an item that was approved by the Board. Mr. Sirico said he believes there was no discussion by the Board relative to the color of the wall.

Mr. Barra said color was not discussed by the Board and he feels a stain would not hold up compared to a factory made color.

Mr. Snieckus said he did take a look at the wall in response to Mr. Yakimik's questions as to the coloration of the existing wall. He concurs with the Mayor that the Board did not get down to that level of detail at the hearings on the application. He noted that the color does tend to fade over time. He said it is a raw concrete wall so it could take a stain material; however it does take skill in order for it to look right. He feels it could be successfully stained to blend in with the landscape.

Mr. Snieckus recommended that the owner contact the manufacturer to get their opinion as to the type of stain or if they would even recommend a stain at this time. Mr. Dunn suggested that if this is done it should be done informally. Mr. Barra suggested that Mr. Yakimik approach the owner informally with a simple request or suggestion.

Master Plan Review

Mr. Snieckus continued his discussion of the master plan review. Tonight he will talk about the sustainability plan element. This document outlines ways, means, goals and objectives of the municipality to pursue more sustainable ways of composing land use controls, enacting improvements to municipal services and buildings within the community and establishing action plans on how to address issues of sustainability in the municipality.

Mr. Snieckus said Sustainable New Jersey is a plan offered by NJDEP for municipalities that provides a rating or certification program. Sustainable New Jersey provides ways and means and even funding to assist in things such as energy audit of buildings, improving air quality within buildings and things of that nature.

Mr. Snieckus said sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. He lists in his document ways in which a community can achieve this goal such as to shift away from polluting and wasteful practices and finding ways to combine services. One of the purposes of this element is to provide for, encourage and promote the efficient use of natural resources and the installation and usage of renewable energy systems, considering the impact of buildings on the local, regional and global environment, allowing ecosystems to function naturally, conserving and re-using water, treating storm water on-site and optimizing climatic conditions through site orientation and design.

Mr. Snieckus talked about global warming and increase in population which will cause an increase in the use of resources. He points out the types of decisions a local government can make and these are listed on page 3 of his report. He pointed out that Allendale is significantly developed without a substantial amount of remaining green space that we have to plan for future development. Any new or redevelopment should be encouraged within the town center areas instead of the fringes of those areas. The State plan also talks about the need to encourage development where we have established utilities and infrastructure such as sewer and water. He said we don't want to overdevelop our downtown areas.

Mr. Barra said he has heard the argument that we need to have more ratables in order to keep taxes down. He asked Mr. Snieckus if he has more information about any studies that were done about this. He is concerned about the impact of residential development on sewer, water, schools, garbage, etc.

Mr. Snieckus said his office has collected data for multi-family developments from the standpoint of their fiscal impacts to the community. It has been recognized that the developments are providing positive ratables to the communities based on the number of school age children coming from these units. Usually starter families begin in these units but the units are not of a size that promote or encourage family development over time and people tend to move on to a single family or larger townhouse facility. There are studies that he can provide with this type of information. With regard to possible development within the downtown area, that land area is constrained as a result of the lot sizes. The lack of depth leads to the lack of parking available and limits the level of development that can occur. If the Borough would allow someone to gather a few properties together and redevelop with a commercial component on the first floor with possibly a residential on a second or third floor, the ratable would tend to be more positive on that type of development. As far as single family residential is concerned, the benefit to the municipality would depend upon the density per acre. There are studies available and he will try to get that information as well.

Mr. Snieckus said the other things that are touched on in his report is the need to conserve and protect natural water bodies and features within the community and to protect the availability of

drinking water, adopt ordinances that protect trees and vegetation that help absorb carbon emissions, propose development improvements that improve access to mass transit, propose new buildings and additions within the community to be more energy efficient, promote the concepts of green buildings and continue to educate citizens about sustainable living.

He said the other component of sustainable New Jersey that he has tried to tie into this document is to establish a vision statement for the community. He wanted to confirm with Councilwoman Wilczynski the approach of the vision statement that he has provided. What it shows is a consistency between the efforts for the Sustainable New Jersey certification and the master plan document itself. He has touched upon a series of overall goals and policies for the community. One is to pursue the certified Sustainable New Jersey program. The second is to enforce land use policies that reduce sprawl and preserve open space, improve transportation options, create compact walkable developments wherever possible and to encourage development and redevelopment policies to be compatible with the principles of the U.S. Green Building Council. It is necessary to prove that a development meets certain criteria of sustainability such as using reclaimed resources in building products, highly efficient energy heating systems within the buildings, etc. While he is not requiring that it be a mandatory requirement of the building code, it is something that he thinks we may want to encourage and provide possible benefits if someone is seeking such a certification.

Mr. Bernstein questioned the Planning Board's role with respect to this information. Mr. Snieckus said the intent is to identify goals and objectives that will help guide policy decisions in the future. He said that is the effort of the master plan. It is a way of identifying specific directions that the municipality wants to go so that land use decisions and policy decisions support those major objectives and goals.

A Board member commented that a lot of this language was not in the old master plan. Mr. Snieckus commented that the Sustainability Plan Element was recently enacted by former Governor Corzine. Mayor Barra said having this in our master plan helps us with grants. Mr. Snieckus said Sustainable New Jersey has grant funding to assist municipalities to do energy audits. If we have this type of document in place it shows that the municipality wants to pursue more sustainable improvements or updates to municipal facilities in order to save money to the taxpayers.

A Board member asked if the Borough should try to use some of the LEED ND certified items in order to achieve some of their ratings. Mr. Snieckus said he was trying not to go to that level. He would not like the master plan to be a document that would steer future decisions without it being known what those future decisions need to be based upon. He tried to provide this as more of a general guideline from the standpoint of being aware of these options that are available. He said the LEED system is not a public agency that publishes these ratings. It is a voluntary non-profit organization.

In regard to item 3 on page 9, Mr. Bernstein asked if we are endorsing or recommending community/school gardens for local food production. By putting it in our master plan have we endorsed it or recommended it or is this a boiler plate element that we would find in master plans from now on. Mr. Snieckus said these are typical programs and he is looking for the board's

input so he can eliminate possible components or change some of the language to leave it more general if that is what the Board wishes.

Mr. Bernstein said everything here is generally positive but the concern would be that someone could use it as a sword to do something and say it is in the master plan. He suggested putting in a prefacing statement in the beginning of the document that would provide an “out” if desired. Mr. Snieckus said many times he puts a statement in the introduction of the document that these statements are meant to be guidelines subject to future needs or demands based on a balance between the needs and a desire to achieve sustainability.

Mayor Barra asked, “What do we put in the master plan? Do we put in broad goals and objectives without being too specific? How specific do we get without causing a problem for ourselves?”

Mr. Walters asked if Mr. Snieckus knows of a town that he would hold up as an example of a town that has done this well. Mr. Snieckus said there are towns that have gone way beyond what he has done in this document and included some of the energy audit information where they have actually hired those specific professionals and they have identified those specific items in the document. He didn’t think that was appropriate for this document, but there are some that are pared down to the more general statement of goals and objectives that have been identified and that is how he has tried to model this one.

Mr. Snieckus said what he has seen for commercial properties or for larger lots is the ability to allow coverage bonuses to facilities that implement items such as rain water harvesting in their irrigation systems for larger buildings or for using pervious concrete or asphalt and they would be allowed a 5% increase in their total lot coverage. There is difficulty with some of these systems. For instance, the pervious concrete or asphalt does require maintenance to maintain that porosity of the material.

Mayor Barra said that deals again with the philosophy of the master plan. The Mayor and Council should deal with the implementation. The Planning Board could say in the master plan to the governing body that it believes in terms of sustainability that we should offer incentives to either commercial and/or residential to have them be more green.

Mr. Snieckus said the Borough could consider the enactment of an ordinance that would allow for benefits if someone was implementing a green building type strategy. The Planning Board could say they would encourage a 5% increase in impervious coverage if someone is implementing a percentage of pervious material with the idea that this is a more sustainable approach to development on a specific property. It would then be referred to the Mayor and Council for review and consideration of an ordinance. Ultimately it would be the governing body’s decision.

With regard to the issue of mass transportation, Mr. Snieckus pointed out that Allendale is only second to Ridgewood in regard to the ridership of mass transit and there may be a need for a bus shelter to encourage people to use the bus lines. There has been discussion about renovation of

the train station which is owned by N.J. Transit, but they do not want to spend any money to refurbish it because they do not consider it to be a hub or center such as Waldwick or Ramsey. Mr. Walters asked if there is something in the master plan to allow for retail there or are we precluded at this point. Mr. Snieckus said he will look at the zoning in that area and find out if the downtown business district extends to that area.

Mr. Snieckus said the document also touches on issues of natural resource preservation such as wetlands, existing topography, vegetation, flood plains, etc. and provides certain targets for preservation. He also provides dialog concerning surface water and ground water needs for preservation as well as additional opportunities such as solar power to help with the costs of electrical usage within the municipality. One of the other things some communities are starting to look at is the issue of public and private partnerships to offset energy costs. He also discusses wind power, geothermal energy, green roofs and rain gardens in his report.

Mayor Barra commented that the property at the end of Powell and Yeomans that the Borough recently acquired in partnership with the Passaic River Coalition has the enormous benefit of acting as a collector point for the preservation of ground water and is a big plus to the Borough's water quality. He said it is something that should be included because it is a 20 acre parcel.

Mayor Barra said he has received a report on the Foreit site. At this point it is just a preliminary plan and ultimately it will have to come before the Planning Board for subdivision of the parcel.

Mr. Sirico said the master plan discussion will continue at the next meeting. Mayor Barra reminded the Board that the Chamber of Commerce had expressed an interest in attending the meeting when the commercial area is discussed. The conclusion was that it will probably be discussed at the April meeting.

Mr. Snieckus said he will be available on both meeting days in March and it will depend on how much he has available whether both dates will be required. The Board concluded that the Chairman can make that determination.

On a motion by Mr. Barra, seconded by Mr. Sirico, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Knapp