

April 11, 2024, Planning Board/Board of Adjustment Meeting Minutes

These minutes were approved at the May 9, 2024, meeting.

Call to Order and Notices: Chair Ford called the regular meeting of the Union Township Planning Board/Board of Adjustment to order at 7:02pm.

Open Public Meetings Act Notice: I would like to have placed in the minutes that the Open Public Meeting Requirements of Law have been satisfied by our notice dated January 18, 2024, as published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and notice dated January 19, 2024, as published in the Courier News. A copy of the notice has also been posted on the Township Website, the Bulletin Board in the Municipal Building and a copy has been filed with the Municipal Clerk.

Flag Salute

Members Present: Mayor DeGiralamo, Committeewoman Cherney, Mr. Nace, Mr. Neary, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Mr. Belden, Ms. Bartolomeo(7:03pm), Chair Ford, Mr. Lepore, Mr. Tousignant, Mr. Glacken.

Board Professionals Present: Robert Clerico, Engineer/Planner, Joe Brosnan, Planner.

Members Absent: Mr. Kastrud, Mr. Gatani.

Approval of Minutes: Mr. Lepore made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2024, regular meeting. Mayor DeGiralamo seconded the motion. **Vote: Ayes:** Mayor DeGiralamo, Mr. Nace, Mr. Neary, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Ms. Bartolomeo, Chair Ford, Mr. Lepore, Mr. Tousignant, Mr. Glacken. **Abstain:** Committeewoman Cherney, Mr. Belden. **No Nays. Motion carried.**

New and Pending Matters

Highlands/Master Plan

Mr. Clerico stated last year the Township adopted a reexamination of the Master Plan. The Planning Board recently expressed interest in undertaking a Land Development Assessment of the current Highlands Planning Area along the Route 78 corridor to determine the impact of conversion to the Highlands Preservation area. In addition, the Board also wanted to evaluate the scope of work and process associated with adopting a new Comprehensive Master Plan for the entire Township.

Mr. Clerico and Mr. Brosnan had provided a memo dated April 10, 2024 which outlined Initiative A, Route 78 Corridor Land Development Assessment for Highlands Planning Area, and Initiative B Comprehensive Master Plan.

Mr. Brosnan stated the Board can focus specifically on the Land Use element of the Master Plan. He stated this element of the Master Plan would be a community effort with subcommittees and focus groups. However, the timing for a complete Comprehensive Master Plan can take up to a year and a half to complete.

Mr. Brosnan explained that the Township can choose to take the entirety of the Highlands Regional Master Plan and adopt the necessary components and conform with the plan. This is a topic called Plan Conformance. The first step to that endeavor is the Initial Highlands Assessment. He stated it is important to understand that embarking on that initial assessment is not a committal to joining the

Highlands. It would mostly be a progress report to understand what the impacts would be if the Township did conform. There would be a final report to show what would need to be done to completely accommodate the Highlands Regional Master Plan. After this is done, the Township would be able to choose whether to conform. The Highlands is willing to fund the initial effort.

Mr. Brosnan stated the next process would be Initiative B for a full Comprehensive Master Plan. This process is lengthy and expensive. If the Township chose to adopt the Highlands Regional Master Plan, then a comprehensive update to the Master Plan would be required and funded by the Highlands.

Mayor DeGiralamo asked about the cost for a complete Comprehensive Master Plan. Mr. Brosnan answered about \$250,000. Mayor DeGiralamo asked about citizen participation in the process. Mr. Brosnan stated this is ideal and the Planner would need to sign off on any recommendations and plans. The Board discussed the possibility of the Highlands funding a complete Comprehensive Master Plan whether or not the Township decides to conform to the Highlands Regional Master Plan. The Highlands will pay for Initiative A. Mr. Clerico stated that completing Initiative A would help the Board and the Township Committee to decide whether to conform to the Highlands Master Plan for the Planning Area.

Mr. Tousignant remarked that the zoning ordinance along the 78 corridor is broad. Currently the limited development along the corridor is due to a lack of infrastructure. However, a developer with enough money could come in and develop the land in a way that is not consistent with what the Township intended. Mayor DeGiralamo commented that this is his main concern. Mr. Brosnan stated the Highlands provide blanket protections, which would control development. Mayor DeGiralamo asked if the Master Plan needs to be changed to take steps to modify zoning. Mr. Clerico said yes.

There were discussions regarding the protections that are offered by the Highlands for challenges to the zoning ordinance. The Highlands offers legal defense for any challenges. The Board discussed what types of development could be affected and what the Board could approve.

Mr. Lepore made a motion to recommend that the Planning Board request that the Township Committee proceed with Initiative A provided the Initiative is funded by the Highlands. Mr. Belden seconded the motion. **Vote: Ayes:** Mr. Neary, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Mr. Belden, Ms. Bartolomeo, Chair Ford, Mr. Lepore, Mr. Tousignant, Mr. Glacken. **Abstain:** Mayor DeGiralamo, Committeewoman Cherney. **Nays:** Mr. Nace. **Motion carried.**

Mayor DeGiralamo left the meeting at 8:40pm.

Stormwater Control Ordinance – Planning Board Review

Mr. Clerico stated that the State has mandated that every municipality adopt a revised stormwater control ordinance to ensure compliance with the new State rules. The Planning Board is required to review the new ordinance for compliance with the Township's Master Plan.

Mr. Nace made a motion to deem that the Stormwater Control Ordinance is not inconsistent with the Union Township Master Plan. Ms. Bartolomeo seconded the motion. **Vote: Ayes:** Mayor DeGiralamo, Committeewoman Cherney, Mr. Nace, Mr. Neary, Mr. Kirkpatrick, Mr. Belden, Ms. Bartolomeo, Chair Ford, Mr. Lepore, Mr. Tousignant. **Abstain:** Mr. Glacken. **No Nays. Motion carried.**

Kal Freight, Inc. – Resolution for Dismissal

15 Frontage Road, Block 22 Lot 30.01

Mr. Lepore made a motion to approve the resolution for the dismissal of the Kal Freight, Inc. application.

Mr. Nace seconded the motion. **Vote: Ayes:** Mr. Nace, Mr. Neary, Chair Ford, Ms. Bartolomeo, Mr.

Kirkpatrick, Mr. Lepore, Mr. Tousignant. **No Nays. Motion carried.**

Correspondence/Comments from the Public/Other Discussion

- Highlands Cross-Acceptance notice –Informational Only
- NJPO Newsletter – Informational only
- April 2, 2024, memo from the Affordable Housing Planner

Chair Ford reviewed the memo from the affordable housing planner regarding new legislation and the municipal impact. There are deadlines the municipality must meet with regard to the new legislation.

Chair Ford asked if there were any comments from the public. There were none.

Motion to Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, a motion to adjourn was made at 8:47pm by Mr. Lepore and seconded by Mr. Tousignant. **Vote: All Ayes. No Nays. Motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Leigh Gronau – Board Secretary