

**HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
March 24, 2016**

A regular meeting of the Hopewell Township Planning Board was held in the Hopewell Township Municipal Building Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 24, 2016.

Ms. Murphy, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. She stated that notice of the meeting was posted in the Municipal Building and had been forwarded to the Hopewell Valley News, The Times of Trenton, The Trentonian and the Hopewell Express in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Members present: Karen Murphy, Chairperson, Julie Blake, Marylou Ferrara, Bruce Gunther, Paul Kiss, Rex Parker, Russell Swanson, Francesca Bartlett and Jack Belmont. Also present: Frank Banisch, Planner, Banisch Associates, Paul E. Pogorzelski, Township Administrator/Engineer and Linda Barbieri, Recording Secretary. Absent: Lawrence R. Clarke, Kevin Kuchinski and Ronald C. Morgan, Esq.

Announcements

Mr. Parker announced that Hopewell Township and the Environmental Commission are sponsoring a free tree seedling day at the Public Works building on Saturday, April 30, 2016 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. This is part of the New Jersey Tree Recovery campaign and an opportunity for residents to receive up to five free tree seedlings.

Minutes for Approval

Mr. Swanson moved and Mr. Kiss seconded a motion approving the minutes of the September 26, 2013 Planning Board meeting. The minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake, Ms. Ferrara, Mr. Gunther, Ms. Murphy, Mr. Belmont and Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

Mr. Swanson moved and Mr. Parker seconded a motion approving the minutes of the October 24, 2013 Planning Board meeting. The minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake, Ms. Ferrara, Mr. Belmont and Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

Mr. Swanson moved and Mr. Kiss seconded a motion approving the minutes of the November 21, 2013 Planning Board meeting. The minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake, Ms. Ferrara, Ms. Murphy, Mr. Parker, Mr. Belmont and Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

Mr. Parker moved and Mr. Swanson seconded a motion approving the minutes of the January 23, 2014 Planning Board meeting. The

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake, Ms. Ferrara, Ms. Murphy and Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

Mr. Swanson moved and Mr. Parker seconded a motion approving the minutes of the February 19, 2014 Special Planning Board meeting. The minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake, Ms. Ferrara and Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

Mr. Kiss moved and Mr. Parker seconded a motion approving the minutes of the February 27, 2014 Planning Board meeting. The minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake, Ms. Ferrara and Ms. Bartlett abstaining.

Ms. Bartlett moved and Mr. Swanson seconded a motion approving the minutes of the November 19, 2015 Planning Board meeting. The minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake and Mr. Kiss abstaining.

Mr. Swanson moved and Mr. Parker seconded a motion approving the minutes of the December 10, 2015 Planning Board meeting. The minutes were approved as presented with Ms. Blake and Ms. Ferrara abstaining.

Memorialization of Resolution

D&R Greenway Land Trust, Inc., Major Subdivision,
Preliminary/Final, Variance C

Block 5, Lot 14.03 - 125 Stony Brook Road

The applicant was seeking Preliminary and Final Major Subdivision approval and a lot area variance for property known as 125 Stony Brook Road, Block 5, Lot 14.03 as shown and designated on the Hopewell Township Tax Map in the Mountain Resource Conservation (MRC) Zoning District. The application proposes to subdivide Lot 14.03 to create a new parcel to be known as Lot 14.031 consisting of 6.050 acres, which surrounds the existing septic system and water well, which is intended to be sold to facilitate the construction of one (1) single-family detached home. The remainder parcel is to be reclassified as Lot 14.032 comprised of 46.75 acres, which will be permanently preserved as open space to expand the acreage of the Cedar Ridge Preserve from 164 to 211 acres.

Ms. Ferrara moved and Ms. Bartlett seconded a motion memorializing the action taken at the February 25, 2016 Planning Board meeting. It was voted on and passed.

Roll Call Vote:

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Ayes: Blake, Ferrara, Murphy, Swanson, Bartlett
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: Clarke, Kuchinski
Not Voting: Gunther, Kiss, Parker, Belmont

Discussion - Route 31 Design Study

It was noted that the Route 31 Design Study was prepared approximately 15 years ago; Board members seated at that time explained that there was a broad range of reasons to prepare the Study, including: 1) Introducing traffic calming measures, which at the time many people in the Township and also Township Committee members had never heard about; some of those measures are being done today; 2) discussions with respect to reverse frontage were taking place, which the Board felt was important to address in the Study; 3) completing a general overview of a large artery in the town; 4) addressing at that time whether the Township should create more opportunities for revenue by increasing the amount of commercial space along Route 31 or whether the Township was more interested in traffic calming and limiting the amount of commercial space, with the public reaction seeming to indicate that they did not want an increase in the amount of traffic; 5) reviewing the southern portion of Route 31 to see if the area could be stabilized as a residential area; 6) reviewing the middle section of Route 31, mostly in the area of the Pennington Shopping Center, as there was the feeling that it was an inefficient use of space, there were shopping centers elsewhere that were more profitable, a number of the buildings were quite old, even 15 years ago, and the thought was that this area could be renewed; 7) addressing the Board's perception that the northern section of Route 31 was a gateway to the Hopewell Valley; and 8) to address safety concerns at the intersection of Route 31 and West Delaware Avenue.

Mr. Pogorzelski commented that also at that time the State Plan was in the forefront. The town received a Smart Growth grant to fund the Study. It was somewhat of a precursor of things to come had the State Plan materialized; it was a building block of sorts into State Plan compliance with smart growth compliance as one item on that checklist. Mr. Pogorzelski noted that Route 31 has long been a conversation topic for the town with many informal discussions that seemed to indicate that the town really did not want Route 31 to become a four-lane highway with a concrete barrier down the center so the town wanted to carry that vision forward to see how that could play out in the future.

Board members commented that when the Study was done Hopewell Township had just gone through a tremendous growth spurt; in the

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

last ten years nothing much has happened. Something the Board learned at the time of the Study was that most of the vehicles travelling along the Route 31 corridor were not residents of Hopewell Township. There was a feeling that this would probably hold true today, perhaps even more so.

Mr. Banisch commented that he felt the Study was well thought out and responsive to many issues that were being discussed at the time; however, the theory that a more residential scale on Route 31 was a good idea was troubling to him now, as the residential driveways along Route 31 are a big part of the dangers along that road. He stated that some of the concepts in the Study should not be accepted at face value and should be challenged a bit. This would involve deciding on the type of values the town would like to see, including a decision on the desired character of the downtown area near Pennington and preventing wall to wall sprawl; these are some of the issues that have always been core values in the town. He commented that if some of the traffic calming measures contained in the Study were used, the town would need to find a way to move all of the regional traffic through the Route 31 corridor at the same time. Looking ahead, the town would need to determine a vision for how it is going to evolve. The conclusions in the Study would need to be reviewed to determine if those conclusions are still relevant and if any of those conclusions have been implemented or are in the process of trying to be implemented. It was his feeling that this needs to be clear so that anyone reviewing the Study does not dismiss the entire Study because perhaps certain conclusions do not make sense today.

Board members commented on the possibility of affordable housing units in the vicinity of the Pennington Circle and how that may impact traffic travelling from the southern portion of Route 31 towards the circle. Mr. Pogorzelski commented that is one of the biggest challenges. He suggested that perhaps a review of Route 31 should be done in segments starting up north where there is more preserved land and/or open space and work south. Once you are south of Pennington Borough you are going to be faced with a lot of complexity and challenges, which cannot be addressed until our affordable housing numbers are known.

There were questions by Board members with respect to what could be done at the Pennytown site. Mr. Pogorzelski stated that the Township Committee has asked the Planning Board to not include Pennytown in the Housing Plan as they are considering selling the tract. He explained that the tract is zoned Shopping Center (SC).

Board members discussed the possible redevelopment of Pennytown. They concluded that no decision should be made that may encumber or

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

reduce the value of the property; when the Township Committee decides what the goals are going to be for this area then the Planning Board would work to actuate those goals as best as possible. It was the consensus of the Board that they must have direction from the Township Committee.

Mr. Banisch stated that regardless of the Board's discussions, there is a general feeling that once the town has received information with respect to their affordable housing numbers it is going to affect Route 31 and that is an issue that everyone should be educated on.

Ms. Murphy asked for questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Ray Nichols, a Township resident, commented that he was a contributor to information contained in the Route 31 Design Study. He felt that it would be worth the Board's while to continue the Route 31 discussion, involve the public, and consider alternatives that were not considered at that time the Study was generated.

The Route 31 Design Study may be viewed at:
[http://hopewelltpw.org/Marshalls-Corner-Pennytown-Task-Force/Rt31 Design Study.pdf](http://hopewelltpw.org/Marshalls-Corner-Pennytown-Task-Force/Rt31%20Design%20Study.pdf)

Update - Housing Plan

Ms. Murphy stated that the special meeting date of June 15, 2016, which the Board has reserved for affordable housing discussions, may change. Mr. Morgan has indicated that it may be around this time that the Court starts to talk numbers. The Board will keep the meeting date at this time in case something breaks in the Court and there is work to be done. Ms. Murphy commented that Mr. Morgan is now the town's affordable housing attorney and will be updating the Township Committee and Planning Board on all affordable housing legal matters.

Correspondence

Ms. Ferrara explained that the Zoning Board would be hearing a Request for an Interpretation from Kooltronic at the April 6, 2016 Zoning Board meeting. Kooltronic is requesting that the Zoning Board provide an interpretation of what Kooltronic is able to do on their tract. She stated that they have already appeared before the Zoning Board and the Board has asked them to return with a clearer indication of the things they want to do on the tract. They have asked the Board for an opinion as to how to interpret various

HOPEWELL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

unanswered questions for them. She commented that it would be useful for Planning Board members to attend the meeting.

Mr. Pogorzelski explained that he would need to train the Planning Board on stormwater; it is a requirement of law that the Board and even the Governing Body have some level of training. He commented that when the Board has a light workload, time at the end of an agenda would be given for training.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Linda Barbieri
Recording Secretary

The detailed meeting discussion can be found at
<http://hopewelltp.org/audio/PB/2016/planning-board-20160324.html>