

MINUTES
RED BANK PLANNING BOARD
February 6, 2023

The Red Bank Planning Board held a Planning Board meeting on Monday February 6, 2023 at 7:00 pm, in the Municipal building, first floor Council Chambers, 90 Monmouth Street, Red Bank, New Jersey.

Chair Dan Mancuso called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm. A roll call showed the following members were in attendance: Dan Mancuso, Michael Ballard, Art Murphy, Juanita Lewis (via Zoom), Lou DiMento, Kristina Bonatakis, Barbara Boas, Dave Cassidy and Fred Stone. Also present were Mike Leckstein, Esq, Shawna Ebanks, P.P., AICP, Director of Community Development and Chris Ann DeGenaro, Board Secretary.

Dan Mancuso read the Open Public Meeting Statement Act. An adequate and electronic notice with the time, place and matter was posted in the two newspapers, with the Borough Clerk's office, the Borough website and posted outside the Red Bank Meeting room and on the front door of Borough Hall.

Draft Master Plan

Continuation of the draft Master Plan presentation.

Comments and questions continued:

Ben Forrest, 16 Locust Avenue, clarified the Hampton Inn property is in the WD-Zone.

He supports the plan. He would like more community input for any future park proposed on the Westside. He was in agreement with the clean-up effort.

Dan Mancuso explained that at this point there is only a clean-up effort. Any plans for a park will be done by the Mayor and Council, with a lot of public input.

The Master Plan is an idea book. He does not know what opportunities will be present at any given time, so it is hard to prioritize any of the ideas. For example, if a certain grant is available at a certain time, then that is what they will focus on.

There was discussion regarding the role of the Planning Board.

Linda Cohen, 28 Riverside Avenue, questioned about plans that get approvals, but then sit for years without anything being accomplished. If a developer purchases a property and it doesn't pan out to be what they thought, the town should not pay for the mistakes of the developer not doing their due-diligence.

Dan Mancuso stated the as long as a property is maintained and kept up to code, it can remain vacant for many years. If it is not kept up, then that is a code enforcement issue.

Susan Viscomi, 25 Cedar Street, stated the Master Plan is referenced many times, especially during applications to the Planning or Zoning Boards. It is a very important document.

She discussed affordable housing, specifically when a lot is sub-divided and how this will add to the inventory, but quality of life becomes an issue. For example, residents have trouble parking their cars.

Bob Zuckerman, Executive Director of RiverCenter, complimented the document.

The report states the town should ensure adequate parking, he would like to add language stating parking inventory to be an inherently beneficial use, to ensure there is enough parking downtown to keep the area vibrant. He referenced the parking study that was done a few years ago.

Dan Mancuso said you can't use the language of inherently beneficial use, as this is a legal term and that wording cannot be added to the Plan. He agrees there are certain times of the day that more parking is needed.

If a parking garage were to be discussed, it would be done by the Mayor and Council.

William Poku, the newly elected President of the NAACP, was asking for synergy.

He felt the Master Plan in its' present form is a disappointment. There is a problem with people of color and not being able to live in Red Bank.

He discussed the Mount Laurel Doctrine, which guides municipalities. He would like there to be an affirmative effort.

The demographic shift shows a 24% decrease in the black population.

The Board has not received any applications for the first time home-buyers program.

Dan Mancuso stated the demographics Mr. Poku provided are true and any applications that come before the Planning Board will be adhered to with regard to the Mount Laurel ruling. Other than that, the Planning Board does not have any control with regard to the synergy being requested.

Mr. Poku discussed two properties on Bank Street that are deed restricted.

Susan Favati BFJ stated there are demographic issues not only in Red Bank or Monmouth County, but throughout the state. The Plan is not all-inclusive, but is a start to address these concerns.

Also, by 2025, a new housing program must be implemented.

Mike Ballard stated that even prior to the Master Plan, there were concerns about revising the existing affordable units; however this does not add to the inventory.

As far as the first time home-buyer program, if you are eligible for this program, you probably cannot afford the house.

Linda Hill, 64 McLaren Street, complimented the time and work done for this Plan. She is concerned, as there is a long list of recommendations.

Mike Leckstein explained it is a laid out plan for things to be done throughout the town.

You cannot assign a priority.

Ms. Hill questioned how the town can approach the long list. It was explained that different entities are involved, including the Council, Planning Board and Zoning Board. Each Board has their part in this.

Dan Mancuso explained if no applications are brought in, than the opportunity is not there to use the ideas recommended in the Master Plan.

If the developer comes in, then they can review what was in the Master Plan and see if the idea is in the Plan.

Lou DiMento felt this was a constrained view of what a Master Plan is. The Plan includes items, such as safety issues, pedestrians, traffic, trees and parking. He feels items should be prioritized.

He discussed the placement of restrooms at Eastside Park and removing of trees.

Mike Leckstein further explained what the Plan is and what it is not. It is part of the land use act, it is not a method of changing zoning. Any Ordinances that are proposed must be consistent with the Master Plan. Priorities are not a part of this.

There was discussion regarding public input and the 1931 Master Plan was discussed.

Susan Favati explained, for example, that having grants listed in the Master Plan, makes it easier when you are applying for them; as when the state reviews your application they can see that grants are within your Master Plan.

Linda Hill felt the 1931 document seemed passive, if items didn't get accomplished.

Mike and Dan explained there were items completed and some were not.

Shawna Ebanks stated BFJ was brilliant to include an action plan in their report.

The implementation and action portion of the report can be reviewed by the Mayor and Council, with regard to short term and long term plans.

Lou DiMento clarified with Susan Favati the time frames presented in the report:

Short term - 1-3 years

Mid-term - 4-7 years

Long term – beyond

Shawna Ebanks explained how there are different items that are important during different times; such as right now, sustainability, resiliency and global warming are hot topics now.

It was also noted that every 5-7 years, the Plan must be reviewed to confirm that items are being addressed and the book just doesn't sit on the shelf.

Bruce Whittaker questioned if the Master Plan doesn't drive the direction of the city than what does?

Mike Leckstein said economics does.

Mr. Whittaker said he would like to see the plan drive what we do.

Mike Leckstein explained we control things through zoning.

There was discussion regarding the zoning of the land and what is permitted. Zoning has to be consistent the Master Plan.

For example, if we want better pedestrian or bicycle safety or enlarging roads, these items are discussed by the Council. It also requires that the Master Plan consist of elements, such as a traffic circulation plan. Council passes Ordinances to implement items.

If the town were to receive funding, the issue on how to spend the money is the decision of the elected officials, with input from the residents.

A motion was made by Dan Mancuso, seconded by Barbara Boas, to close the public portion. All were in favor.

Dan provided the following suggested changes to the Plan:

- Remove reference about park at library and re-word it to state open space
- Lighting – make wildlife friendly, when possible
- Add language that existing public housing units be maintained
- Edit the reference to encourage underground parking and re-word it to encourage parking under-ground and under buildings
- Opportunity Zone – add this onto the map and the description list. Susan Favati confirmed this covers much of the Westside and is federally depicted. These are located throughout the country.
- Clarify the map with regard to the Overlay Zone
- Change Shade Tree Commission to Shade Tree Committee

Shawna Ebanks thanked Susan with BFJ and FRA and all the work accomplished.

Michael Ballard clarified the BR1 Zone allowing taller buildings on Monmouth and West Front Streets and the denial of the Pazzo application from the Zoning Board. He wanted to confirm if this was spot zoning.

Susan Favati said no it was not.

There was discussion regarding height restrictions in this area.

Lou DiMento feels there is a trade-off, whereas, If you enable a builder to put up a higher building maybe they will propose a larger set-back and have more open space to plant trees.

Mike Ballard wanted clearer language in the Plan to reflect a building height of up to 50 feet in this area.

Dave Cassidy received an email from stakeholders involved in the roundabout issue and that they were against it. He just wanted this to be on the record.

Mike Leckstein and Dan Mancuso confirmed that wording in the Master Plan would be changed to state that portions of Monmouth Street and West Front Street could have building heights up to 50, but no more and this would be on only these two streets, in the areas that are not in the train station overlay district.

A motion was made by Barbara Boas, seconded by Art Murphy, to approve the proposed Master Plan with the changes discussed. Ayes: Dan Mancuso, Michael Ballard, Art Murphy, Juanita Lewis, Lou DiMento, Kristina Bonatakis, Barbara Boas, Dave Cassidy and Fred Stone. Nays: none.

Art Murphy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Barbara Boas. The meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dina Anastasio