

MINUTES
RED BANK PLANNING BOARD
January 23, 2023

The Red Bank Planning Board held a Planning Board meeting on Monday January 23, 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 7:00 pm. A roll call showed the following members were in attendance: Mayor Portman, Dan Mancuso, Tom Welsh, Michael Ballard, Art Murphy, Lou DiMento, Barbara Boas, Fred Stone and Alix Schroder. Also present were Mike Leckstein, Esq., Shawna Ebanks, P.P., AICP, Director of Community Development, Ed Herrman, PE 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 Presentation:

Shawna Ebanks confirmed the meeting was noticed and provided to Monmouth County.

Susan Favate from BFG provided the presentation.
The process started last January.

Christine, from BFG, explained different workshops, pop-up events and public meetings that were available to get information to the residents and community business members. They also met with Borough staff, HPC, RiverCenter, Red Bank Middle School students and Council members.

The vision is to capture all that Red Bank has to offer. Red Bank has small town life, extensive amenities and distinctive architecture. They want to make sure the town continues to evolve and is diverse. Four goals were determined for this project: connected, balanced, equitable and dynamic.

There were several small areas that were determined by FHS Studios (they partnered with BFJ in this project) that needed in-depth research: Sunset Park, Riverside area by the VNA and the area by the hospital.

The Sunset Park area was an industrial area with contamination. Susan stated a grant has been applied for regarding this issue.

The area located by the gateway near the VNA addressed pedestrian infrastructure and transportation. This is a county road, so the Borough does not have a lot of leeway regarding this topic.

The hospital area has had a lot of growth and they wanted to review the impact on the neighboring area. They discussed how to accommodate a major employer in the area, which is right near a residential area.

A large component in a Master Plan is land use. They recognized the residential issue is the primary component; the business district is large and growing; the train station has much to offer; affordable housing will be addressed to possibly provide accessory dwelling units. Waterfront access was looked at and the same things that were recommended in the 1950's were recommended now. They want to know how can these suggestions be implemented.

A summary of some of the items recommended include:

- How to advance the goals of waterfront access include mapping easements
- Hospital area -they looked closely at this area and how it overlapped with the historic area
- Public health - ways to adapt quickly during times of health outbreaks, such as holding outdoor activities.
- Land use and reviewing ordinances
- Traffic – vehicular and pedestrian.
- New circulation element – a deep review was completed
- Complete Streets – a plan to be aggressive, making the area safe for all users
- Sidewalk plans, pedestrian assets, more bike parking,
- NJ Transit train and bus.
- Hot spots – there are a handful of intersections that were reviewed for traffic safety
- EV charging/parking
- Economic Development- supporting the small business community, especially in a tough retail environment; better communication between all
- Shrewsbury Avenue corridor – make sure it remains its' own area, review design guidelines and Zoning changes for this area, so it doesn't become part of the downtown
- Arts/Cultural – destination – support by funding
- Parks/Open Space – maximize what we have
- School District – partnership
- Sustainability/Infrastructure – encouraging new development, waste production and recycling/composting
- Reducing impervious coverage
- Map changes

Dan Mancuso opened up the floor for any questions.

Cindy Burnham, 71 Wallace Street confirmed the Hospital Zone and its' movement into the Historic Zone.

Susan Favate explained that Medical Services are permitted across the street in the BR-1 zone. An example would be a medical office use in an existing building. To address issues of this nature, would be to use a Zoning approach.

Joan Wetherell, Manor Drive questioned if the group talked to students from Red Bank Regional. They were not able to arrange as meeting, as there are students from other towns also.

Ben Forrest, 16 Locust Avenue expressed his concerns with spot zoning through the years for open projects. He was looking for a more precise document, so there would be no questions and less exceptions.

Susan Favate explained that a property owner can always ask for a variance. Rehabilitation designation is in place for most of the town, not the Broad Street area. She recommended perhaps shrinking this, so it is more targeted and predictable.

Mr. Forrest would like waterfront access in the Sunset Park area, but didn't want it to be like Disneyland.

Dan Mancuso explained the town is trying to get funding for a clean-up project; which is the first step. There is no hard plan for a proposed park, that is far away.

Mr. Forrest was also concerned with the Route 35 corridor. It is an ugly view to see when entering the town.

Susan Favate explained the Hampton Inn has an active approval in place for this site. The area where there was previously a gas station at the foot of the bridge, should be made more aesthetically pleasing.

Steven Hecht, 135 Branch Avenue expressed his concern with the communication between the Eastside, Westside and downtown and how they can become one instead of separate entities.

Susan Favate explained the train is a visual barrier; they recommended improving sidewalk connections.

The town has been working on the Monmouth Street and West Front Street connections.

She also explained that they should remain distinct and not become part of the Broad Street market, as they serve different uses.

Susan Viscomi questioned if providing 10% of developments a tax exemption is high for a town of this size. She questioned the VNA receiving a 30-year tax levy and if this was a pro or con.

Susan Favate stated it may be a little high, but it is not negative; as there are strong non-profit uses that contribute to the town.

Tax Abatements are used a lot in many towns, as an incentive for a site that has been sitting for a while. It promotes smart growth.

Ms. Viscomi also questioned why there was no input on marijuana laws.

Susan Favate explained this was already addressed by the Borough.

Goals are broad, so any issues can later be addressed, as long as they are consistent with the Master Plan.

Maryellen Mess, Hudson Avenue, wanted to know who the developer was for the NJ Transit site.

Susan Favate could not say, as there is no deal with Red Bank, it is with NJ Transit.

Ms. Mess also expressed her concerns to encourage underground building parking, as it creates big dead space, for example on Mechanic Street.

Ms. Favate stated they recommended more efficient use of the land.

Ms. Mess also discussed her thoughts on affordable housing and the allowance for smaller floor space.

The Zoning Board has approved applications for undersized units and they are not taking into consideration families with children.

Susan Favate explained there are strict state requirements the town must meet.

Some of the units are already established, but not accounted for.

The demand is not in the downtown area.

Ms. Mess stated the Red Bank Housing Authority works hard to meet the needs of families with children and there are many units in need of repair.

There was discussion regarding public/private partnerships and she feels desirable areas should be set aside for all.

Susan Favate explained smart and thoughtful public housing should be provided.

Dan Mancuso explained this is a long, structured process and there would be no public land given away to developers for market rate housing that is meant for affordable housing.

Cindy Burnham, clarified the riverwalk area and she would like it to be a nature area.

Ben Forrest would like to see more affordable housing in town.

Dan Mancuso explained there is a difference between affordable housing and housing that is affordable.

If there is money available, we have to hunt it down.

Susan Favate explained with regards to the traffic issues, not everything is easily fixable, since the county and the state owns some streets. They did look at pedestrian traffic accidents.

She noted some concept plans to look at, including painting on sidewalks and what would be more visible to drivers.

Joan Wetherell, Manor Drive, wanted to clarify intersections/lighting.

Susan Favate explained certain intersections where there are changes recommended.

Nancy Blackwood, Chestnut Street, discussed the issue of sidewalks and who is responsible.

Susan Favate explained they should have a plan for maintenance and ownership.

Dan explained that during a change of property ownership you can require the owner to repair the sidewalk, if it is bad shape.

Tom Welsh further stated that at one time there was an effort to have a tax implemented so the town would be responsible for this, but nothing was pursued.

Councilman Ballard stated that there were many good ideas from this report.

Dan Mancuso stated the next meeting would be February 6, 2023 at 7:00pm.

The Master Plan will most likely be adopted at this meeting.

Comments:

Ben Forrest expressed his thanks to the volunteers.

Dan Mancuso explained the public outreach was important.

Steven Hecht, Branch Avenue, is a Board of Trustee member for the library and he explained that the recommendation to make a park at the library would be a problem.

The library was deeded to the town in 1937 by the Eisner Family and one of the caveats was that there never be a park there.

Susan Favate confirmed that this was to be removed from the report.

Maryellen Mess, Hudson Avenue was disappointed with the document. She felt it was over-whelming and would have liked a list of items that are doable. She stated a large part of the compilation of things has been around for years. She felt it would be helpful to prioritize the recommendations; as some cost a lot and some are vague.

She was happy one of the recommendations was how to handle the hospital, addressing this issue through the zoning process.

Pedestrian safety was good.

Dan Mancuso explained the Master Plan is a guide and is done intentionally this way. It allows a developer to know what the town would like to see. It is not a to do list.

Lou DiMento agreed that there were many recommendations and some of those at the end didn't agree with what was in the document. Maybe by the next meeting they can pick the top 10 recommendations and prioritize them.

He discussed the White Street parking lot.

Dan said to email Shawna any suggestions.

Barbara Boas stated priorities were needed and perhaps they could create priority levels.

Mike Leckstein stated they had done a wonderful job. It is painting a picture of what you want the town to look like.

Susanne Viscomi is part of the library board and the school board and has been involved in their development of 5-year plans. These plans are helpful in determining what the goals of the organization are.

She stated this was a great first step to see the needs and wants of the town.

When a developer comes in with an application, they should be able to know where the town wants to be, not where they are.

Dan Mancuso confirmed this was a starting point.

A motion was made by Barbara Boas, seconded by Lou Dimento, to continue the hearing to the February 6th meeting, with no further notice required. All were in favor.

A motion was made by Art Murphy, seconded by Barbara Boas, to approve the Resolution for 348 Shrewsbury Avenue. Ayes: Dan Mancuso, Art Murphy, Lou DiMento, Barbara Boas and Fred Stone. Nays: none.

A motion was made by Dan Mancuso, seconded by Fred Stone, to approve the Resolution for the application of 15 East Leonard Street. Ayes: Dan Mancuso, Art Murphy, Lou DiMento, Barbara Boas and Fred Stone. Nays: none.

A motion was made by Art Murphy, seconded by Barbara Boas, to approve the Resolution for the application of 162 Catherine Street. Ayes: Dan Mancuso, Art Murphy, Lou DiMento, Barbara Boas and Fred Stone. Nays: none

Art Murphy made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Barbara Boas. The meeting adjourned at 8:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dina Anastasio