

**GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
December 13, 2011

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee Meeting, which was held on Tuesday, December 13, 2011, at 7:30 p.m., in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building, Lower Level Conference Room.

**Statement of Proper Notice**

Adequate notice of the regular meeting of the Lawrence Township Growth & Redevelopment Committee has been provided by filing an annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk, and by filing the agenda with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building, and mailing to the Trenton Times, the Trentonian and the Lawrence Ledger.

The roll was called as follows at 7:35 p.m.:

**Present:** Chairperson Christopher Bobbitt, Vice Chairperson Ryan Kennedy, Lovette Love-Stevens, Michael Marion, Karen Vincent-Lavanga, David Maffei, Donald Little, Michel Franc

**Excused Absence:** Charles Lavine

**Absent:** Cami Granahan, Tushar Patel, Jags Vazirani, David Mizenko, William Zimmer, John Conroy, Kurt Koevenig, Reza Asgari, Pamela Mount, Councilwoman, Bruce Nahan, Lawrence High School

**Also Present:** Andrew Link, Principal Planner/Business Advocate, Michael Powers, Council Liaison, Susan Snook, Secretary

**Approval of Minutes:**

The September 13, 2011 minutes were unanimously approved.

**Discussion with GEPNA:**

Chairperson Bobbitt stated that Greater Eldridge Park Neighborhood Association (GEPNA) members were at the meeting to make a presentation.

Brett Smith, President of GEPNA, Terisita Bastides-Heron and John Gaskins, Board Members. Mr. Smith stated they had their monthly meeting last night and a couple of things were discussed. They had their merchant market fair, where Mrs. Smith went and talked to the businesses and initially it was to have a sidewalk sale and have the businesses out and have the people know the different businesses in the area. It ended up where the businesses had a little special of the day and had a stand at St. Ann's property to hand out flyers to talk to the neighborhoods and tell them what the businesses and GEPNA were doing.

GEPNA also has a "Wreath Program" where they asked all the businesses to put up a holiday wreath supported by Willis Greenhouse, as part of a beautification program.

GEPNA is also looking at a Neighborhood Watch Program. There has been some crime and there is a debate whether the crime has increased.

There was a brief discussion about Marco's expanding his jewelry store to a Mexican Food Market. It was also stated that GEPNA would like to finalize their business district which runs along Route 206 from Willis Greenhouse to the Presbyterian Church and also have some businesses which are off of Route 206. GEPNA has been trying to tie the areas together by doing planters and wreaths to make it look cohesive. GEPNA also asked if the members of the Growth & Redevelopment members had any suggestions.

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A question was brought up about the Sign Ordinance. It was asked if the merchants would be able to advertise the way they like to such as seasonal things. How will that impact the future? Councilman Powers stated that the sign ordinance would allow for what is similar on Main Street where you can put seasonal decorations on the telephone poles in the commercial district. There was also a concern about sidewalk sales and what was permitted. So a recommendation should be made to the Planning Board next year to see if that is something that can be allowed.

GEPNA also asked if they would be allowed to run a banner across Route 206; however, Route 206 is a State Road. Mr. Smith stated there is uniformity on signage and if they could start working toward some standard features, make it more of a neighborhood feel, they put in small planters across from some businesses. However, one key issue with growth and redevelopment is they have trouble getting businesses directly engaged with GEPNA as an organization. Mr. Smith suggested that maybe the Growth & Redevelopment Committee could sponsor a meeting with GEPNA to have some brain storming on what the businesses can do.

Mr. Smith also stated about working with planning in the standpoint of density. There was a study done by Rutgers and one of the things was the housing density in the GEPNA area is not adequate for foot traffic to walk to the businesses to make them grow. One suggestion was the Willis Greenhouse property and putting in housing which would put more people in the area to have more walking traffic. Someone was interested in purchasing Willis Greenhouses; however, the business is for sale, not the land.

There was a lengthy discussion on the Pit Stop. It was stated that they were close to a final statement to be fully remediated. Freeholder Colavita wrote to New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection; however, it has slowed down again. The results are possibly expecting a letter to come out early February for an all clear. If this does happens, then Pit Stop becomes the possibility of doing some development. However, GEPNA's concern is does the area need another sub shop; there are four (4) in the area already. A discussion was held with Roma Bank to put in a branch; there was also a recommendation to make it into a multiple unit, retail on first floor and residential apartments above. There is available land behind the Pit Stop, where maybe it can be turned into a park.

The study also suggested working with New Jersey Department of Transportation to divide Lawrence Road, in that area, with soft dividers down the road to slow the traffic. Councilman Powers stated that New Jersey Department of Transportation lowered the speed limit from 40 mph to 35 mph, south of St. Ann's. There is also a traffic light going in at Darrah Lane, hoping to slow traffic down. There was also a concern that people do not stop when the pedestrian light is lit; it was suggested that a Police Officer should be posted there for a couple of months, maybe it would make the people stop. The Growth and Redevelopment could speak to the Public Safety Committee maybe posting a civilian officer at the pedestrian light.

Chairperson Bobbitt asked if the property taxes are still being paid by the property owner. It was asked if GEPNA could get in touch with the property owner to ask them to clean up the site and it was stated that it has been difficult to get in touch with them. It is currently being used by Public Service Electric & Gas for storage (dirt) because they were working on Lawn Park Avenue. At one time, there was fencing installed around the property; it was taken down because it was an eyesore.

Chairman Bobbitt stated that if the property owner is paying taxes on it, it seems like the owner might want to do something with it because he is not walking away from it. Supposedly, the owner has exceeded State funds, so to do anything in this market it is going to be interesting. Mr. Smith stated that GEPNA needs to be creative and coordinate different ideas to different large group of people to come up with something so it just does not sit there for commercial reasons.

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Councilman Powers stated that the Craft Cleaners is different than the Pit Stop because the Craft Cleaners and the Township went to the Court and because of safety concerns and the roof caving in, the Township will be demolishing the building, an initiative with Township funds; however, a lien will be posited against the owner of the building. The Township will be using, about \$50,000.00 of its funds. Mr. Smith questioned, if the property continues to be owned by the owner; Councilman Powers stated that there are tax liens against the property; and there are tax certificates; but no one wants to purchase them because they don't want to do the clean-up.

GEPNA feels that this is the situation in which they are in with the Pit Stop. GEPNA would like to see how to make the property useful to the neighborhood; so if they can do a demolition and leave it as open space. Councilman Powers stated is it a viable and attractive location for a bank or other type of business. Chairperson Bobbitt asked Mr. Smith how do the other business owners see 206 along that portion developing. The business owners stated they do not have enough money or time to do anything outside of just keeping the doors opened during normal business hours; help with events, a specific item at a meeting where our input is needed they will be there; however, it is a hard sell.

There are 38 businesses from Willis Greenhouse to Candella's; but that includes the fire house. Terisita Bastides-Heron prepared a map, which she will e-mail to Andy Link. Councilman Powers asked if any of the businesses are members of the Mercer County Chamber of Commerce and he suggested it might be a good idea because they promote businesses.

Mr. Smith stated that sustainability practices with the businesses such as insulation, solar power, better appliances, trying to educate businesses to save money. There was a brief discussion about trying to apply for a grant with the State for unique lighting. Mr. Smith stated that challenges include unique lighting; tree plantings; banners, changing the parking, sidewalk sale to build awareness of the businesses.

Brief discussion about parking issues, parking behind the businesses or have community parking at the Fire House. However, the new fence and wall are deterring the people from using it. Councilman Powers stated that some of the parking was for the fire fighters; however, this is something we should investigate.

It is unsure when the traffic light at Darrah will be installed. Councilman Powers stated that the Township did not receive a letter from New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and it is still in their court.

Mr. Smith stated that Pit Stop is their main concern because it is most visible and the next big major issue is the "Neighborhood Watch" and GEPNA has been working with the Police on this issue. Mr. Marion asked if there were any business that expressed their concern about Township regulations that hinder their business. Mr. Smith stated yes, Marco thought he was being singled out because English was not his first language and there are some other businesses also that had concerns. Mr. Smith stated that it is difficult getting permits in Lawrence Township. Councilman Powers stated about looking into A Frame signs being used in that area.

Chairperson Bobbitt stated that this is the opportunity that GEPNA needs to link up with the businesses to get all of their issues and bring them to this Committee. Chairperson Bobbitt stated that he is hearing that GEPNA has day to day issues, things that the Township and this committee and other committees could take care of. There are also the big picture issues like your vision of Eldridge Park and there are middle things that are doable but we can't do, like anything on Route 206 since that is New Jersey Department of Transportation, and GEPNA can help this committee to understand those day to day things and possibly helping with other issues, such as the Pit Stop.

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Mr. Smith stated that the next GEPNA annual meeting is January 9, 2012, second Monday, at 7:30 p.m. at St. Ann's. They will be working on their yearly calendar and will take this back to the Committee.

**Awards Program Recap:**

Councilman Powers mentioned about the Special Olympics 2014 is coming up and who should we talk to about this for marketing purposes. It was also mentioned about the hotels in Lawrence, which are Howard Johnson, Red roof, Comfort Inn.

We should ask Jude from the Mercer Regional Chamber of Commerce to come back as a guest speaker to get businesses to attend our meeting to get them involved.

**New Business Welcome Effort:**

Mr. Link had received a new business list from the Fire Marshal's Office which is from September to December 2011. The most recent business is Celsion Corporation on Lenox Drive and Netti's Italian Specialties in the Farmers Market and Ultimate Fitness Equipment at 2936 Brunswick Pike.

Councilman Powers stated there is a ribbon cutting on the December 20<sup>th</sup> at the Jean Darc Salon on Quakerbridge Road. Mr. Link stated he sent out an e-mail.

David's Bridals was mentioned as being a new business as well as a new hair salon by the Farmers Market on Route 1 (where Swiss Bakery was located).

**Redevelopment Issues:**

A question came up about the Quaker Bridge Mall and the application before the Board being approved. However, beside the Cheesecake Factory moving in, what is the other business going in? Why is it such a secret?

A brief discussion about the Exxon on Route 1 and it is out of business; however, the business for working on cars is still open.

Colonial Bowling Lanes discussion about being behind schedule; the stucco is complete and so is the painting.

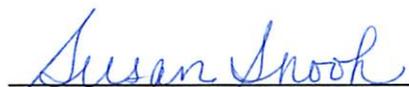
Auxiliary Services was also mentioned and it was stated that it is for commercial contractors.

**Other Business:**

There was a lengthy discussion for the 2012 Meeting Schedule regarding the February 14, 2012 date. It was moved to February 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. Other than the one change, the 2012 meeting schedule was approved.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on January 10, 2012.



Susan Snook, Secretary  
Growth & Redevelopment Committee