

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
February 10, 2015

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee Meeting, which was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2015, at 6:30 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 6:37 p.m.:

Present: Christopher Bobbitt, Ryan Kennedy, Lovette Love-Stevens, Charles Lavine, John Conroy, John Schloesser, Max Ramos, Donald Addison

Excused Absence: Tushar Patel, Danielle Delprato, Boynton R. Weekes

Absent: Howard Nelson, Andrew D. Bedryk

Also Present: Andrew Link, Principal Planner/Business Advocate, Cathleen Lewis, Mayor, Jude Martin-Cianfano, Susan Snook, Secretary

Election of Officers:

Nominations were opened to the floor for Chairperson. Ryan Kennedy nominated Christopher Bobbitt for Chairperson. Chairperson Bobbitt accepted the position and it was a unanimous vote.

Chairperson Bobbitt opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairperson. John Conroy nominated Ryan Kennedy for Vice Chairperson. Vice Chairperson Kennedy accepted the position and it was a unanimous vote.

Approval of Minutes:

The October 14, 2014 minutes were unanimously approved.

Public Comment:

None

Approval of 2015 Meeting Schedule:

The 2015 Meeting Schedule was approved unanimously. Vice Chairperson Kennedy asked if we were to hold the meeting in another location, do we have to re-notice. Mr. Link stated he has to inform our Clerk.

2015 Goals and Objections:

Chairperson Bobbitt stated last year we were talking about signage and do we still want to continue on with. Mr. Addison asked what could we do about it and what do we expect out of it. Chairperson Bobbitt replied that his understanding is that James Parvesse came in and gave a presentation and it is really not the big signage it is the little signage. It seems like there are also issues at Eldridge Park and the Shopping Center with small signage. Mr. Addison stated we can make recommendations, can we move it or approve it or are we wasting our time.

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Mr. Lavine stated as long as a sign does not require a zoning variance; however, banners could be addressed, sandwich boards, and how many days to keep it up. Mr. Conroy stated the problem is a business gets caught and that business then calls and complains. Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated the person who gets caught then reports the other person and if it violates the zoning code and if it doesn't then those signs should be permitted.

Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated there are a few things we can do and one is to inform them of what the rules are so it doesn't happen again and make a recommendation if a change is needed that we can act on that change. Mayor Lewis stated she had preliminary conversations and explained what the issue is regarding the temporary A-frame signs and pedestrian signage as opposed to monuments signs.

Mr. Addison stated it is not just Lawrence Township and surrounding municipalities and almost certain the signage issues is the failure for who is responsible for the signage. An ordinance should not be negotiated. Data should be taken and a record kept of it. The person should be willing to give their name and contact information and lodge the complaint and if they do not want to do it, then there is no complaint.

Mayor Lewis asked if there was a bigger issue or are we talking about the Lawrence Shopping Center. Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated Mrs. G's signs, banners and people trying to increase business. Mayor Lewis stated the last time we spoke about this was about sandwich boards and A-frame signs at the Lawrence Shopping Center because you were not allowed to put them there, but if you were in a pedestrian area like Main Street, those are available.

She continued that one of the small fixes, which you will not get a lot of complaints about, was defining pedestrian areas because if it is a shopping center that you are able to walk around, it is not a Mall, we don't want them on Route 1. Banners are a different issue because you get into the bigger stores and we want to make sure that we are not cluttering Route 1 and that is where this body can provide guidance by talking to business owners.

Mayor Lewis continued, stating that if businesses front on Route 1, it makes sense to this committee, that they could put up a sign four times a year when they have their big sales if that is the rule then you have all of the stores along Route 1 and will clutter Route 1. We have to figure a way to portion out those businesses.

Mayor Lewis stated there are different signage rules based on the permitted use in those zones so that is the place to start. There is a difference in a residential zone and a heavy commercial zone. If you can identify where the actual problems are and not where there are just complaints, but where there are complaints that are actually adversely impacting business. Mayor Lewis commented she understands that it is ridiculous to take down the sixth American Flag, it probably did not adversely impact their business now that they had now five American flags and not six; does the fact that someone has a sandwich board and therefore no one comes in their business because it has been under construction or nobody knows how to get to the business, does that adversely impact their business and that is something this committee probably wants to address.

Mr. Conroy stated the sandwich board is something we can present to Council and why we can't monitor it like we do dumpsters, for example. He suggested if the business wants to do banners on Route 1 it is a \$250.00 or \$500.00 for a 30-day permit. Mayor Lewis stated we do not want it to look too cluttered; so her suggestion was on the number of permits issued at one time. The Board members stated that could hurt the business also, some of the stores may not be able to afford the permit fee.

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Vice Chairperson Kennedy suggested bundling the information and presenting it to the Board for the re-examination of the Master Plan. Mr. Addison stated a project to do is the Brunswick Circle Redevelopment and the status and the Lawrence Shopping Center and have updates. Mr. Lavine stated the signs should be worked on and address and sort to make a recommendation that could be passed through Council.

Mayor Lewis talked about the Lawrence Shopping Center and they have not been forthcoming and their biggest problem right now is they told the businesses they were going to have the parking lots done by the Holidays, and that did not work which is a million dollar project. The roof is probably another million dollar project and until those two projects are done, looking for new tenants doesn't make any sense.

Mayor Lewis stated that the Township is on the list of New Jersey Department of Transportation projects and have met with the Commissioner and his answer is we are broke. One is off the table until July 1 and the second one is dependent upon the owners building those things. This Board should continue working on signs and should attend a Council meeting and invite people to a meeting to discuss their problems or concerns about signs. This way we get a list and from that list we could make recommendations that can be fixed now; these are the things that could be looked at with the Master Plan and these are items that we do not feel need addressing. It was suggested that we invite the business owners to one of our meetings to hear their concerns about signage, etc. Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated that Mayor Lewis should send an e-mail to ask for e-mail addresses for businesses in Lawrence Township and explain why.

The Board spoke about the Lawrence Shopping Center and how to fix it up. Mayor Lewis stated that no one could have told the new owners that there was a private sewer line that was leaking and had been eroding underneath to create those sinkholes, which no one could of told them that. The new owners want to keep the businesses they have; however, they realize no new businesses until they fix up the major problems (parking lot and roof). The anchor stores are Oscar Huber, Acme, DSW, Staples and Burlington Coat Factory. Mayor Lewis stated she will try again to sit down with Colliers and have a discussion.

Mayor Lewis stated one problem we have in Lawrence is that we have no liquor licenses for restaurants and as all of the restaurants were leaving Trenton, we could not go after any of them because we did not have a liquor license. Trenton has an excess of liquor licenses and they are cheap. Mayor Lewis thought why don't we try to allow a municipality to make a percentage of their liquor licenses portable within the County so that you can then buy a portable license and you would have to go in front of the Planning Board or Zoning Board of the Township you want to move to, then you would be able to move that license in there (example Amici's) and take the license with them and Trenton would get the money.

There is an Assemblyman that has a bill that would create a license to serve liquor in a restaurant, not a bar, if you are under a certain threshold by paying for a permit every year. The details are not sketched out yet; what would happen is a big box store would not be allowed to purchase this license, it would be designed for smaller restaurants that would never be able to spend somewhere between \$350,000 and a million dollars for a liquor license. But they would be able to purchase a permit every year and be allowed to serve beer and wine, maybe liquor, to full dinners, not with a bar. If it is abused it would not be renewed.

Mr. Addison commented that our agendas are always pretty busy and it should be cut back a bit. It should be consistent with update on activities that can be shared with us, like the Lawrence Shopping Center, Route 1 Redevelopment and liquor license issue for independent or small businesses. Mr. Conroy stated that the Route 1 Redevelopment is a bad development that will not work. Part of that whole plan was Heritage Village and look at the retail section of Heritage Village, it is empty. Mr. Conroy stated that maybe create a Main Street for that area that would help things become more successful. It was suggested that talk to Main Street and how to create our own Main Street, they are looking at broaden their boundaries, so why can we have Main Street Lawrenceville and Main Street Route 1.

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Mayor Lewis commented the original Main Street successfully there were residents and businesses that were interested. There are four (4) structurally deficient bridges in Lawrence and there is where the money is asked to go. The Board members discussed Costco and a rumor that the shopping center next door was going to sell to Costco for an additional parking lot. Mayor Lewis stated that the Quaker Bridge Mall settled the tax appeal and have set their value for the next three cycles until 2017.

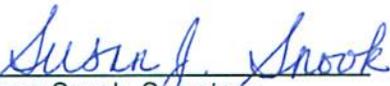
Chairperson Bobbitt stated our goals and objectives are signage and hold a meeting. How do we approach the Lawrence Shopping Center and Route 1 Redevelopment. Mayor Lewis will have a monthly status update. Mr. Lavine will give an update on Zoning Board issues and Chairperson Bobbitt will give an update on Planning Board issues. The Board decides to focus on signage.

A keynote speaker for the Award Ceremony was Howard from Wawa.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

The next meeting will be held on March 10, 2015.



Susan Snook, Secretary
Growth & Redevelopment Committee