

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
April 12, 2016

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee Meeting, which was held on Tuesday, April 12, 2016, at 6:30 p.m., at Collaboration Core located at 3150 Brunswick Pike, Lawrence Township NJ 08648.

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 and the Trentonian.

The roll was called as follows at 6:45 p.m.:

Present: Ryan Kennedy; Lovette Love-Stevens; John Conroy; Danielle Delprato; Andrew Bedryk; Joan Brame; Maria Connolly; Teresita Bastides-Heron; John Odalen; Jeff Lang

Excused Absence: Tushar Patel; Charles Lavine; John Scloesser

Absent: Boynton R. Weekes

Also Present: Andrew Link, Principal Planner/Business Advocate, Christopher Bobbitt, Council Liaison; Pam Mount; Jude Martin-Cianfano; Susan Snook, Recording Secretary

Approval of Minutes:

The March 8, 2016 minutes were unanimously approved with a change. Ms. Bastides-Heron questioned the person nominating themselves and also seconding themselves for it to be removed.

New Member:

Chairperson Conroy welcomed our new member John Odalen who introduced himself to be a 25 year resident and started his own business as a professional organizer, which helps people with clutter and productivity.

Chairperson Conroy also told the Committee members to look for people in the Lawrence business world or resident who would like to join because we need to boost our membership to fill the vacant seats that we have.

Cheri Durst, Director of CollaborationCore:

Ms. Durst stated it is not rent but membership dues and will be contributing to your community. It is a non-profit organization but not tax exempt. Ms. Durst explained that a membership is priced accordingly. It covers facilities management, utilities, internet access, furniture, mail sorting and a receptionist. Optional services include conference rooms, use of copiers/printers, administrative support and special event space. There are 35 offices located at this site and two are converted into little huddle rooms with four chairs and a round table for meeting purposes.

Each office comes with 4 hours of conference room space per month and after that if you are a member you are offer a 50% discount. An example is New Jersey Coalition of Sexual Assault which has four offices and explained how they use them. They get billed at the end of the month for copies and pay a monthly fee of \$8.99 a month.

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There are no long leases; however, they do ask for 3 months lease but will do month to month if can't commit to a 3-month lease. An average office is \$899 a month; interior offices are \$749 and always open to negotiations. There is a non-resident member and pay \$50.00 a month to pay for a business address rather than their home address and the mail is collected and forwarded to them. See attached brochure.

A tour from 7:01 p.m. to 7:06 p.m. was given to the Committee members by Ms. Durst.

Public Comment:

None

Sign Ordinance:

Ms. Connolly reviewed the sign ordinance, see attached dated March 2016. Ms. Connolly stated that a lot of the businesses have issues with temporary signage and the sign ordinance and did not know what those issues were only that there were restrictions and the duration of how long they can have them.

Ms. Connolly thought the Committee might want to send out a survey to businesses and asking them what their issues are with the sign ordinance and what needs clarification. The solution is to see what the problem is. A sign permit is required for installation or alteration of a sign unless it is exempt by the ordinance. The ordinance has a list of those exemptions are, see Page 1 (#2, 8 and 10) are relevant.

The issue might be the 30-days and the business would like to keep it up longer. Window signs are permitted without a permit and dimensions are required; you cannot exceed 25% of window space or 10% of the façade area. Lawn signs are limited to 3 sf per side.

Ms. Connolly spoke about prohibited signs, see Page 2. No. 5 could be an issue with off-premise signs. Chairperson Bobbitt stated Candelas is a permanent sign and that is why it is there. The sandwich board signs are the big issue. Chairperson Conroy stated they are allowed on Main Street but not allowed at the Lawrence Shopping Center.

Ms. Brame felt this is unfair and unequal. The Lawrence Shopping Center has been many times reprimanded for having sandwich boards out. Chairperson Conroy stated that Main Street has their own body of committee so they have the manpower to voice their opinion and the idea of creating a main street and got it zoned in.

Councilman Bobbitt commented that it talked about A-frame signs allowed in neighborhood center 1 and 2, professional office districts and the historic district; but no other district. The Lawrence Shopping Center is highway commercial. Ms. Connolly stated the A-frame sign in the ordinance is treated as a permanent sign. The difference between an A-frame and a sandwich board is the size.

Chairperson Conroy stated it only gets enforced when somebody calls and complains. The discussion has always been on the A-frame sign and the fact that now the shopping center being so vacant with so few stores that are open that it gives them an opportunity to put an A-frame sign out. Ms. Brame stated the purpose of having a sign ordinance is to maintain a certain visual standard which evolved over time so we don't look all out of character. Chairperson Conroy stated we are making recommendation to Council for temporary signage.

Chairperson Conroy stated the Board is trying to help small businesses promote a daily special or something that is coming up so they can promote their business in a small way without being visually intrusive to the Township, like the Lawrence Shopping Center and GEPNA.

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Ms. Mount stated it might be worth it to do a survey before you go to Town Council because you have real direction. Ms. Brame commented how Lawrence did not support a local business, the Sushi Restaurant in the Lawrence Shopping Center, when the parking lot happened and it was blocked off and they were really suffering in access ability and people to identify where they were located. The owner wanted to put signs out on Route 1 so people could find the detoured way to get in because they could not come in the normal way. Ms. Bastides-Heron also mentioned the Cheesecake store located on Lawrence Road, next to Varsity Pizza, the sign was very small and hard to read; now they are out of business.

At the next meeting, look at a map of Lawrence and get designations where A-frame signs can expand to as a temporary sign. It was mentioned to allow it in all the zones and have it where it is allowed up to four weeks. Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated a sandwich board should be allowed every day because they would bring it out in the morning and bring it in the evening.

Ms. Connolly suggested asking Brian or Phil to attend one of our meetings to discuss the rationale by not having A-frame signs in the rest of commercial districts. Councilman Bobbitt stated when he spoke to Mr. Parvesse his biggest issue was the temporary signage and not so much about permanent signs; so an e-mail to Jim would help. This way you will get a sense what the actual complaints are. Ms. Mount commented that is a permit for a temporary permit sign (lawn signs) and can have eight (8).

Chairperson Conroy asked the Board members what we want to investigate – temporary signage or permanent A-frame sign that is taken nightly. Ms. Connolly stated she can call Mr. Parvesse and see what the issues are and what kind of complaints he gets. Ms. Connolly suggested that it would be helpful if the ordinance had pictures which would be helpful or even a brochure.

The Board will look at temporary signs, the permanent A-frame signs and the different zones in parts of the Town that signs are permitted and other areas it is not permitted. The temporary sign there is a limitation on the time it is spent out, the size of it and not to get carried away. The ordinance allows 6 sf for each side (2 x 3). Ms. Connolly will get in touch with Mr. Parvesse and what he says about and will discuss at the next meeting. Chairperson Conroy suggested getting a zoning map and see the areas that are excluded and what about the Mall, maybe changing the size.

Mr. Kennedy suggested in assisting a guide with an insert for the sign ordinance to put in a welcome package. Councilman Bobbitt said there was not a problem with the permanent signs for Route 1 because they received their approvals from the Boards; it is GEPNA and the Lawrence Shopping Center that have the problems. Chairperson Conroy stated the highway commercial zone is a broad spectrum and we have the Mercer Mall, Lawrence Shopping Center vs Sleepy's and the Quaker Bridge Mall. We would have to think about how a sandwich board would end up on Route 1 and that would be a problem.

Councilman Bobbitt stated a problem is also with businesses on Route 1 that have a small frontage because the building is so small, their sign cannot be that big. They would have to apply for a variance and could a business that small afford to attend before a Board.

Mr. Kennedy asked before considering to do this should we collect more data from the community or businesses; so we know that we have a full product to bring to Council or should we report back to Council to see if we are close to keep on going. Councilman Bobbitt stated it will be better to speak to Jim Parvesse to see what the issues are. Chairperson Conroy stated if we want to go out to the public and ask them if an A-frame sign that you need to take in daily would help your business, not what type of signage you want that will get out of control. Then we can take the feedback to and our recommendations to Council and this is what the businesses are saying will help them and still be within the spirit of the sign ordinance without making major amendments.

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Redevelopment of Lawrence Shopping Center:

Chairperson Conroy stated we spoke about having a meeting at the Lawrence Shopping Center. Ms. Brame stated there was another crisis with the sewerage problem which effected several businesses and they had to close for the day. Ms. Brame reached out to the Management Company to attend a Growth & Redevelopment Committee meeting at Empower Fitness, but has not heard from her yet; so the deadline will be at the end of the month then the meeting will be held at Town Hall.

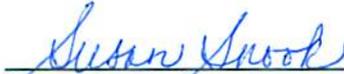
Ms. Bastides-Heron was concerned about the safety issues at the Shopping Center. Ms. Brame stated the security has doubled since the last management company and if you look at crime rates or incidences at the Shopping Center they are extremely low. The security is there 12 hours a day, 11:00 am to 11:00 pm.

Attendance Issues:

Chairperson Conroy stated we should all be looking for new people to join the Committee so we can continue to have a quorum. There was a good discussion on the sign and further along than the last couple of years and come up with small recommendations on what we want to make on temporary signs and A-frame signs. The suggestion is to put in some pictures of samples in the ordinance or a pamphlet that explains temporary signage.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.



Susan Snook, Secretary
Growth & Redevelopment Committee