

CHATHAM BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD  
September 21, 2016 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Susan Favate called this Regular Planning Board Meeting of September 21, 2016 to order at 8:20 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Chatham Municipal Building. This meeting immediately followed a Joint Meeting between the Borough Council and the Planning Board. Chrnm. Favate announced that all legal notices have been posted for this meeting.

Name	Present	Absent
Mayor Bruce Harris	X	
Council Member Victoria Fife	X	
Janice Piccolo	X	
Chrmn. Susan Favate	X	
Vice Chrmn. Wagner	X	
H.H. Montague	X	
John Bitar- Second Alternate		X
Tom Gilman – First Alternate	X – arrived 8:44 p.m.	
Joseph Mikulewicz		X
William Heap	X	
Wolfgang Robinson		X
Vincent Loughlin, Esq.	X	
Dr. Susan Blickstein	X	

Public Comment

No one came forward.

Resolution #PB 2016-21

The minutes of the August 17, 2016 meeting were approved as amended. Chrmn. Favate abstained from voting on these minutes since she was absent that night.

Resolution

Application PB #16-004

Michael Riccone

150 Center Avenue

Minor Subdivision

Block 35, Lot 5

Mr. Montague made a motion to approve Resolution #PB 16-004 memorializing the Planning Board's approval of the Minor Subdivision for 150 Center Avenue, Block 35, Lot 5. Mayor Harris seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The following Board members voted aye: Mayor Harris, Mr. Montague, Mr. Heap, Vice Chrmn. Wagner.

Discussion

Re-examination of the Master Plan

Dr. Blickstein noted that Board members should have draft copies of the Master Plan Re-examination and Update Report. The Master Plan Subcommittee met in July after the Community Workshop was held in June. Work was done on the original document.

Dr. Blickstein recommended that the Board look at the substantive parts of the document tonight. The emphasis of the Master Plan is to look closely at the downtown area as a focal point. All of the information gathered from the two Master Plan workshops is now before the Board members. Feedback was also received from representatives from the Historic Preservation Commission.

Dr. Blickstein reviewed some of the feedback given by the store owners and residents at the Master Plan workshop. One recommendation was to develop more reasons to draw people to the downtown area. There was a feeling that not enough people were using Chatham's downtown for routine shopping. People should be alerted to where parking is available. There is also a concern about congestion along Main Street.

Dr. Blickstein pointed out that the core of the downtown is primarily in the B-4 District. A little portion of it is in the B-2 District.

Dr. Blickstein noted that she and the subcommittee spent a great deal of time crafting a vision statement for Chatham's downtown. The emphasis is on vibrancy, improving the aesthetics, and providing activities that draw people to the downtown. Dr. Blickstein brought up the question of how to integrate opportunities for new multi-family residential units. There is a large desire among millennials, as well as people who are aging in place, to live in downtown environments.

Dr. Blickstein discussed the re-enforcement and protection of important historic urban patterns and the existing character in the context of redevelopment. There are tools available that can complement these two objectives. Some residents indicated that they would love to have more good activities to bring their children to the downtown area. The Borough should address the off-street parking and how to best serve residents, commuters, and local business employees. Dr. Blickstein felt that parking is definitely an issue in Chatham.

Dr. Blickstein noted that there is an interest in enhancing the walkability and bikeability in the community. She brought up the question of how to remove barriers for investment in the downtown. The last point made, particularly from the focus group, is the need to actively manage, promote, market and better maintain the downtown.

Vice Chrmn. Wagner noted that there are a number of vacancies currently on Main Street. He questioned whether the process and the expense a future merchant must go through to have a change of permitted use approved for a store unit has been a factor in keeping these stores vacant.

Dr. Blickstein answered that what Chatham Borough requires for a new business to open up is less stringent than what Summit, Millburn or Maplewood would require of future store owners.

Dr. Blickstein noted that 3-story buildings are already permitted in the Borough; but not all of the current standards enable that to happen easily. The Reexamination of the Master Plan will do some rectifying in this area. It is recommended that the Planning Board, in this policy document, think about allowing 4-story buildings in certain locations, however not uniformly and not everywhere in town.

Dr. Blickstein reported that the sub-committee and in the public outreach sessions discussed the matter of allowing first floor residential uses. The first floor residential uses could be allowed in certain locations of the Borough, however not necessarily on Main Street.

Dr. Blickstein pointed out that the Borough has no parking requirements for permitted first-floor, ground floor, non-residential uses in the downtown. She suggested the Borough think about applying to the New Jersey Residential Site Improvements Standard Board for relief from the generic residential parking requirements that were not designed for transit accessible communities. That would apply to mixed-use development in the multi-family uses in the downtown area.

Dr. Blickstein recommended that the Borough should give assurance that downtown buildings will be maintained, with emphasis on the historic district, as well as through property maintenance ordinances and enforcement.

Council Member Fife asked when was the last Streetscape done for the Borough.

Mrs. Piccolo answered 2010.

Council Member Fife said she has heard comments that the downtown is looking very attractive with the new planters, and new benches. She realized that dealing with the appearances of privately owned buildings/properties can be more challenging.

Dr. Blickstein discussed her recommendation on place-making. For instance, the Borough could experiment with an event like a temporary closure of a major street for certain events or on weekends.

Dr. Blickstein's last recommendation was to look at Bowers Lane to South Passaic Avenue to the Train Station lots, and at the rear of the stores. Think about opportunities for new developments and redevelopment in those areas and how to better address circulation, pedestrian access, and parking.

Dr. Blickstein briefly reviewed the goals with respect to housing related to preserving the character of the Borough's single-family and two-family residential neighborhoods. New infill development should conform to the context, scale, character of the surrounding homes. Specific recommendations were made in the Reexamined Master Plan on how to achieve this goal. Recommendations were also made on how to achieve housing diversity, recognizing that residents have different needs as they age within the community.

Dr. Blickstein noted the recommendation on implementing and monitoring compliance with the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan Settlement Agreement. She also noted the recommendation to continue to implement the Gateway Overlay area.

Dr. Blickstein brought up a livable Circulation Element of the Master Plan, based on complete streets principles acknowledging all modes of transportation. Also, both local and regional

challenges when it comes to mobility. At the public workshop, downtown business owners expressed concerns about downtown parking and circulation.

Chrmn. Favate commented that residents have observed that traffic becomes so congested on Main Street at times, that vehicles are forced to turn down other streets.

Dr. Blickstein noted that this diverting of traffic often involves trucks carrying goods ordered by residents on-line.

Dr. Blickstein stated that input is needed from the Planning Bd. on substantive direction in the Master Plan document, specifically on recommendations. Another attempt will be made on revising this document. The revised document will then be presented to the Planning Board and be made available on the Borough's website. The formal adoption process can then be discussed.

Dr. Blickstein asked if Board members found any typos, please e-mail them to her, and include the page numbers.

Board members and Dr. Blickstein discussed the height issue of downtown buildings. The Board should decide on how to craft the standards for downtown building heights. Dr. Blickstein advised that the Board would want to centralize density closest to the core of the retail sector and closest to the train station. Dr. Blickstein noted that a concern was expressed about the possibility of allowing 4-story buildings.

Council Member Fife commented how the downtown is so linear. Unfortunately, there is a disconnect with the businesses way down on the east end of Main Street. Some people just don't want to walk that far to visit places like Restaurant Serenade. Were there any recommendations to deal with this problem?

Dr. Blickstein felt that there was merit to different businesses to have their own identities. Also, some of the streetscape treatments could be extended beyond the B-4 District to create more activity. Unfortunately, the sidewalks beyond the B-4 District, going both east and west, the sidewalks become narrower. However, pedestrian lighting and other components might help encourage more pedestrian traffic and connect the downtown businesses better.

Chrmn. Favate pointed out that going west on Main Street, beyond the Main Street/Fairmount Ave. intersection, there are not many businesses, beyond the Bean Curd, to visit.

Dr. Blickstein noted that a recommendation had been made to have that section of Main Street be evaluated potentially for redevelopment.

Mr. Heap remarked that Amazon has changed the nature of retail. That has changed the nature of ground floor space. He asked how would an alternate use be encouraged or another type of use and not end up with businesses that may not be suitable for Chatham.

Dr. Blickstein noted that the uses allowed in the B-4 District has been broadened. All personal service uses are now allowed. A wider range of food service uses are allowed, except for drive-throughs.

Council Member Fife brought up the need to market Chatham's downtown. The question is how to attract typical retail businesses to our downtown.

Dr. Blickstein stated that it takes a great deal of work to create a really vibrant downtown. Referring to the public survey, the Chatham people would like to see for the downtown: restaurants, mixed retail, locally owned and locally oriented businesses, arts, entertainment and cultural activities.

Mr. Gilman asked whether it would be worth reaching out to retail brokers.

Dr. Blickstein said one broker was contacted. The broker had recommended yoga studios. The broker, as a millennial herself, recommended establishing more bars.

Mayor Harris stated there was something to that suggestion; however, there are only four liquor licenses available in the Borough. They are all taken.

Dr. Blickstein asked that Board members send her feedback/corrections on the draft document by next week. She encouraged the Board to take a look at the edges of the B-4 District.

Mayor Harris pointed out that Shepard Kollock Park was excluded **from** the Historic District as shown in zoning map in tonight's presentation. Board members wondered how up-to-date the map was.

Mrs. Piccolo suggested Mr. DeNave should be consulted to see if Shepard Kollock Park should be included in the Borough's Historic District.

Summing up, Dr. Blickstein said she will use whatever Borough Zoning Map is deemed correct. Mrs. Piccolo will touch base with Mr. DeNave about the zoning map.

Dr. Blickstein asked the Board to send her their comments on the B-4 District edges, particularly on this district's eastern and western edges. Please send her comments no later than a week from today.

Dr. Blickstein thanked all the Board members who served on the Master Plan Subcommittee – helping with public outreach and attending all the meetings.

The Board decided to cancel their meeting scheduled for October 5, 2016.

At 9:39 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Board meeting will be Wednesday, October 19, 2016, 7:30 p.m., Council Chambers, Chatham Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Holler  
Recording Secretary