

**Town of Phillipsburg
Planning Board Meeting
535 Heckman Street
Minutes for April 26, 2018**

Vice Chairman Zwicker called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm and led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Vice Chairman Zwicker read the Open Public Meeting Acts Statement. Those Present were: Mayor Stephen Ellis, Councilwoman DeGerolamo, David P. Morrisette, Jennifer McBride, Dominic Vangeli, Rosanne Rohm, Vice Chairman Keith Zwicker. Also in attendance were William Mandry, Planning Board Attorney; Mr. Stan Schrek, Board Engineer; and Ms. Charee Carney, Recording Secretary.

Resolutions-

Bourbon Street Case 17-002

Attorney Mandry stated that there was not a quorum to vote so the resolution will need to be tabled until the next meeting. Mr. Scheck said they might be signing the plans and the resolution at the same time.

A motion was made to table the Bourbon Street resolution to the next meeting and seconded. The motion carried.

Old Business - Redevelopment plans for Union Square

Angela Knowles presentation for the Redevelopment area, Union Square.

Ms. Knowles handed out a revision of the riverfront redevelopment plan to the board and district guidelines. She mentioned the parties who did the studies and people that helped with the process of the redevelopment area plan. Ms. Knowles gave a brief history of the timeline of the redevelopment area plan. She mentioned the public survey submitted and how they received helpful information from the public of the developing concepts. Planners from Rutgers took an interest in Phillipsburg and presented fundamental designs. This whole plan started from the NJ Highlands grant and their planning program.

The plan is available online for public access, which includes a 2.5 mile stretch in Phillipsburg. Tonight's presentation is focused on the Union Square, north. She explained the map, coloring coding etc. and how to read it. The area will be rezoned over what is existing today. There will be a contract between the developer and the town so that the district guidelines can be met. The town can condemn buildings, if needed. The approval process of the redevelopment plan would first go through the town council and then would go back to the planning board. The historic preservation commission would ensure that the development complies with historic regulations.

As for the waterfront, parking lot area and recreation, Union Square, north is the area of focus (District 2). She described the current businesses and explained that if there is a relocation of

business, there can be lots of possibilities. For circulation and access, they would like a route into the site to minimize traffic. They are looking for three separate building areas for a possible hotel and other mixed uses. The goal is to build out the area for buildable spaces, green spaces and to keep the footprint of the area. They will keep the existing forest for storm water management and incorporate a trail. The nature trail would go under the bridge and connect with a possible hotel. A constructed elevated boardwalk would be above grade with two levels of parking. Any farmers markets, festivals and vendors would be under the boardwalk and there would be residential uses for the upper levels. The mechanics and kitchens etc. would be above the flood levels as well. The theme would continue along the river so people can have access to the river and also keep the continuity of the historic elements. They're not proposing any new development on South Main Street. SoMa's new deck was an inspiration to an extended seating area along South Main Street. There's an idea for an indoor recreation area and a Ferris wheel. The idea is to draw people to Union Square.

There is also a plan to redefine the square with three or four-story buildings. The uses would be commercial and then residential in the upper levels. There will be a coordinated look throughout for the signs as well with a historic theme. The newly developed Historic Preservation Commission will review the applications for development.

The next step would be for the planning board to make a recommendation to the Town Council to adopt the amended plan. Once adopted they will develop an RFP.

Mr. Zwicker opened up the meeting to the public.

Trisha Cobble, 9 Union Square, said that her family has been in the area for 33 years and she feels the plan is beautiful and very impressive. She asked if they are including the entire square as a flood zone because she said it changed recently. Ms. Knowles responded no.

Lee Clark, 221 Heckman Street, said he was impressed with the presentation; the green infrastructure, positive development and energy. It truly shows the town is moving forward and gives the younger generation a reason to stay. He encouraged the board to vote yes.

Charlotte Walker, on Riverside Way, feels that her house should be saved because it is historical and built by the railroad. Pam Dalrymple 385 Grant Street, and Christy, 274 Sitgreaves Street, said that they love going to their grandmother Charlotte's home and do not want the town to tear it down. They have been working hard at cleaning up the property and they still have many functions on the property. Ms. Knowles responded that the plans are not set in stone, and they can work something out to be helpful to everyone.

Mayor Ellis addressed Charlotte and asked her to take a look at the PPL center in Allentown, how they kept a historic hotel in the plan. He said that property values have changed dramatically in Phillipsburg because of development.

Mr. Morrisette stated regarding the planning, the parking would be developed north of 22 and there was talk of another access to the river. Ms. Knowles said that plan tonight was simplified and only covered the north of Union Square area.

Councilwoman DeGerolamo stated that the master plan has been in the works since the 80s and very similar to what is being proposed. She thought that the plan presented this evening was great and it helps that there are pictures and maps. The councilwoman voiced concerns about a building that is being constructed off Howard Street and how the fire department would not be able to access this building if there was a fire. There may be a need of roadwork to that area because the fire trucks cannot get under the tunnels. As for the permitted uses, she asked if they are adding the waste container use disposal to the plan and it was responded yes. She asked about condemnation and eminent domain and voiced concerns. She was also concerned about the use of the Open Space money for the acquisition of land.

Mr. Vangeli feels that many of the buildings can be rehabilitated.

Vice Councilman Zwicker explained the RFP process and how they will look for people that are qualified.

Mayor Ellis agreed that this plan is very similar to the old plans. He feels that times have changed and the plans can be implemented now. Phillipsburg is now in a federal program called the Opportunity Zone. A developer will get 2.5% tax break if he sells the building they constructed for capital gains. If they stay 7 years, they will get a 7% tax break, 10 years, it's forgiven. Phillipsburg was the last town to be picked. The area was based on the census and the poverty census. It's not just Union Square in the Opportunity Zone, it's a huge part of Phillipsburg. The properties are becoming more valuable because investors may want to buy them for construction.

Charee Carney, 894 Hill Street, asked why they are adding the waste container storage back into the plan and asked if this was about LMR and wanted clarification. She was concerned because of the smell of garbage she witnesses at her property on Hill Street. Mayor Ellis said that if they allow services such as this it would reduce the municipal tax rate. He also said that LMR is taking a different direction and she doesn't have to worry about that anymore. He took trips down where LMR is located and said it smelled like a landfill. Mr. Schrek stated that this plan does not include that district.

Mr. Schrek mentioned that he is excited about the plans today and feels that it is doable. What is really making this a reality is the fact that Phillipsburg is in the Opportunity Zone. This plan can just run, involving the planners. He encouraged the leadership to drive this plan which can be the turning point for Phillipsburg. There will have to be some relocation work but that will be the responsibility of the developer.

Mayor Ellis motioned to recommend the plan to council and Mr. Zwicker seconded. The motion carried.

Minutes

Councilwoman DeGerolamo motioned to approve the minutes and Ms. McBride seconded. The motion carried.

Bills

Councilwoman DeGerolamo motioned to accept the bills, contingent upon the funds available in escrow and Mayor Ellis seconded. The motion carried.

Mr. Morrisette motioned to adjourn and Ms. McBride seconded. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32.

Respectfully submitted,

Charee Carney
Land Use Technical Assistant