TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG

Planning Board Meeting

675 Corliss Ave, Phillipsburg, NJ 08865

Minutes for APRIL 28, 2016

Chairman Corcoran called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. Chairman Corcoran led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and read the Open Public Meeting Acts Statement. Those present were: Mayor Stephen Ellis, Councilman Randy Piazza, Chairman T. Kent Corcoran, William Duffy, John Penrose, Keith Zwicker, Bernie Rooney, and Jennifer McBride. Also present were: David Morrisette, William Mandry, Board Attorney, Mr Stanley Schrek, Board Engineer, Charee Carney, Recording Secretary.

Mayor Ellis administered the oath of office to Mr. David Morrisette.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Case # 14-005 - Lynch Subdivision (23-25 Summit Ave)

Attorney Eddleston, representing Mr. Lynch, appeared before the board. He requested a 60 day extension to perfect deed for the subdivision of 23-25 Summit Avenue.

Mr. Duffy made a motion to accept the proposal for the extension of time and Ms. McBride seconded. The motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Case # 16-001 - Shammy Shine appeared before the board and requested their application be moved to the next meeting in May.

Mr. Mandry made a note to board for the record; Case # 16-001 - Shammy Shine will appear before the Board on May 26, 2016. Property owners will not be required to be noticed again.

**RESOLUTIONS**

CASE # 16-004 - FLYNN’S ON THE HILL

A motion was made by Ms. McBride to memorialize Case # 16-004, (Flynn’s on the Hill). Mr. Penrose seconded the motion. The motion carried with one abstention from Mr. Morrisette.

CASE # 16-002, 650 JOHN MITCHELL AVE

A motion was made by Ms. McBride to memorialize Case # 16-002, (650 John Mitchell Ave). Mr. Rooney seconded the motion. The motion carried with one abstention from Mr. Morrisette.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion was made by Mr. Rooney to approve the minutes from the April 28 the meeting, with the correction of noting Mr. Zwicker attended the meeting. Mr. Duffy seconded the motion. The motion carried with one abstention from Mr. Morrisette.

**APPROVAL OF BILLS**

Chairman Corcoran suggested the Board discuss the bills separately, particularly the bills associated with 55 Howard (Case # 16-003).

A motion was made by Mr. Penrose to approve the bills, with the exception of the bills associated with Case # 16-003 and Mr. Rooney seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

**55 Howard (Case # 16-003) Bills**

Joe Bell, the attorney representing the County of Warren for 55 Howard, sent a letter to the Town of Phillipsburg demanding their money back placed in escrow.

Mr. Duffy stated that the County did not send enough for escrow, to pay the Planning Board professionals amounting to almost $3,000.00.

Mayor Ellis stated that he spoke with Kevin Duddy, Building Official, and Bob Merlo, CFO, and they would be willing to return the $1,000 in escrow.

Mr. Duffy asked if the town would cover the almost $3,000 in bills associated with the case. The Mayor announced that the town would absorb the fees.

Attorney Mandry stated that it would have cost the town $30,000 to $50,000 if the case went to court.

After the hearing on March 24, 2016, Mayor Ellis stated he spoke with the applicant and they told him they were going to pull out anyway because of the compressors next door. They wanted to still put in a maintenance shed.

Mr. Schrek stated that the application only showed a salt shed and it didn’t say anything about a maintenance shed.

Councilman Piazza stated that we suggested alternatives but they wouldn’t consider.

A motion was made to approve the bills associated with Case # 16-003 by Mr. Rooney and seconded by Ms. McBride. The motion carried unanimously.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Mayor Ellis directed Attorney Mandry to prepare a factual response to the County of Warren and return the $1,000 escrow with the letter.

Attorney Mandry stated, “The letter from County was not factual and Attorney Bell did not respond to let us know what their intentions were. They are making it look like we were being unreasonable. I called Attorney Bell three (3) times. We would’ve told them over the phone if they would have called back. We also requested a letter of approval from the D.E.P. and a copy of the contract. They obviously got their money back, the $150,000 they said they paid to landowners. There were a lot of mistruths in their letter.”

Mayor Ellis asked Attorney Mandry to revise the letter to inform the County of Warren of the fees the Town of Phillipsburg absorbed, associated with the case billed from our professionals.

**OTHER COMMUNICATIONS**

Mr. Schrek distributed packets of information regarding the Historic Preservation Plan, Ordinance, and other related material. He suggested the board review the material to prepare for discussion at a later date. He stated that it is our responsibility to protect the downtown area. For example, there’s a building downtown that the owner is proposing a change to the building that does not meet the historic preservation guidelines.

He recommended that we elect officials for the committees that are qualified.

Mayor Ellis and Councilman Piazza said that they liked what Mr. Schrek prepared. Councilman Piazza stated that the plan could possibly help the absentee landlord situation in the downtown area.

Councilman Piazza gave a brief description of the historical structures that are still intact. He distributed a map that consisted of proposed trails in the Phillipsburg area and stated that there are maintenance issues that will be addressed.

Mayor Ellis announced the events “The Main Street Initiative” and “Build a Better Block in 48 Hours” (event focused on showing vacant buildings to potential merchants).

The board discussed the importance of branding and Mayor Ellis stated that ore was huge in Phillipsburg. Mr. Penrose suggested that we keep “Riverfront Destination”.

Mayor Ellis shared with the board different seminars he attended and how the information was helpful.

Mr. Zwicker stated that Delahanty’s is changing their sport’s bar into a more upscale restaurant.

Councilman Piazza stated that the old hotel in Union Square would be a great steakhouse.

Mr. Roonie stated that the hotel would make a great distillery.

Mr. Duffy stated, “We have an Enterprise Zone, but we don’t have a director of the Enterprise Zone. Can this director also be the director of the Main Street Initiative? We could have two (2) people for the price of one. We need someone who knows the town.”

Mr. Zwicker stated that we had a meeting but don’t have any employees for the UEZ because it was done away. The funds need to stay separate.

Mayor Ellis recommended Mr. Schrek and Chairman Corcoran go to the next UEZ meeting and discuss the session about the “trendy names” idea.

Councilman Piazza stated that the stores should not be covering up more than 20 percent, so you can see inside.

Mayor Ellis stated that the vacant buildings should have signs that something like “Great for..”.

Mayor Ellis updated the Board about the Morris Canal.

Councilman Piazza explained the whereabouts of the visible remains of the Morris Canal starting at Lock Street.

Mr. Schrek stated that Phillipsburg is the only town that you can walk the entire length of the canal but you need to know where you are going.

Mayor Ellis updated the board about Opus and the Lopatcong meeting. There was much resistance with the Lopatcong Planning Board. Mayor Ellis stressed the importance of the project to the Lopatcong Planning Board and stated, “It’s either put up with a little more traffic or get shot at”. Mayor Ellis was assured that the project will go through.

Mayor Ellis updated the board about the Firth area development. A developer that was previously in front of the Board to put in single family homes, is now contacting the town about possibly continuing with the proposed project.

Mayor Ellis updated the Board about the Perucci project. Perucci bought out the junkyard and lien so they can get out to South Main Street. He now has a 200 million dollar backing from the International Iron Workers Union.

Mr. Duffy stated that Firth Street is being considered to be changed into a two way street.

Chairman Corcoran reminded the Board to submit their disclosures and remember their pins for next year.

Mr. Rooney made the motion to adjourn and Ms. McBride seconded.

There being no further business before the Board this evening; the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Charee Carney

Recording Secretary