

August 2, 2019

The regular meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) of the Township of Hanover, County of Morris and State of New Jersey, was held on Friday, August 2, 2019 in Conference Room A of the Township Municipal Building, Route 10 and North Jefferson Road in the said Township, convening at 8:00 am.

Chairperson Breen announced that adequate notice for the meeting has been provided in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act and by posting written notice of the meeting on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building in said Township and by mailing such notice to the following newspapers: Hanover Eagle, Daily Record, and the Star Ledger.

ATTENDANCE:

Present: Chairperson Breen; Members Brueno, Facchino, Hoblitzell, Linfante and Sheridan; Alternates Conklin, Florio, Mian and Potkay; Mayor Francioli; and Internal Coordinator Snow;
Guest: Committeeperson Cahill

Absent: Vice-Chairperson Campbell; Member Struble; Director of Planning Ferramosca;
Alternates Elias and Shannon; BA Designee Brancheau

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

None – No quorum last meeting

NEW BUSINESS:

Topic: Pine Plaza / Business retention strategy for those affected by redevelopment / Tenant outreach status

Discussion: Chairperson Breen opened the discussion by talking about that the Pine Plaza notice posted by the Township. He stated that this posting and the public response highlighted how vital it is for the Township to have a set communication strategy. He further stated that the Township needs to focus on putting out pro-active, positive communication for all of the upcoming projects. Mayor Francioli responded that the Planning Board had been studying the site for months, and that the Committee had been looking at it for years as an opportunity to get a mixed use development in to meet COAH requirements. He wants EDAC to focus on outreach and business retention for these tenants but the Township legally cannot interfere with the leases. Member Linfante replied that there are two issues – locations to relocate are limited and the tenants are concerned with the cost of relocation but in a redevelopment scenario with a condemnation option they would legally be entitled to relocation assistance. He further explained that a commendation does not need to actually occur, it just has to be an option for the tenants to be entitled to assistance. Retail facilities cannot be condemned, just the property. Chairperson Breen clarified that any relocation arrangement would be between the tenants and the new developer. Mayor Francioli replied that the Township was never going to condemn and redirects the conversation back to business retention.

Alternate Conklin responds that the area needs to be redeveloped because Pine Plaza has been unable to retain tenants for years. He further states that the end result of this will be positive because it will allow for growth and evolution with new tenants. The public may like what is there now but they will like what new businesses come even better. Mayor Francioli agrees and says that the public is having an emotional response to the news because it is change. Alternate Florio states that the Pine Plaza landlords have always been a problem and the ones to blame for poor tenant retention but the Township gets the brunt of it in the public eye. Chairperson Breen stated that it is because the Township communication on the issues has been poor. Member Linfante stated that some of the tenant lease agreements still have as long as 6 years left on them and that if one of these tenants did not want to leave, it could hold up the development of the site for the length of that lease unless

they get bought out and offered relocation money. Member Brueno responded that one tenant could cause the whole plan to fall apart but the Township cannot intervene. Member Linfante stated that this is why the condemnation option actually helps the tenants because it allows for them to receive relocation assistance, otherwise they are not entitled to anything. Mayor Francioli responded that even if condemned, the property owner would be compensated.

Member Linfante then stated that most people just do not know what is happening at all and that something needs to go onto the website. Member Conklin responded that instead of that notice that went out, it should have been renderings of the proposed changes. Committeeperson Cahill replied that the attorney has a PowerPoint with renderings and that we should be able to get them to post. Alternate Florio asked why the Township would put out renderings or even comment at all when the property has not even been sold yet. Mayor Francioli stated that they would just be concept renderings and that it is implied that there could be changes. Member Linfante stated that anything being proposed or any renderings should be pushed out because there are a lot of changes coming and the Township should get ahead of the discussion. Member Hoblitzell stated that there has to be some element of education to accompany this information because the general public does not understand what condemnation actually means or what COAH obligations refer to. Chairperson Breen states that there will always be negative comment, but the Township needs to ignore that and direct communications at the majority of the Township with a strategic approach. Mayor Francioli stated that Committeeperson Cahill has prepared an FAQ document outlining all of the issues and wants to publish it but it is still awaiting legal and Committee review. Chairperson Breen responds that these communications need to be planned out ahead of time in preparation of the next big announcements coming. IC Snow responded that the Committee then needs to talk with the Township attorney and make sure that he will be able to collaborate on these time-sensitive notices and the issues involved in advance. Member Hoblitzell suggested that maybe the Township should hire a consultant or firm part-time to handle the communication of the vital issues coming up. Mayor Francioli stated that some of these things should come from the Planning Board and not EDAC. Member Hoblitzell stated that it can come from the Planning Board but ultimately should be drafted by a professional that can offer consistency.

Member Linfante stated that the next step is a Redevelopment Plan for the area and that there will be an open forum for the public to comment on it. Alternate Mian stated that once the public can comment on it, a lot of the frustration and questions will dissipate. The group discusses again how the Township needs to be proactive and transparent with the process of what is happening to prevent more negative response from the public. The answer cannot be “come to the public meeting” and instead must be to post it on the new website or push it out via an official Township social media account.

Topic: Whippany Fire House

Discussion: Committeeperson Cahill distributed the draft of a letter that he will send to the local papers about the Whippany Fire Department vote. He stated that the letter is to clarify information surrounding the loan issue and to correct “fake news” being spread around. He stated that if the vote does not pass, the threat of municipalization and combining the two fire districts is a possibility but the building would remain unfinished. Mayor Francioli responded that if the vote does not pass, it also would end up being more costly to the taxpayers due to rates on the existing loan increasing. Chairperson Breen stated that EDAC has no choice but to endorse the vote because it’s the best of the options that exist. Member Brueno stated that a study was done in the past that there should only be one fire department for the Township. Committeeperson Cahill responded that this issue is immediate and needs attention first but he does not disagree with Member Brueno. Alternate Florio clarified that she does not want to go on record as taking any position or endorsing this vote.

ON-GOING:

None – ran out of time

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) is scheduled for August 16, 2019.