



Mayor and Common Council Borough of Flemington

December 15, 2021

Online during COVID-19 Emergency

Call to Order (7:00 PM)

Mayor Driver called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. She noted that no official action would be taken tonight. She also noted that questions and comments from Council and Planning Board members would be taken before Public Comments are made.

Special Meeting (7:00 PM)

This meeting is being held in conformance with the Open Public Meetings Act.

Flag Salute

Roll Call of Council Members:

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Caitlin Giles-McCormick	Council President	Present	
Jessica Hand	Council Member	Present	
Malik Johnston	Council Member	Absent	
Jeremy Long	Council Vice President	Present	
Christopher Runion	Council Member	Present	
Kimberly Tilly	Council Member	Present	
Betsy Driver	Mayor	Present	

Roll Call of Planning Board Members

Jeffrey Doshna	Planning Board Chairman - Present
Susan Engelhardt	Planning Board Vice Chair - Present
Todd Cook	Planning Board Member - Absent
Brian Budney	Planning Board Member - Present
Michael Champion	Planning Board Member - Absent
Marc Hain	Planning Board Member - Absent
Karen Giffen	Planning Board Member - Present
James Hill	Planning Board Alternate 1 - Absent
David Norton	Planning Board Alternate 2 - Present
Trent Levitt	Planning Board Alternate 3 - Present
Hannah Weitzman	Planning Board Alternate 4 - Present

Presentation of Community Action Plan

By David Dixon, Vice President and Jeff Sauser, Associate Planner, Stantec Urban Places

Mr. Dixon introduced his fellow speakers and summarized how information would be presented.

Mr. Sauser gave a slide presentation, which the mayor noted would be posted on the Borough website.

He discussed how success could be measured, and said the goal is to have a bustling Main Street within a 15-minute walk from diverse housing. He noted previous studies done in the Borough and said their housing projections seem reasonable. He said housing is a catalyst for economic revitalization.

Their discussions with residents, business owners and others have shown that top priorities are retail, walkability and authenticity.

Mr. Dixon discussed national trends for housing, retail and office space. He noted early concerns were expressed about the neighborhoods near Main Street, and said that the Borough is fortunate that there are several large sites in town that can accommodate new housing.

Mr. Sauser gave a local analysis, saying that 1,000 units of new housing will support a walkable community. He then discussed infrastructure, saying the

sewer and stormwater system has adequate capacity, school enrollment has been decreasing, and traffic studies indicate the area will not reach the peak activity of the years when Liberty Village was a big draw. He noted concern for an adequate water supply, and said the Borough should remain proactive about constructing new wells.

Their recommendations included considering housing as the most potent revitalization tool, concentrating housing growth on large available sites like Cut Glass, Liberty Village and Agway. A cohesive corridor is desirable to tie the Stangl area to the Main Street area through Fulper Road. There was discussion of pop-up parks and green spaces.

Presentation of Housing Study

By Laurie Volk, Co-Managing Director, Zimmerman/Volk Associates
Ms. Volk gave a presentation analyzing the residential market potential. She relied on HUD data in assessing market rates and affordability rates. She said 1,270 households have the potential to move into Flemington over the next 5 years. Preferences are: 42% would rent apartments, 7% would buy a condo. She said target rates for rents in general in Flemington would be \$1,295 to \$3,100 per month.

Questions from Council and Planning Board

Council Questions: Mr. Long asked about water capacity, noting his understanding that supply is adequate for the time being, but would have to increase to support future growth.

Mayor Driver discussed the workplace post-Covid, and how Covid has affected commuting issues and mass transit. She asked about trends for housing and roads. Mr. Dixon said pre-Covid, downtown work commutes were already dropping, and that trend increased during Covid. He and his colleagues expect a decline in commutes to office centers, and that means lower morning and afternoon peak demands.

Mr. Runion asked if the schools have adequate room for the students new housing would bring. Mr. Dixon and Mr. Sauser said local schools are not full and there's the potential for a decline in school populations. Mr. Runion discussed a recent article about space limitations in local schools. Ms. Volk said school populations have been declining for the past 10 years, and the housing in her study, predominantly multifamily, tends to have fewer children. She and Mr. Dixon said they could do a projection on the number of children the planned housing might produce. Mr. Dixon noted that tax and fiscal benefits might outweigh the costs.

Mr. Runion also asked about vacancy rates in Hunterdon housing and the need for retail to serve residents already here. Mr. Dixon discussed a tipping point of 1,000 housing units, which would invigorate the market. Regarding where commercial growth should go, Mr. Dixon suggested the ground floors of new housing. He said it's important to focus the amenities along Main Street.

Planning Board Questions: Ms. Engelhardt discussed the differences between housing in Raritan Township and housing in the Borough.

Mr. Budney asked about accessory dwelling units. Ms. Volk said they're usually decided by the homeowner, but there are a variety, including apartments over garages. Mr. Dixon said if the Borough wanted to provide guidance about these, he could help make some connections.

Mr. Doshna asked about developers' ability to build projects and make their margins considering the costs in Hunterdon County. There was discussion of the missing middle income. He also spoke of the Borough's commitment to providing affordable housing. He also discussed the planned Master Plan update, and asked for the professionals' input on what amenities would be important to continue or to be built.

Public Comments

(up to 3 minutes each, for a maximum of 30 minutes)

Jim Coleman from Namdar, Liberty Village owner, asked about studies of the economic impact of housing. Ms. Volk said no fiscal impact analysis was done as part of their assessment - it's more complex. She said in general terms, Flemington will be a more vibrant community in 10 years.

Joanne Braun, 77 Jefferson Court, Raritan Twp., asked about things to do in Flemington, and how to make arts and culture growth happen. Mr. Dixon said thinking of the town as a "destination" is a perilous business model. It's better to have a strong community-based economy. The living local culture is much more sustainable, creating a strong market where the Borough can ask for things back from developers. Ms. Volk said that in multi-family buildings, public uses could go on the ground floor. Mr. Sauser said that increasingly, people want to come to a more authentic place. Mr. Dixon said the Council and Planning Board play an important role in fulfilling the promise of the changing demand - if they just let growth happen and don't require public spaces, pocket parks, etc., they won't be created.

Robin Lapidus, FCP executive director, said the recent Neighborhood Preservation Program grant the Borough received can pay for things like the creation of pocket parks and murals, and it comes with technical expertise. Mr. Dixon noted that the more assertive the Borough is in asking developers for community benefits to improve the Borough, the better qualified the developers it gets will be.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:


Sallie Graziano, Borough Clerk

Approved by Council 1/4/2022