

CHATHAM BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD
July 8, 2009 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Richard Crater called the Chatham Borough Planning Board meeting of July 8, 2009 to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Chatham Municipal Building. Mr. Crater announced that all legal notices have been posted for this meeting.

Members Present:

Mayor V. Nelson Vaughan, Councilman Joseph Mikulewicz, Chairman Richard Crater, John Bitar**, Donna Cali-Charles, Vincent DeNave*, H.H. Montague, Alan Pfeil.

*arrived at 7:37 p.m.

**arrived at 7:38 p.m.

Anne Marie Rizzuto, Esq., attorney for the Board, was present.

Members Absent:

Susan Favate, James Mitchell

Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes of June 10, 2009 were approved as amended.

Resolutions

a. The Gravity Vault, LLC – 40 Watchung Avenue

Ms. Rizzuto reviewed the special conditions that the applicant has agreed to follow:

- To clean up the areas outside his facilities, including the parking lot, and maintain these areas in accordance with Borough ordinances
- Re-stripe the parking lot
- Have the parking lot lighting turns off one hour after his business closes

Councilman Mikulewicz made a motion to approve Planning Board Resolution #PB 2009-10. Mrs. Cali-Charles seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The resolution was unanimously approved by eligible Board members.

b. Erin Moore -242 Main Street – Power Flow Yoga Kids

Ms. Rizzuto noted that Ms. Moore was supposed to have received approval for her proposed signage from the Borough Sign Committee.

Mr. Montague made a motion to approve Planning Board Resolution #PB 2009-11. Mr. Pfeil seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The resolution was unanimously approved. Mr. Bitar and Mr. DeNave abstained from voting.

Open to the Public

No one from the public was present.

Cheryl Bergailo, Planner – Status Report

Ms. Bergailo reported that she has made progress on the parking utilization study. She and her associates made observations of the downtown parking situation on a Friday and

a Saturday in the Borough. Ms. Bergailo reviewed the following situations which occurred on those days:

- The worst parking situation is the row of parking spaces across from the Chatham Firehouse. That particular line of parking spaces is always very full.
- The parking in the Post Office Plaza sometimes reaches full capacity.
- The graveled parking area, in front of Post Office Plaza, experience double parking at times
- The downtown parking system seems to be functioning even during the peak hours
- The Saturday parking peak is from 12 noon to 2 p.m. After 2 p.m. the demand for parking rapidly diminished
- The Friday parking peak is about 1 p.m.

Ms. Bergailo noted that she has not done the parking ratio study yet. She felt that the bank parking may be overdone. There may be too many spaces designated for bank parking; however, this number of spaces may be required of the banks.

Ms. Bergailo noted that there is currently a great deal of vacant office space on the eastern side of Main Street, on the south side. Perhaps this section should be excluded in the parking analysis, with regard to the office ratios. In another part of town, the Kings Supermarket parking lot was never half during her times of observation.

Mr. Crater noted that complaints have been received that the municipal parking lots on the north side of town are often full. Ms. Bergailo said that section of town was included in the analysis. She noted that the parking lot next to Café Beethoven is under-utilized. The municipal lot, Center Street East, is better utilized during the day.

Ms. Bergailo said she would like to contact Traffic Enforcement Officer Balsamo to see how many parking tickets she issues a day. Mr. DeNave said he could arrange that meeting. Mr. Crater suggested Ms. Bergailo also speak with the municipal employee (Cheri Morris) who handles the parking permits for commuter parking. With the recent economic downturn, the waiting list for commuter parking may have decreased significantly.

Continuing with her presentation, Ms. Bergailo felt that the parking demand is greatest in the B-4 District. She wasn't sure if that district would be capable of supplying additional square footage for parking. Mayor Vaughan noted he has received numerous complaints about the lack of parking behind the Library of the Chathams.

Ms. Bergailo discussed the tight parking situation on the southwestern side of Fairmount Avenue. Ms. Bergailo felt the parking on the eastern end of Main Street worked pretty well; however, parking for Dance Renovations on Roosevelt Ave. (Town Square) is chaotic on Saturdays. Illegal parking occurs.

Ms. Bergailo brought up the commuter parking lots, on both the eastbound and westbound sides of the train station. She reported that on the Friday she did the analysis,

there were parking spaces available on both sides. Ms. Bergailo also reported that the CVS parking lot, except for the spaces running directly in front of the stores, never filled up on the day she observed.

Ms. Bergailo said her analysis will bring up the question of whether the Borough should permit local buildings to be three stories high, which may impact the parking even more. The Borough may decide to restrict this height at 2 stories.

Ms. Bergailo suggested the Borough look into taking up more easements behind the stores in Post Office Plaza to create more parking spaces.

Ms. Bergailo gave her observations of the parking situation on South Passaic Ave. There always seemed to be parking spaces available on that street. Vehicles did not have to keep circling, looking for openings in that particular section. Ms. Bergailo stated that Liberty Drug Store has “a unique” parking situation. She believed that store employees probably double-parking behind the store to free up spaces for customers.

Mr. DeNave asked Ms. Bergailo when she could give the Board a full presentation. Mr. Crater asked Ms. Bergailo if she would be ready for either of the Board’s August meetings – Aug. 5th or Aug. 12th. Ms. Bergailo answered that she could be ready for either of those meetings. She added that she will be working on a utilization study and a comparison of parking studies. Eventually recommendations for ordinance modifications can be made.

Mr. Crater will contact Ms. Bergailo tomorrow which meeting date in August the Board decides on.

F.A.R. Committee Report

Mr. Crater noted that at the last Board meeting, Mr. Montague distributed a thorough report on FAR applications which had been before the Board of Adjustment. Mr. Crater suggested at a future meeting, the Planning Board will listen to comments from the public on this issue.

Mr. Montague noted that he did not include the FAR data for the years 2008 and 2009. Currently the requests for FAR variances are have been very low. Mr. Montague recalled that Mrs. Cali-Charles had raised the question of whether the applicants who had their FAR variances denied had moved out of town. Mr. Montague said he was still working on that information.

Mr. DeNave distributed copies of a letter from a resident, Mike Conlon, giving his views on FAR. Mr. DeNave has asked residents who are unhappy with the FAR regulations, to put their comments in writing.

Councilman Mikulewicz brought up the FAR study done by then Councilman Plambeck dated August 26, 2001. At that time, Mr. Plambeck was a member of the Planning Board. Mr. Plambeck had made a recommendation about building coverage being

calculated on a sliding scale. Mr. Montague, who also belonged the Planning Board at that time, explained how that calculation was done.

Mr. Pfeil brought up the idea of inviting local architects to give their ideas on FAR to the Planning Board. Councilman Mikulewicz said Brian Siegel of Siegel Architects expressed an interest in helping. Mr. Pfeil suggested additional architects in the area who have appeared before the Board. Mr. Crater suggested these architects meet with the FAR subcommittee. The subcommittee will report back to the Board at one of the September meetings.

Mr. DeNave offered to find the FAR definitions from towns that touch on Chatham Borough. The Board could then review how these neighboring towns handle their FAR situations.

Mr. Crater suggested that the FAR subcommittee ultimately submit a report and a recommendation regarding FAR to the full Board. He would like the Board to take action on this matter by the end of the year, at the latest.

Ms. Rizzuto reminded the Board that if they recommend an ordinance to the Borough Council, the Council needs two meetings to adopt an ordinance. Ordinances should not be adopted in December, because there may be there may be a number of new Council Members in January. Mr. Crater and Councilman Mikulewicz agreed that the Board should finish their FAR research and recommendations by October and then immediately forward their recommendations to the Borough Council.

Sign Ordinance

Mr. DeNave reported that the Borough Council appointed Sign Committee met recently. This committee reviewed the current sign ordinance line by line. The committee members marked up the current sign ordinance with revisions. Councilman Harris is now making a clean draft incorporating these revisions. The cleaned up draft will then be presented to the Planning Board. The other Borough Sign Committee, whose membership includes downtown business people, should look at the draft also and give their comments before the draft is submitted to the Borough Council.

Old/New Business

Mr. Montague reported on the Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting held on June 24, 2009.

Mr. Pfeil asked about the status of the vertical banners put up in front of Dunkin' Donuts recently. There had been a number of complaints about them.

Mr. DeNave answered that he had obtained an understanding from Dunkin' Donuts that those banners will be removed right after the 4th of July. He believed the banners were now gone.

The Board decided to hold their next scheduled meeting on August 5, 2009, 7:30 p.m.
The meeting scheduled for August 12, 2009, 7:30 p.m., is cancelled.

At 8:57 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Holler
Recording Secretary