

CHATHAM BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD
 August 19, 2015 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Susan Favate called this Chatham Borough Planning Board meeting of August 19, 2015 to order at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Chatham Municipal Building. Mrs. Favate announced that all legal notices have been posted for this meeting.

Name	Present	Absent
Mayor Bruce Harris	X	
Council Member Fife		X
Janice Piccolo	X	
Chrmn. Susan Favate	X	
Matthew Wagner	X	
H.H. Montague	X	
John Bitar		X
James Mitchell		X
Joseph Mikulewicz	X	
William Heap	X – arrived 8:38 p.m.	
Wolfgang Robinson	X	
Vincent K. Loughlin, Esq.	X	
Dr. Susan Blickstein		X

Public Comment

No one came forward.

Resolution #PB 15-20

The meeting minutes of June 17, 2015 were approved as amended.

Discussion

Retail Uses in the Business District

Mrs. Favate noted that she has discussed this matter with Mayor Harris and Dr. Blickstein. She would like to hear the Board's thoughts.

Mrs. Favate observed that many of the recent businesses are not the type to generate pedestrian traffic or encourage visitors to the downtown area. The most recent businesses who have appeared before the Board have testified that they don't get many visitors. This scarcity of shoppers helps the parking situation; however, it doesn't produce the vibrancy needed for our downtown. Also, currently there are a number of store vacancies on Main Street.

Mrs. Favate asked the Board members if they felt that this is a problem, and, if so, what should be done about it. The Master Plan Re-examination is starting to be discussed. Perhaps this situation could be included into the Master Plan.

As an example, a new interior design store has taken the place of Snyder Maytag. This store is not open on a day-to-basis. Customers visit by appointment only.

Regarding the number of store vacancies, Mr. Montague pointed out that store rents can run very high nowadays.

Mrs. Favate asked Mrs. Piccolo if she has received any feedback from prospective merchants.

Mrs. Piccolo answered that she hasn't heard that businesses are discouraged about coming into Chatham Borough. She felt more could be done to market our area. Business retention and recruitment is necessary in Chatham. A look should be taken at the mix of businesses in downtown Chatham.

Also, Mrs. Piccolo has observed that local residents would like to take care of all their services on the weekends in Chatham, and not have to travel beyond. There is currently a lack of services. More should be brought in – a shoemaker, opticians, etc. Destination stores, like antique businesses can be a draw for people. Restaurants can keep a downtown active. After a meal, many people want to stroll around and visit nearby stores. Many times, particularly in the evening, there are no stores open for them to visit.

Mrs. Favate said she, for one, found that Madison has more to offer with their stores, their restaurants, their movie theater, etc.

Mrs. Favate felt Westfield NJ had a good balance of stores. Mrs. Piccolo discussed the small square footage of Chatham Borough's store units (1100 sq. ft.).

After further discussion, Mrs. Favate concluded that her concerns are less of a planning and zoning issue, at least for now. It's a marketing issue concerning individual property owners.

Board members discussed the parking situation downtown. Mrs. Piccolo pointed out that the Borough has to market the walkability to local stores. Most people try to park as close as possible to the store or event they want to attend. They should realize that it's really not a far walk from the Center Street East or Bowers Lane parking lot to downtown businesses.

Mrs. Favate said she has seen small signs in other communities stating the number of minutes it takes to walk to a certain store, train station, building. Mrs. Piccolo felt signs like that would tie in well with the Mayor's Wellness Committee activities.

Mr. Montague pointed out that all the oldsters like himself do not like to walk long distances from their parked cars. The safety of sidewalks are very much preferred, rather than walking in the streets or curbs.

Mrs. Favate said she would like to hear from the public what type of uses they would like to have downtown.

The Board members further discussed the parking situation downtown. Mrs. Piccolo brought up the parking available at the rear of the stores. Maybe these parking areas could be made more attractive and inviting.

Miscellaneous

On other matters, Mayor Harris reported that a professional planner will be hired to help with the re-examination of the Master Plan.

Regarding future Planning Board agendas, Mrs. Favate didn't see any applications in the near future.

The Planning Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 2, 2015 is cancelled.

The next Planning Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 16, 2015, 7:30 p.m., Council Chambers, Chatham Municipal Building.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Holler
Recording Secretary