

CHATHAM BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD
December 2, 2020 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Susan W. Favate called the Chatham Borough Planning Board Regular Meeting of December 2, 2020 to order by Zoom at 7:30 p.m. Chrmn. Favate announced that all legal notices have been posted for this meeting. This was a virtual meeting. Board members were present by way of Zoom.

Name	Present	Absent
Mayor Thaddeus Kobylarz	X	
Steve Williams	X	
H.H. Montague	X	
Vice Chrmn. Matthew Wagner	X	
Chrmn. Susan Favate	X	
Curt Dawson	X	
Joseph Mikulewicz	X	
Gregory Xikes	X	
William Heap	X	
Torri Van Wie		X
Council Member Irene Treloar	X	
Vincent K. Loughlin, Esq.	X	

Also present:

Kendra Lelie, professional planner for the Planning Bd.

Vincent DeNave, the Borough Engineer & Zoning Officer joined later in the meeting

Public Comment

There was none.

Resolution #PB 2020-01

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the October 21, 2020 and November 4, 2020 meeting minutes as submitted. Mr. Montague seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. The minutes were approved as submitted.

New and Returning Applications

There were none.

Discussion Items

Zoning Definition Changes B-5

Ms. Lelie noted that the Board members should have before them tonight a summary of the definition of Medical Services as discussed at great length at the last meeting. Hospitals and other items are no longer included. There is also a proposal that the governing body would like the Planning Board to consider – the definition of the Medical and Dental Offices. An editorial

change should be made to this particular definition to make it more comparable to the Medical Services definition.

At the Board's request, Ms. Lelie put the latest, revised definitions up on the screen. She recalled that all of these definitions had been discussed at the last meeting. Ms. Lelie reported that Mr. DeNave and Mr. Williams helped to craft all the feedback given by the Board for the definition of Medical Services. She noted that Hospitals and Residential Care Facilities have been removed from the Medical Services definition. A definition for a Diagnostic Lab is essential.

Chrmn. Favate asked if diagnostic labs were currently allowed as a principal use anywhere in the Borough.

Ms. Lelie answered no, not they she was aware of.

Chrmn. Favate concluded that someone could still open a diagnostic lab as a stand-alone permitted use.

Mr. Williams reviewed the typo corrections made by the Board. The correct capitalizations were made in this draft.

Council Member Treloar and Mr. Williams substituted "medical specimens" in place of "medical products".

Mayor Kobylarz asked Ms. Lelie if she knew of any medical doctors who could do a quick review of this draft ordinance.

Ms. Lelie answered she could have that review done; however, it may not work well time-wise to reach First and Second Readings with the Borough Council.

Mayor Kobylarz asked Attorney Loughlin if the Board could approve this ordinance with the understanding that a medical doctor will be scrutinizing it for the medical terminology.

Attorney Loughlin believed that action would be permissible.

At Mr. Williams' recommendation, the word "medical" was removed in front of "specimens".

Mayor Kobylarz asked Attorney Loughlin if everything looked substantive in his eyes.

Attorney Loughlin felt that everything has been covered.

Attorney Loughlin asked if the Board wanted to include any language about veterinarian services in these definitions. Sometimes veterinarians have facilities to keep dogs and cats overnight.

Mayor Kobylarz pointed out that there is already a veterinarian on Watchung Avenue. His office is in the M zone.

Chrmn. Favate that the matter of ventinarians could be reviewed at a future time.

Mr. Montague made a motion authorizing Kendra Lelie to make the editorial revisions on these definitions for the M-5 District and forward them on to the Borough Council for their consideration. Also, a medical doctor will, in the future, review the language for the section on medical laboratories. Mayor Kobylarz seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken. All Board members present voted aye. The motion was approved.

Residential Bulk Requirements

Ms. Lelie recalled that at the last meeting the Board expressed concerns about the building heights and building masses of local homes. She noted that Board members were particularly concerned that the newer homes being constructed are using every square foot of allowable open space. As a result, there was a feeling that these newer homes lacked character.

Ms. Lelie noted that Board members had been asked to take photos of homes that worked well for them and those that didn't. She suggested that Board members point out the characteristics they felt were positive features for these homes.

Mayor Kobylarz asked Chrmn. Favate what she felt were the basic architectural principals of these homes that she felt were good pluses.

Chrmn. Favate commented that the neighborhoods that had different architectures seemed the most attractive and interesting. She felt that Red Road had a good variety of homes of all ages. Also, Chatham Street and Rowan Road have a pleasant mixture of architecture. Chrmn. Favate described a few local homes that unfortunately appear box-like.

Mr. Heap discussed a house currently under construction on the corner of Weston Avenue and North Hillside Ave. It wasn't clear to him which street the house will be facing. Mr. Heap also discussed a home recently constructed on Pihlman Place. Referring to the photo of this home, Chrmn. Favate felt that the pitch of the roof is almost flat. She felt essentially this was a three-story home.

Ms. Lelie reviewed the characteristics of local homes that Board members had brought up: overhangs, roof pitches, and second floor off-sets.

Ms. Lelie pointed out that from a zoning perspective, the town cannot require porticos, roof-pitches and porches. These items fit in more with the design character. Ms. Lelie felt the idea of reducing the second story to reduce the bulk is a zoning issue. It's not necessarily a design item.

Ms. Lelie felt that the only time the Planning Bd. has purview concerning certain roof-pitches, porticos, etc. is when a sub-division application comes before them. She stated that she avoided requiring architectural character types because it goes beyond the jurisdiction of zoning.

Mr. Dawson asked if the Board would be allowed to publish certain architectural characteristics that they felt would enhance the Borough.

Ms. Lelie answered yes. It could be a document to provide guidance for the building of new homes. This document could be included in a building application packet. She did not feel these design guidelines should be included in the Borough ordinance or be an appendage of the ordinance.

Mr. Montague recalled there had been a Design Guidelines book that the Borough had given out to residents and businessowners to study. Mr. Montague felt that the actual size of a building on its lot has a great deal to do with bulk and aesthetics.

Mayor Kobylarz informed Mr. Montague that the Historic Preservation Commission has just updated that Design Guidelines book.

Mayor Kobylarz felt that the one pitfall of putting out new design guidelines, is that future new trends of architecture may be discouraged. He asked Mr. Wagner and Ms. Lelie what their professional observations were.

Ms. Lelie discussed how the second floors of homes have an impact on the bulk. She felt residential guidelines would be a good idea. Certain elements like porticoes, overhangs, etc. could be discussed in these guidelines to make a house architecturally interesting and eclectic.

Chrmn. Favate agreed with Ms. Lelie's point that addressing the second-floor bulk would prevent a box-like appearance for a home. Residential guidelines would be a good move.

Mr. Wagner discussed how, as an architect, he has to work with the rooflines of a home undergoing renovations/expansions. He has encouraged his clients not to expand the first-floor roof height. That proposal would push the roof-plate even higher. Mr. Wagner suggested there could be an incentive for homeowners to stay within the 8-foot floorplate.

Mr. Dawson felt a style-guide would be helpful for people who have to come before the Planning or Zoning Board with plans.

Mayor Kobylarz pointed out that the Historic Preservation Commission is completing their Design Guidelines, from a historic viewpoint. Mayor Kobylarz asked if it would make sense for the Planning Board to create a document or guidelines for residential buildings. The Board could encourage what architectural items they like, and those they don't.

Chrmn. Favate noted that the developers who have constructed homes in Chatham Borough often have a sense of what architecture features the Board favors. The architects that come in for the first time before the Board, would benefit from these Planning Bd. guidelines.

Mayor Kobylarz recommended that the Board form a select committee to create a Planning Board's perspective of guidelines.

Mr. Montague asked what about proposed home designs that go before the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

Chrmn. Favate stated that the guidelines could be for both Planning Board and Zoning Bd. of Adjustment.

Mr. Montague noted that the Zoning Board mostly looks at calculations and percentages when they consider applications seeking variances. Not as much aesthetics.

Mayor Kobylarz said they he would still like a member of the Zoning Board to serve on this committee. Hopefully, Mr. DeNave, the Borough Engineer, would also serve.

Mr. DeNave had recently joined the meeting.

Mr. DeNave commented that he liked the idea of guidelines; however, guidelines have no teeth in them. Some builders have a good sense of what is acceptable in Chatham Borough. These builders are aware of current trends and do not propose to over build. However, there are the architects and homeowners who want to use up every allowable inch on their property, building to the maximum allowable amount. Mr. DeNave felt that it was important to incentivize the builders and homeowners of what the Planning Board would want in the way of house design. Mr. DeNave brought up that the Borough prefers detached garages; however, it was discovered that homes with detached garages are hard to sell.

Chrmn. Favate suggested that this subcommittee review the regulatory side and the guidelines side. The regulatory side will take a little longer. If the regulations were done in a reasonable time, they will have a good impact.

The following people volunteered to serve on the subcommittee to look into organizing guidelines for residential homes: Chrmn. Susan Favate, Vice Chrmn. Wagner, Vince DeNave, and Curt Dawson.

Mr. Montague stated that he will see if he can get a volunteer from the Zoning Bd. of Adjustment to join the subcommittee.

Attorney Loughlin noted to the Board that Design Guidelines have been popular in New Jersey for a number of years. These Guidelines were created especially when the McMansions began to be built. He felt the Guidelines will be helpful to both the Board and for applicants seeking variances.

Mayor Kobylarz also felt that the Design Guidelines would help sustain the property values in town. The Guidelines will show that the Borough honestly cares what gets constructed in town and how a home will look like.

Chrmn. Favate concluded that the subcommittee for the formation of the Guidelines will start work and report back to the Planning Board in the future.

At 8:53 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The Planning Board has no second meeting scheduled for December.

The next Chatham Borough Planning Board Meeting will be its Reorganization Meeting on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 7:30 p.m. It will be a virtual meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Holler
Recording Secretary