

CHATHAM BOROUGH PLANNING BOARD
February 3, 2021 7:30 p.m.

Chairman Susan Favate called the Chatham Borough Planning Board Regular Meeting of February 3, 2021 to order 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, Attorney Loughlin, and other participants were all present by way of Zoom.

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

Also present:
Vincent DeNave, Chatham Borough Zoning Officer & Engineer

Resolution #PB 2021-01

Vice Chrmn. Wagner made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2021 Planning Board meeting. Mr. Xikes seconded the motion. The minutes of January 6, 2021 were approved as submitted. Mr. Mikulewicz abstained from voting because he was absent from that meeting.

Public Comment

There were none.

Discussion Items

On Referral from the Governing Body:

Ordinance 21-03:

“ORDINANCE ADOPTING AN AMENDED REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE RIVER ROAD REDEVELOPMENT AREA, LOTS 9, 10 & 11 IN BLOCK 125 IN ACCORDANCE WITH N.J.S.A. 40A: 12A-6.”

Mr. DeNave noted that Phil Abramson, AICP/PP, was present tonight. Mr. Abramson worked on this Redevelopment Plan.

Mr. DeNave stated that these changes tonight will not change the plan that the Borough Council has been working with the public about. This ordinance outlines all the regulations that the plan needs to abide by. Mr. Abramson will review tonight the minor tweaks that were made. The Planning Board, with Attorney Loughlin's help, will approve a resolution and send it back to the Borough Council. Mr. DeNave stressed that this resolution is not granting approval to the project. It will only make simple changes to the ordinance, that will enable the plan to come back before the Planning Board. The Board can then review the entire plan then, hold a full hearing, and listen to testimony.

Phil Abramson, Planner with Topology, came forward, He put on the zoom screen the River Road Redevelopment Plan Amendment – Master Plan Consistency Review. This was done as a slide presentation.

Mr. Abramson explained that his presentation will include clean-up items being made to amend the redevelopment plan. He felt that these were really minor amendments being made to the plan. It has already been decided that this whole plan is consistent with the Borough's Master Plan. After this February 3rd Planning Board meeting, the ordinance will go before the Borough Council for a Second Reading. If the ordinance was favorably received by the Borough Council, a Redevelopment Agreement could be adopted and a Financial Agreement could be adopted that same date. On February 27th, a public hearing could be held.

Mr. Abramson put up a map on the Zoom screen showing the three relatively visible properties that are in the Redevelopment Plan.

Mr. Abramson reviewed the objectives and benefits of this Redevelopment Plan:

- 1) The Redevelopment Plan will remediate some long-contaminated properties
- 2) It will create new ratables
- 3) It will improve a major gateway to the town
- 4) It will provide affordable housing options
- 5) It will support transit-oriented development

Mr. Abramson displayed on the Zoom screen renderings of the proposed structure prepared by the Redevelopment architect. Mr. Abramson felt that the architecture will relate to the industrial surroundings.

Mr. Abramson discussed the few changes being made to the Redevelopment Plan. Some of the open space courtyards will be needed to access the garage. The municipality, then, decided to put this situation into the ordinance, the developer will make a donation to create or improve existing open spaces in the Borough.

Mr. Abramson reviewed the updated setbacks that were being proposed. The setback on River Road will be a minimum of 10 feet, with a maximum of 20 feet. On Watchung Avenue the maximum will be 30 feet. The rear yard setback is the NJ Transit right-of-way. The building height will be consistent with the Borough's underlying zoning ordinance. One additional vehicle access point will now be located along River Road.

Mr. Abramson stated that there were several Master Plan goals achieved by this Redevelopment Plan. He felt, as a planner, what is being proposed for that area is much more desirable than what exists there today. It will have a good civic design.

Summing up, it was Mr. Abramson's professional opinion that the Planning Board would be well within its right and purview to consider this redevelopment plan ordinance is consistent with the Borough's Master Plan and to forward it on to the Borough's governing body. Mr. Abramson believed that the changes proposed tonight were relatively minor, but are important in the overall redevelopment process.

Chrmn. Favate asked if there would still be open space designated for outdoor amenities for the residents.

Mr. DeNave pointed out that there will be space available behind the pool area. It will be slightly elevated. He noted that any additional space the developer had for outdoor amenities back up to the railroad tracks. The developer can make a contribution towards creating open space amenities either by the river side or wherever the governing body decides. This open space will be more appropriate than cramming an area so close to the train tracks.

Mr. Heap asked Mr. DeNave how much would the developer donate to create this open space?

Mr. DeNave believed it would be somewhere between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

Mr. Xikes asked if the renderings shown tonight of the development depicted the correct setbacks.

Mr. Abramson answered yes.

Mr. DeNave explained why some of the reasons changes had to be made to the plans. An adjustment had to be made to slightly move the proposed building around. The roads had to be widened. Some of the property was taken for the right-of-way. This was an important factor in improving the traffic flow and safety conditions in that area. The remaining land will be used for streetscape.

Mr. Xikes asked what the sidewalk widths would be. Also, how much buffer would exist between the sidewalk and the street.

Mr. DeNave answered that he couldn't give an exact number. The plans were not in front of him tonight.

Vice Chrmn. Wagner advised the Board that they shouldn't determine these measurements by the renderings shown tonight. The actual plans would have to be looked at.

Mr. Abramson stated that the sidewalks themselves will have a 10 ft. minimum of passable area.

Mrs. Van Wie was glad that the intersection will be made broader. She asked if there would be enough room for a bike route for train commuters or will there only be sidewalk.

Mr. Abramson answered that a shuttle is required to transport commuters to the train station. He hasn't yet seen the right-of-way cross sections that are being contemplated.

Mr. DeNave reminded Mrs. Van Wie that her proposal would involve a county road (Watchung Ave.). However, it could be look at as a possibility.

Council Member Truilo and Mr. Abramson discussed the height of the development. Mr. DeNave noted that the lowest point of the building would be at the intersection. The architect faced many challenges with the existing grade changes on this property. There is a significant grade change as the property goes up towards the train tracks.

Further answering Council Member Truilo's inquiry, Mr. Abramson stated that the maximum building height of the development, within 50 ft. of the Watchung Ave. right-of-way, would have a maximum height of 3 stories 36 feet.

Council Member Truilo liked how the building was designed, so as to not overpower the intersection.

Mr. Mikulewicz asked about the utilities for the development.

Mr. Abramson answered that he had every confidence that Mr. DeNave and the engineers of the utility companies will do a good job re-locating the utilities as necessary.

Mr. DeNave added that the developer has agreed to underground all the electric utilities at this intersection. The project side of River Road will have underground wiring. The developer has committed to this underground wiring. It is up to JCP & L to make it work.

Mrs. Van Wie asked if the ordinance would give an allowance to the building height for solar panel installation.

Mr. DeNave reported on the latest discussion regarding solar installation on the building's flat. Geoscape Solar came up with a solar installation design, and had presented it to the developer. The details will be made available.

Mr. Mikulewicz asked if the affordable housing component had been discussed at all.

Mr. DeNave answered that 15% is required for rental units. This development will have slightly over 15%. Rounding down this percentage is not allowed.

Mr. DeNave thanked Mr. Abramson for his presentation. He stated that all of the details of this development will come before the Planning Board. The Board will have the opportunity to ask questions of the development's professionals. The Board will still have the chance to tweak details such as the aesthetics.

Vice Chrmn. Wagner made a motion that the Planning Board adopt a resolution approving these proposed revisions to the Redevelopment Plan for the River Road Redevelopment were consistent with the Chatham Borough Master Plan. Mr. Williams seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

Mayor Kobylarz	-	yes
Council Member Truilo	-	yes
Mr. Williams	-	yes
Mr. Montague	-	yes
Vice Chrmn. Wagner	-	yes
Mr. Dawson	-	yes
Mr. Heap	-	yes
Mrs. Van Wie	-	yes
Mr. Mikulewicz	-	yes
Mr. Xikes	-	yes
Chrmn. Favate	-	yes

The resolution was adopted.

Regarding future applications, Mr. DeNave informed the Board that a Change of Permitted Use application has been deemed complete and will come before them at their next meeting.

Mr. Heap asked Mr. DeNave what is the status of the First Student bus company property on River Road.

Mr. DeNave answered that First Student has been sold. First Student will cease operation after the current school year.

At 8:22 p.m. the meeting adjourned.

The next Planning Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 17, 2021, 7:30 p.m. It will be a virtual meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Holler
Recording Secretary

