

Franklin Borough Planning Board
Meeting Minutes for
April 20, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by the Chairman, Mr. John Cholminski, who then led the assembly in the flag salute.

Mr. Cholminski read the Statement of Compliance pursuant to the "Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975."

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. John Christiano
Mayor Paul Crowley (Arrived at 7:35)
Mr. Nathan Foulds (Vice-Chairman)
Mr. Jim Williams
Mr. Steve Zydon
Mr. John Cholminski (Chairman)
Mr. James Nidelko (Alt #1)

ABSENT: Mr. Fred Babcock

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Ken Nelson, Nelson Consulting Group
Mr. Robert Correale, Brady & Correale, LLP

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the **Franklin Borough Planning Board Meeting Minutes for March 16, 2015**. Seconded by Mr. Foulds.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Christiano, Foulds, Williams, Zydon, Cholminski, Nidelko

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS:

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS:

There were no resolutions for approval.

APPLICATIONS FOR COMPLETENESS:

There were no applications for completeness.

Mr. Ken Nelson the Board Planner joined the meeting.

ADJOURNED CASES:

There were no adjourned cases.

APPLICATIONS TO BE HEARD:

There were no applications to be heard.

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OTHER BUSINESS:

There were no other business to discuss.

PAYMENT OF BILLS:

Mr. Foulds questioned Meenan Oil invoice# 15-017F in the amount of \$218.50. Mr. Cholminski said this application will be presented to the Zoning Board of Adjustments. Mr. Nelson commented Meenan Oil is installing a propane tank that will require a use variance.

Mr. Foulds made a motion to approve the **Franklin Borough Planning Board Escrow Report for April 20, 2015**. Seconded by Mr. Williams.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Christiano, Foulds, Williams, Zydon, Nidelko, Cholminski

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: None

DISCUSSION:

Bill Boards and Electronic Signs:

Mr. Nelson the Board Planner discussed his letter dated April 13, 2015 regarding billboards and electronic signs. He said the Borough currently has 10 to 12 billboards along Route 23 and Route 517. Mr. Nelson indicated he had a discussion with Joe Drossel the Zoning Officer regarding the Boroughs sign ordinance and suggested to the board they need to clarify billboards in the ordinance. He talked about electronic signs he has seen in other towns that change every 7 to 12 seconds and indicated he finds them very annoying. He stated if someone comes in with a proposal to make their bill board electronic rather than stationary like it is now then it would be considered a upgrading or expansion of an existing nonconforming use which would then require a zoning board application. He said if someone wants to convert their billboard to an electronic billboard the best way to deal with that is a "D" Variance going before the Zoning Board. He said each billboard needs to be handled on a case by case basis.

Board Members discussed different types of electronic signs and billboards outside and inside businesses.

Mr. Nelson suggested the Planning Board set up a committee and include the Boroughs Zoning Officer to discuss onsite electronic signs. Board Members agreed they do not want to see more billboards in town.

Mr. Cholminski talked about the difference between billboards and signs. He commented that a billboard would be on a piece of property advertising anything that's not done on that property and indicated we have a sign ordinance in place for

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signs that are associated with businesses. He mentioned electronic signs that could be tied to the internet and talked about signs based on new technology.

Mr. Nelson asked Board Members if that is the direction they want to look into and investigate. Mr. Cholminski commented we need to accept the new laws of technology and stated if someone wants to put a new billboard up with new technology that will require a "D" variance and will have to apply to the Zoning Board. Mr. Nelson commented if someone has an existing bill board that they want to convert to an electronic billboard that will also have to go to the Zoning Board.

Mr. Cholminski stated the next discussion is regarding signs. He commented if these signs become electronic then we need to think about size, location and can they advertise off property businesses. He suggested the subcommittee can see what other towns are doing and come up with some recommendations.

Mr. Zydon asked if the electronic signs could be signs you see when you are standing inside stores. Mr. Cholminski responded yes they could be inside stores. Mr. Cholminski also commented our ordinance only allows a certain amount of signs. Mr. Christiano talked about a large sign issue along Route 287 which the display changed every ten seconds. Mr. Cholminski commented this sounds like a billboard issue and any billboard change will be referred to the Zoning Board for variances.

Mr. Cholminski thinks it's a good idea to review signs in an existing business and the use of electronic signs in that existing business. Mr. Cholminski asked for volunteers to form the Planning Board Subcommittee regarding signs. Board Members Steve Zydon, John Christiano, and James Nidelko volunteered for the subcommittee. Mr. Zydon said he could also ask the EDC for their recommendations. Mr. Cholminski commented he does not think it's the EDC function to recommend ordinances but suggested to Mr. Zydon it may be a good idea to invite EDC Members to join your subcommittee meeting.

Route 23 and Master Plan Rexam Discussion:

Mr. Nelson indicated at the last Planning Board Meeting a general discussion took place regarding the Route 23 Corridor and Master Plan Rexam. He said the last Rexam was completed in 2009 and the state requirement is every 10 years. He suggested the Master Plan Rexam include other planning related issues that are of concern as part of the whole package.

He discussed his Tentative Outline memo distributed to Board Members. He commented on Item #8 (Issues of Concern in 2015) included the Route 23 Corridor and other issues. He suggested in the next few months the Board needs to make some decisions about what other issues they would like included in his Rexam

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Report. Mr. Nelson commented the Route 23 Corridor evaluation is going to be the primary focus of his document.

Mr. Cholminski mentioned the Hospital Property and Zinc Property. He also commented on the economy and said the population of Sussex County has decreased and people no longer want to commute.

Mr. Nelson said the Department of Community Affairs may provide Planning Services to Municipalities. He said Franklin applied to the DCA to see if they could provide some assistants. Mr. Nelson said he is working with someone who works for the DCA and he will be taking another look at the Zinc Mine Property and Main Street and come up with the best recommendations. Mr. Nelson talked about an implementation strategy plan and feels this could help to determine what the borough can accomplish in the next few years. Mr. Nelson said he will be talking to Alison McHose, Administrator for her input and asked the Board Members to email him or the Board Secretary with any suggestions they may have. Mr. Nelson said there is a limit on the budget that needs to be considered.

Mr. Nelson discussed Maps distributed to Planning Board Members regarding the Route 23 Corridor. He said the best way to deal with Route 23 is to break it down into sectors. He referred to maps on display and explained the twelve sectors and said the maps include the existing Land Use Conditions. He indicated yellow on the map represented residential, pink represented commercial and green is property that is undeveloped. He discussed Land Development Schedules A and B.

Mr. Cholminski commented on the different lot sizes and uses and said one size just doesn't fit all. Mr. Nelson said he will come up with some recommendations as to the possible reconfiguration for some of the Highway Commercial Districts and dimensional requirements. He said the problem with some of these properties along the HC Zone is that there is not much depth for commercial development. He suggested cutting back on some of the commercial zone acres but is concerned if that will be appropriate for residential development.

Mr. Cholminski talked about how commercial development have changed over the years. He compared Board Members concerns back then to what they are now. He talked about population decreasing and stabilization declining. He feels that a combination of residential may be more appropriate.

Mr. Nelson commented on the concerns of sewer and water in the area and said he will talk to Board Engineer, Tom Knutelsky.

Mr. Nelson commented on the shopping center site zoned commercial and hopes that someday it gets built. He said you can separate that out as the current HC Zone with the five acre requirement and then take other areas and make that a different HC Zone with a smaller lot size requirement.

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Mr. Cholminski remarked on declining shopping malls and said many strip malls are vacant and feels more people are shopping for things on the internet. He indicated to Board Members that a mixed use may make more sense instead of focusing on commercial businesses.

Mr. Nelson talked about the uses in the HC Zone and commented on some of the lot sizes along Route 23. He suggested we should look into limiting the uses that are permitted on some properties. Mr. Cholminski commented on how difficult it is zoning certain properties along HC Zone but would like to create flexibility.

Mr. Nelson referred to the maps displayed pointed out that an existing residential property that fronts on Route 23 which is zoned commercial may be a good location for professional offices. Mr. Cholminski said the biggest challenge is if you make smaller businesses along Route 23 you will not get the DOT to approve the exits and entrances. He said he talked to a potential developer regarding a property and the DOT has already told them a left turn out of the property is not possible. He talked about the residential back streets of Franklin along Route 23.

Mr. Nelson commented on commercial properties along Route 23 where the backyards are residential. He talked about how the zoning is set up to put commercial property right in someone's backyard. He said the bottom line is that we have a real mixed bag here.

Mr. Zydon said on the north end of town we should think of consolidating businesses to certain areas instead of spreading them out. Board Members referred to Mr. Nelson's Maps of the Route 23 Corridor and discussed properties in sections #1 thru sections #6.

Mr. Christiano said we have some residents on Route 23 that might in the future become professional offices. He said this will not change the complexion of Route 23 and also will not require any massive reconstruction in the area. He said we have to get out of the HC1 and HC2 mind set and said there are other options like a mixed use.

Mr. Nelson said these properties have been zoned for commercial use for decades. He talked about the Daycare Center on Route 23 that is used for nonresidential purposes or a combination of residential and commercial. He said the question is why the rest of those properties have not converted in some way for commercial use or a mixed of residential and commercial. He said he can look at the current ordinances and review if professional offices are allowed in the commercial zone. Mr. Cholminski said you have to be careful with the parking and traffic on what uses you allow.

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Mr. Nelson asked Board Members to email him with any suggestions they may have. Board Members discussed zoning on Route 23 and the traffic.

Mr. Nelson commented on area (Sector #4), old lumber yard property. Mr. Nelson said this property has been sold and the owner is talking with a developer. He indicated this property is part of the redevelopment area that the Planning Board worked on a few years ago. The Board Members discussed the property location and access to Route 23. Mr. Cholminski said the Department of Transportation, (DOT) will not allow a left hand turn onto Route 23.

Mr. Nelson pointed out to the Board residential properties that border Route 23 have their backyards facing Route 23. He said he is not quite sure why the Highway Commercial District Boundary was drawn in some of those locations.

CORRESPONDENCE:

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION:

Mr. Foulds made a motion to **Open to the Public**. Seconded by Mr. Williams. All were in favor.

Mr. Dick Durina a resident of 23 Lozwa Road stepped forward. He thanked the Board Members for their hard work and would like to become more familiar with the Master Plan Rexam. He agreed with most of the conversation tonight and believes that Commercial property has changed. He feels the issues along Route 23 are the traffic and water and sewer. He said the market now is keeping seniors in town, looking at health care, and jobs. He said he is very interested in what's going on in town but claims he has missed some meetings. He also requested to see any information that was distributed to Board Members at tonight's meeting. Mr. Cholminski stated they are available for review after the minutes of meeting are approved. He also commented on electronic signs and finds some of them very distracting and feels that safety should be first. He commented on the new Walgreens and indicated that his first concern was safety.

Mr. Foulds made a motion to **Close to the Public**. Seconded by Mr. Williams. All were in favor.

Mr. Nelson stated he is working with the Economic Development Committee on a spread sheet that will include properties block and lot number, tax code, and street addresses. He does not think we have the time or money to get this done as part of the Rexam but his spreadsheet will have substantial amount of information about each property along Route 23. He said this can also serve as an effective tool for the Economic Development Committee.

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Mr. Nelson notified Planning Board Members he will not be available to attend the next Planning Board Meeting scheduled for May 18, 2015. Board Members discussed possible rescheduling the next planned meeting.

Mr. Nelson suggested Planning Board Members perform a site investigation and review the properties along Route 23 Corridor. Mr. Cholminski agreed and thinks it's a good idea to walk these sites and review their surroundings.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM on a motion by Mr. Foulds, Seconded by Mr. Christiano. All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Osellame
Board Secretary