



MORRIS TOWNSHIP
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

The February 1, 2021 Meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Committee was called to order by Liam Gallagher (EDAC Chairman) at 6:03 P.M., via Zoom.

* * *

ATTENDANCE

Mr. Robert Berns
Mr. Randall Emond
Mr. Liam Gallagher
Ms. Elizabeth (Beth) Kujan
Mr. Jeffrey Mueller
Mr. Malcolm (Mike) Sheldrick

ABSENT MEMBER

Mr. Ken Bariahtaris
Ms. Jessica Brennan

APPOINTED OFFICERS

Mr. Jeffrey Grayzel, Mayor
Mr. Timothy Quinn, Township Administrator
Ms. Kathy Viarengo, Tax Assessor

ALSO PRESENT

Ms. Cathy Wilson, Township Committeewoman
Mr. Paul Phillips, Township Planner

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PRESIDING OFFICER'S STATEMENT RE: ADEQUATE NOTICE – O.P.M.A. – (RECORD INSERT)

Liam Gallagher issued the following statement of adequate notice:

“Adequate Notice” of this meeting of the Township Committee of the Township of Morris was given as required and defined by the Open Public Meetings Act, as follows:

Written Notice was given on January 15, 2021 to the official newspapers, Morris County Daily Record, by email at least 48 hours prior to the date of this meeting, and a copy of the Notice was posted on the Bulletin Board in the Municipal Building of the Township of Morris by the



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Township Administrator, and a copy of the Notice was likewise filed in the Township Clerk's Office. Copies of this Notice were mailed by Certified Mail to all persons who have requested individual notice, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-19, all of which Notices were given at least 48 hours prior to the date of this meeting, and said notice will be retained in the Office of the Township Clerk.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Liam Gallagher led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion duly made, seconded, and carried by the votes as indicated, the reading of the 01/11/2021 meeting minutes were approved as circulated.

GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting commenced with the approval of the EDAC 2020 Year-End Report. The first topic of discussion was the new office building that is being constructed at 340 Mt. Kemble Avenue. According to Liam, the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted C.I.T.'s plans, as they have delayed their move-in until at least September 2021. This situation is certainly not unique to the Township, as there has been a sharp increase in vacant office space throughout the United States due to telecommuting and hybrid workweeks. Additionally, it is becoming increasingly common to knock down and rebuild vacant buildings as opposed to retrofitting them. Liam also stated that Pfizer will be vacating its office space in Giralda Farms and that Crum & Forster Insurance will be leasing a part of the old Pfizer building.

Township planner Paul Phillips spoke about community outreach strategies for property owners on the Madison Avenue Corridor (MAC) and the importance of reaching out to ALL owners and "not just the big ones." He suggested sending a letter to the owners and following up with those who do not respond and then bringing in the owners for interviews. He asked the committee, "How do you want property owners to convey concerns?" as well as whether they wanted to form subgroups to formulate the letters and conduct the interviews. Mayor Grayzel suggested forming subgroups and involving the planning board, while Randy offered to head the interview subcommittee. Randy suggested interviewing owners individually as opposed to group interviews, as well as asking each owner the same set of open-ended questions and then transcribing the answers and analyzing them. Mayor Grayzel stated that some of the questions should ask, "What brought you to the Township and why are you staying?" "What do you like and dislike?" "What are your future plans? and "How are you utilizing your space?" Paul stated that the interview subcommittee should not feed EDAC's vision to companies and that they



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should try to get as much information as possible from owners, especially with regards to inner relationships between owners and tenants.

Kathy Viarengo (Tax Assessor) suggested reaching out to the owners first as opposed to the tenants because they “have a stake in the Township.” She also discussed three properties (all in the B-11 zone) on the MAC that are “ripe for redevelopment due to vacancy, underutilization or outdated condition of the existing improvements, or lack of demand for the current use.” The first property (Block 8602, Lots 4-6) is the former TD bank site and the adjacent property which is occupied by the Cosy Cupboard Tea Room. Both properties are owned by the Bruen family. A drive-thru Dunkin Donuts was proposed on the site, but was never actually pursued. Drive-thru restaurants are not permitted in the B-11 zone.

GENERAL BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

The second property is the current Provident Bank site at 250 Madison Avenue (Block 8601, Lots 1-2) on which the Wiley Malehorn and Sirota law firm is also a tenant. It is owned by the Silverman Group, which had previously explored potential redevelopment of this site with a bank on the first floor and apartments on the upper floors, but apartments are not permitted in the B-11 zone. According to Kathy, “proposed use has not been pursued by owner, but they are likely to be back with another proposal at some point.” This property adjoins Doctor’s Park, which is underutilized according to Kathy, but the investor may not want to redevelop or sell the property. Individual leases with varying expiration dates further complicate this issue.

The third property is located at 299 Madison Avenue (Block 8301, Lot 29) and is owned by Teachers Insurance and Annuity Associates (TIAA), who purchased it in a sale-leaseback arrangement with Jacobs Engineering. Jacobs vacated the building in July 2019 after their lease expired. The building needs extensive renovations. There has been some interest in non-office use, but no formal proposals. The property is zoned OL-5, which allows office and research laboratories. Restaurants and financial institutions are also permitted. However, according to Kathy, “a large institutional investor like TIAA is unlikely to sell the property subject to the purchaser obtaining a variance or zone change for any use not currently permitted by the OL-5 zone.” If TIAA is able to find an office user, it is possible that they will simply sell the property at a reduced rate to relieve themselves of the property. Kathy concluded her portion of the meeting by stating that other properties along the MAC such as The Abbey and the former Wells Fargo site have either already been approved for redevelopment or change in use or they are owner-occupied or owned by investors who may not want to change the current uses.



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Committeewoman Wilson asked if the Provident Bank finished its proposal to have a bank on its first floor and residences on its upper floors. Paul responded that the proposal was put on hold, most likely due to the pandemic. He concluded his role in the meeting by stating that the letters sent to businesses by EDAC should go through management. Mayor Grayzel concluded the meeting by discussing the importance of reaching out to all Township businesses by asking the questions that were discussed earlier in the meeting, as well as by including a “Township Brag Sheet.” He also mentioned the importance of providing information about the Township to businesses employees (as opposed to only giving information to owners) in hopes of getting some of them to move to the Township.

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

The February 1, 2021 meeting, with no further business, was adjourned at 7:14 P.M.; next to convene at 6:00 P.M., March 1, 2021 via Zoom.

Nicole Donohue
EDAC Secretary