

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PLANNING BOARD MEETING**  
**Tuesday, August 16, 2022**

**Present:**

Chairperson Jessica Pearson

Councilman Jack McEvoy

Mr. Tim Camuti

Mr. Jason Hyndman

Mr. Jeremy Katzeff

Ashley Neale, Planning Board Secretary

Vice Chairman David Freschi

Mr. Steven Neale

Mr. Al DeOld

Mr. Jesse Lilley

Mr. Greg Mascera, Planning Board Attorney

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Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM by Chair Pearson.

**Pledge of Allegiance:**

Chair Pearson reads Open Public Meetings Act Statement.

**Public Hearing**

Chair Pearson asks if anyone from the public would like to address the board on topics not on this meeting's agenda. No members of the public came forward.

**Presentation & Discussion on Draft Master Plan Continued**

Chair Pearson notes that the Board will be continuing their discussion on the draft Master Plan and hands the meeting over to the San and Paul from H2M Associates.

San notes that at the last meeting they left off on page 109 in the Economic Development Plan. San continues by noting that no Board members had comments until page 112. She notes that Chair Pearson requested that the following statement be included, "the work from home population can help drive more local businesses for food establishments, office supply needs, super market visits, local gym memberships where those employees may have visited services outside of the town when they worked in their urban office locations pre-pandemic. This could have a large benefit for the local business community and is likely not yet measurable due to the shut downs that occurred throughout 2020 and 2021." San notes they will be happy to include the statement. San continues with Chair Pearson asking them to include language to emphasize the suggestion to have more cohesive design standards in the Town Center building facades.

There is discussion amongst the Board regarding installation of playground equipment and art installations. Vice Chairman Freschi notes that he feels that HBW Middle School is underutilized. He adds that the community garden has been a huge success and could possibly be expanded or adding something else to the land adjacent. San suggests adding the following statement, "create places of interest under place making, for example art installations at appropriate locations."

It is noted for the record that Mr. Camuti has joined the meeting at 7:38 PM.

San continues by noting that Vice Chairman Freschi suggests adding language to suggest that the town consider a parking garage adjacent to the Town Center business district. She notes that they spoke with multiple department heads and business owners and the feedback they received was more about way finding signs. There was discussion

regarding the parking situations in town, specifically regarding the last parking study done. There was also discussion amongst the Board regarding the costs of parking structures. Mr. Neale and Councilman McEvoy both comment that parking studies and ideas are an ongoing discussion within the Township Council and administration. San reads Vice Chairman Freschi's question regarding current mix of business establishments lacking in variety. San notes that the feedback they received was there was a lack of variety in restaurant choices, and a lack of creative businesses. Paul notes that business owners discussed affordability for new businesses being an attractive quality for the Township. There is talk relating to the 50/50 residential and commercial requirement in the Township's Zoning Code. Chair Pearson notes the Plan suggests removing that from the Town Center Zone, but leaving it in the Extended Town Center Zone.

Mr. Lilley brings up the Cannabis use language that was discussed at the last meeting. Chair Pearson asks where San intended the paragraph be inserted. San notes she would add it to the Land Use Plan element on page 55, she strongly suggests using generic language and notes the picture under will be removed. Mr. Lilley expresses concern that the language seems to suggest the support that the Township overturn the decision to "Opt Out." Mr. DeOld comments that he also has similar concerns. San clarifies that the intent is to say the town "can" consider opting in which is factual not that the town "should." There is discussion amongst the Board regarding the exact wording that should be included to make the statements sound more neutral and less suggestive. There is also extensive discussion regarding opting in versus opting out.

Chair Pearson asks if anyone from the public has questions on the Economic Element of the Plan the Board has been discussing. Rose Karmel from 12 Oakridge Road- Notes she was unable to find the document online. It is noted for the record that the document can be located on the Township's website, [www.veronanj.org/planningboarddocuments](http://www.veronanj.org/planningboarddocuments).

Chair Pearson notes the Board will now move on to discuss the Sustainability Element. San address some of Mr. Hyndman's comments regarding emissions and reducing amounts of cars. He notes that he feels that things that were discussed in the regarding traffic circulation should be integrated into this section. San notes that some of the comments deal with global factors and that they are focusing on Verona, and any other regulations would be filtered down from the State accordingly. There is discussion amongst the Board regarding the recommendation to, "collaborate with Sustainable New Jersey to help calculate baseline emission," on page 127 and carries to recommendations on page 143. San notes this will be removed. San notes that Mr. Hyndman made a comment regarding heat pumps, and agrees to add language as this was done prior to the bill coming out. Mr. Katzeff asks for clarification on why there was no mention of vanpools and asks about a jitney survey the Township conducted. Mr. Mascera notes that because there is no train station in town, jitneys are not permitted. Councilman McEvoy notes the town did implement a shuttle service, but it was barely used. Mr. Neale comments that there was been multiple feasibility studies done regarding jitneys and shuttles. San notes that Chair Pearson made a comment that on page 134 to add "native species" where it reads, "inform residents about replacing trees on their property with more hardy species."

San notes they agree to changing language on page 139 per Chair Pearson's suggestion to read, "concerns regarding the impervious surface coverage repetitive flooding events and the increasing pressure on the municipal storm water system with a limited capacity the Township Council has reduced the trigger for major developments, as well as extended the model ordinance to make the regulations applicable to minor development sites subject to Township approval. It is agreed that on page 143 recommendation number 14 should use "encourage" instead of "incentivize." There is discussion regarding hazardous trees in recommendation number 24, and is ultimately decided it be removed all together. Recommendation number 29 was discussed, and a decision was made to add another recommendation stating, "Update storm water management plan and municipal storm water capacity by investing in replacement upgrades and seeking state funding opportunities."

There is discussion regarding the Peckman River banks. It is suggested that, "stabilize and extend the banks of the Peckman River to reduce the incidence of flooding, increase capacity and minimize erosion," be added to the plan where the Peckman River is discussed. There is discussion on properties along the river, riparian zones and certain properties being grandfathered into being non-compliant. Mr. Hyndman suggests adding language suggesting an



easement study for properties along the river. It is discussed and decided that he will draft language to send to the Board for approval.

Chair Pearson asks if anyone from the public has any comments regarding the Sustainability section.

Herb Lev from 45 Summit Road- Comments he would like to see a section that specifically mentions Mount Prospect Park and how he would like to be maintained by the Township and not sold to the County. There is extensive discussion regarding the Township's Recreation and Open Space Inventory plan and the wording in it regarding this property. There is also further discussion on the fiscal background and intentions of acquiring the property.

Barbara Davey from 15 Oakridge Road- Voices concerns regarding the property on Bloomfield Avenue near Fells Road. She notes that the neighborhood has been fighting for years to keep that property green and undeveloped.

Chair Pearson calls for a break at 9:36 PM. The meeting is called back to order at 9:47 PM.

Chair Pearson notes the Board will now be discussing the Community Facilities section. San notes that under number 2 they agree to include language regarding green infrastructure. San notes she will be rewording the section on page 148 regarding School District Facility Needs Assessment based on the chart on page 147. San notes they will be adding, "Verona should maintain these volunteer services," under the Verona Rescue Squad section per Chair Pearson's request. She adds they will also add a recommendation stating, "Update Community Center when financially feasible." There is discussion on cell towers, specifically the one located at the Community Center. It is suggested that language be added regarding the possible height expansion. San proposes the following wording, "It is recommended that the existing telecommunication towers located at the Community Center, the height remain as is, and no further additions be made."

Chair Pearson asks if anyone from the public has any comments on the Community Facilities Element. No members of the public came forward. Chair Pearson notes the Board will now move on to the Historic Preservation Element.

San notes that Chair Pearson made a comment that the Historic Preservation Commission has sent out mailers to home for potential inclusion and some have responded with interest and notes that will be added to page 163. Councilman McEvoy asks about the Sunnyside Historic Transition Area, noting that it states properties along Montrose and Bloomfield Avenues, adding that Sunnyside is on the other side of town. There was discussion amongst the Board about the correct labels and wording. San notes that section will be crossed checked because it sees the title may be mislabeled and they will be update accordingly. Mr. Freschi notes there are street labels missing on the bike routes on page 92.

Chair Pearson asks if anyone from the public has any questions regarding the Historic Preservation Element. No members of the public came forward. Councilman McEvoy commends San and Paul on their work on the plan. Chair Pearson asks if anyone from the public has comments, regarding anything discussed at the meeting tonight. There is discussion regarding future meeting dates for possible adoption. It is agreed there will be two special meeting one on September 13 via ZOOM video conferencing at 6:30 PM, and September 29, in person at 7:30 PM at the Community Center for formal adoption.

### **Adjourn**

After a motion made by Mr. Katzeff and seconded by Mr. Freschi, there was a unanimous vote to adjourn at 10:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Ashley Neale  
Planning Board Secretary

*PLEASE NOTE: Meeting minutes are a summation of the hearing. If you are interested in a verbatim transcript from this or any proceeding, please contact the Planning Board office at 973-857-4777.*