

**WARREN TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
7:30 P.M. – Susie B. Boyce Meeting Room – 44 Mountain Boulevard
May 22, 2023
APPROVED**

CALL TO ORDER

FLAG SALUTE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR OUR TROOPS

ROLL CALL

Mayor DiNardo (excused)	Mr. Scuderi (excused)
Committeeman Lazo (excused)	Mr. Esposito (excused)
Mr. Gallic	Mr. Lippitt
Mr. Toth	Mr. Dwyer
Mr. Lindner (excused)	
Mr. DiBianca	
Mr. Argiro	
Chris Sobieski, attorney for board	

Statement by Presiding Officer: *Adequate notice of this meeting was posted on January 11, 2023, the Township bulletin board and sent to the Township Clerk, Echo Sentinel, and Courier Newser per the Open Public Meetings Act. All Board members are duly appointed volunteers working for the good and welfare of Warren Township. We plan to adjourn no later than 10:00 p.m.*

■ **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

May 8, 2023

ROLL CALL

Motion was made by Mr. Argiro, seconded by Mr. Dwyer to approve the minutes.
For: Mr. Toth, Mr. Argiro, Mr. DiBianca, Mr. Lippitt, Mr. Dwyer, and Mr. Gallic.
Against: None.

■ **Reports:**

John T. Chadwick, IV, P.P., Professional Planner
Christian Kastrud, P.E., Professional Engineer
Cathy Reese, Clerk

■ **CITIZENS HEARING non-agenda items**

Mr. Gallic opened the meeting to the public for non-agenda.

Ms. Jessica Giacchi came forward and said she had difficulty finding the exact definition of a flag lot. Mr. Chadwick stated that a flag lot is prohibited in two places in the ordinances. They are prohibited to prevent a home to be built behind another home as

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there can be problems in the future. Emergency access to flag lots can be confusing or delayed. There are some in town currently. Ms. Giacchi asked about the resolution and a structure being built behind an existing dwelling. She mentioned the lot on 19 Valleyview and its subdivision approval. She said there is a fire burning in the neighbor's lot and the smoke comes across into her yard. She has concerns with what will happen behind her house.

Mr. Gallic asked if this was an open fire, it was a bonfire, in a firepit. Mr. Gallic mentioned that the applicant was asked during the hearing what the plans were and they said they do not intend to build there.

Mr. Chadwick mentioned that they can call if there is clearing on the property. They are expected to come to town for any clearing of trees. There was further discussion on a flag lot and the newly formed lot is not a flag lot.

Mr. Chadwick stated that the lot does conform with the township regulations. It must be approved if it conforms. Ms. Giacchi said that it is not a rectangular lot and therefore not desirable. Mr. Gallic said that they followed the rules and they have right to have the subdivision approved.

Mr. Jim Giacchi from 15 Valley View Road came forward and spoke about the subdivision checklist and the checklist for the subdivision had items missing. He questioned the process of the review of the list. Sometimes the items are not applicable, or they can ask for a waiver. They discussed a wetlands assessment and the checklist.

Seeing no one else come forward, this portion of the meeting was closed.

■ **CORRESPONDENCE** None.

RESOLUTIONS:

PB23-01

Silver Leaf Court, LLC/Brookside Drive

Block 62.03 lot 18.02

Preliminary Major Subdivision (approved March 27)

ROLL CALL

Motion was made by Mr. Toth, seconded by Mr. DiBianca to adopt the resolution.
For: Mr. Toth, Mr. DiBinca, Mr. Lippitt, Mr. Dwyer, and Mr. Gallic.
Against: None.

PB23-02

Ana Santos

Block 202, lots 19 and 4

Minor Subdivision

This resolution was not complete and was postponed to the next meeting.

■ **HEARING agenda items**

Downtown ReDesign Discuss and consider concepts for a potential future Downtown ReDesign for possible inclusion in an Amended Land Use Plan Element and/or other Master Plan elements and/or Master Plan Reexamination Report. No formal action to be taken.

Mr. Gallic said the planning board was looking for fact finding and an interest mission on the Downtown ReDesign. He mentioned several motivations for this and includes the ability to accommodate future requirements for the state for low and moderate income housing without putting into jeopardy our open spaces. To do that they need to be aggressive in zoning and creative in the redesign.

Another opinion is that the downtown could be a nicer looking area. Mr. Gallic feels this could help the look and take pressure off of the town by developers.

There was the downtown designation that has been in place for 30 years. There is a TID (transportation improvement district) put in place around 1990. And there is a town center designation which is the same area. The county has designated this area as an Economic Development District.

Mr. Gallic feels this may be the last good chance to create a nicer looking downtown. Some people don't agree. This will be informal and nothing will be voted on that evening. They want input from people.

They went to one of the tables in the court room and rolled out a map of the downtown area. They have marked up some maps at earlier meetings. Mr. Gallic invited all to gather around the table.

There were some maps they went over that had been marked up already and there were some clean copies. They discussed the maps and orientation of them. The area along Mountain Blvd is from Bardy Road to Pauls Firewood. And the north to south is from Town Center Drive to the Washington Valley Road extension.

Mr. Gallic discussed adding a circle in the middle of the town, maybe into the parking lot of Kings shopping center, similar to the Morristown green. They also talked about a regular traffic circle (no green). There was a series of roads that might be added to give it more of a downtown feel similar to Westfield.

A resident asked about the ability to make these changes as they are county roads. Mr. Gallic said those roads would be pretty much left as they are but a circle would be added. It would have to be approved by the county.

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They asked about the circle and mentioned the Watchung circle and it is slow, and it is slow in Morristown.

Mr. Murowski a Magnolia Lane resident, said they need an overpass or by-pass. There was discussion of different options. He feels it is too difficult with the buildings already in place. All these homes make up a neighborhood with kids, and he doesn't want any through roads. He was upset that more people did not know about these meetings.

Mr. Gallic reminded all that there would be notice for any meeting and they are requesting feedback and there is no voting this evening.

A resident suggested a notice via email from the Township concerning/notifying on land use meetings.

Mr. Gallic said they had met with the state on re-qualifying for the downtown designation and they have changed the rules. They need public transportation. Mr. Gallic said there is a lot to do, the officials need to agree and the stakeholders have to be involved and agree; the township officials, the residents, the county, the utilities, and the property owners. And then the town and state will have to get agreements on the fourth round of affordable housing. Mr. Gallic feels they must start moving ahead and not be forced by builders.

Some residents feel it is pushing too much into the space. Mr. Gallic said the plan is to provide walkable areas where they don't need to drive. It is unknown what the formulas for the next round of affordable housing will be. Residents pushed to hear a number of what will be required.

Mr. Gallic suggests to listen to an idea on the possibility of a circle with open space in the middle and you have four stories with retail on first floor and apartments above nearby. There may be parking decks behind them.

Mr. Gallic guesstimates that it may be as much as 500 affordable housing units be added to Warren. Mr. Chadwick reminded all that the rules have changed and the town was able to transfer half of the obligation to New Brunswick in the early rounds.

Mr. Chadwick went over some of the projects. The next round they needed to come up with 700 units and were not sued. The third round the number they required was 1490 units (a portion of a builders remedy total units). The 1400 came down to 790 through adjustments, etc. This is what created the five new projects out of that round. All those projects were a result of litigation. Fair Share Housing participated in most of the negotiations. Then during all this the legislature said COAH (Council on Affordable Housing) doesn't exist and assigned the solution to 17 judges.

There is suppose to be a plan in place by 2025 (along with all other towns).

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A resident discussed having all of a development being affordable. An area in need of redevelopment. Mr. Gallic brought up that it is an equity issue, to put all affordable units in one place and maybe not welcome the development, instead of mixing in units with market units. The board had a problem with another development that wanted to put all the affordables along a busy street and the market units back farther where it is quieter.

Woodland acres has 57 units and was town owned property. There is also the Pirhl Development on Lindberg that was township property and it has 80 apartments all rental and all affordable. This met some of the previously required affordable units. The town shall still look at using township owned properties. This has been going on since the late 80s and the township has come to settlements. They have negotiated the total number of units downward.

A resident asked about some of the units that were going to expire (the requirement for keeping units affordable) and the town has worked to keep those in affordable. The new units have long time frames, 50 years.

There was a discussion on traffic studies. There will be an extensive study for the Master Plan. The county controls much of the roadways with traffic flows.

A resident proposed that the board ask residents what they feel they want and what an ideal downtown would be. Maybe do surveys.

Mr. Gallic mentioned some downtowns he had visited in Indiana that were well done, Carmel, Indiana is very nice and has won awards. They brought in a world class theatre, water park, outdoor areas for recreation, along with retail on bottom floors, affordables, etc. It was already developed; it was and it was a little outdated and rundown.

Some things that are essential for downtowns are meeting halls, theatres, open spaces, recreation designed in the plan. Mr. Gallic feels they should be doing 21st Center downtown; zero carbon footprint, lots of heat pumps, be more environmentally friendly.

A resident brought up the option of building up and parking underneath building or building up and going over the roadways.

The downtown redesign will be an element of the Master Plan and the Master Plan is required by all towns. It is approved at the Planning Board and then ordinances are adopted to give structure on how the town should be developed. There are some new requirements in the Master Plan to account for Climate Change. There are many elements in Master Plan; some are Open Space, Zoning, circulation, and the downtown redesign will/may become an element of the Master Plan.

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A downtown needs foot traffic and population. The idea of legacy was discussed, maybe the Kings theatre, etc. as an enticement. The developer gets the enticement of housing. They can propose to property owners an idea to redevelop or modify existing properties. There is a potential of lawsuits with the next round for many residential units, market and affordable. There should be an outlet/plan to propose to do something for less.

A resident spoke about sidewalks and being able to bike and walk in downtown areas. They should include more of this for residents all over town. Areas to relax and sit and visit with others might be desirable.

Mr. Gallic feels Warren's identity is up in the air and a nicer downtown might solidify that for the better. It is a good community but it is split up here and there with neighborhoods. There was discussion on cross walk lights along roads and not just at corners. Mr. Gallic spoke about creating a grid in this downtown area. What is here now are strip malls. There has not been any discussion with property owners yet.

There would be a stakeholder meeting in public. A resident mentioned that they need grocery stores, and bike lanes. Mr. Gallic asked if others had any comments.

A resident spoke about taking down the Warrentown Tavern and it ended a town center. She also said the cross traffic from route 22 to route 78 will not end and she felt you could not put all that traffic on a circle. Maybe an east/west bypass would work. There was discussion on look and feel of a downtown, large buildings might feel a little too modern while a little lower buildings with some space might be more appealing to some people.

Mr. Gallic said they would meet again, probably many times on the downtown redesign workshops.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. DiBianca, seconded by Mr. Dwyer. All in favor. Meeting adjourned approximately 8:50 p.m.

SCHEDULE OF NEXT MEETING

June 26, 2023
Pending applications

PB23-05 284 King George Road, LLC, Hotel Site Plan
PB23-06, 30 Mountain Blvd Preliminary Site Plan with inclusionary housing
Paternostro, Minor Subdivision Morning Glory Road, awaiting revised plans

■ **ADJOURNMENT**

Adjourned approximately 8:50 p.m.