

**WEST AMWELL TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD – REGULAR MEETING
June 20, 2023 Minutes – 7:00 PM**

The West Amwell Township Planning Board meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Tomenchok followed by the salute to the flag.

The following statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act as listed on the meeting agenda was read into the record by Chairman Tomenchok: This meeting was called pursuant to the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. This meeting was noticed as a regularly scheduled meeting transmitted to the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Times of Trenton on January 26, 2023. A copy of this notice is available to the public and is on file in the Office of the Planning Board and Township Clerk.

The following general policy statement of the Planning Board was read into the record by Chairman Tomenchok: The Board's general policy is to end the presentation of testimony on applications by 10:30 PM and to conclude all Board business by 11:00 PM. When necessary, the Chairman may permit a reasonable extension of those time limits.

Attendance – Roll Call

Present: Bob Balaam
Jim Cally
John Dale
John Haug
Carl Ippolito
Christopher Morgan – (*arrived at 7:10 PM*)
Rob Tomenchok
John Flemming – Alt. #1
Connor Montferrat – Alt. #2
Attorney Tara St. Angelo
Planner Joanna Slagle

Excused: Nella Hamtil
Joe Petrucci

New Business – Other

Discussion: Master Plan Re-exam – Economic Plan Element

Chairman Tomenchok commented that despite efforts to obtain information from the High School and the Township Finance Advisory Committee, no one has gotten back to the Board. He asked Attorney St. Angelo to submit an OPRA request to the school for the requested data. Chairman Tomenchok thanked Mr. Beaumont for his personal input on the Plan.

The Board then reviewed the Economic Plan Element, page by page, noting the following details:

1. Page 58: Mr. Cally noted the State took back the Township's COMPTRA money and suggested the Plan reflect that.

West Amwell Township Planning Board Minutes – 6/20/23

2. Page 64 – Municipal Operations Cost Index: Chairman Tomenchok commented that he cannot find any updated information and suggested someone try to research it. Mr. Montferrat stated he would seek the updated data.
3. Chairman Tomenchok made a general comment stating he would like to remove the “Planning Basis” from each individual element and put a statement at the beginning of the Master Plan that serves to be all encompassing.
4. Chairman Tomenchok suggested the overall language of the Master Plan should be updated, noting the Township is no longer in jeopardy of “cutting services,” and should instead highlight “maintaining services.”
5. Mr. Montferrat suggested including any major projects that have been approved and referenced the Housing and Fair Share Plan Elements. He commented that the Board could rely on the permits pulled through the Construction Office.
6. Chairman Tomenchok noted the inventory and analysis table needs to be updated as well as the tax rate chart.
7. Mr. Montferrat commented on the school data showing each student costs \$25,888.00. Chairman Tomenchok suggested a re-evaluation of the funding proportion based on the need of the student. Mr. Beaumont spoke up from the public saying funding is based on each student and enrollment numbers for each municipality in the regional district.
8. Chairman Tomenchok noted OEM Director Harry Heller needs to provide updated data under Emergency Services.

Mr. Morgan commented on a general decline in student community service hours. Mr. Cally noted the COVID pandemic may have something to do with it.

Chairman Tomenchok noted the following amendments to the Policy Recommendations section:

1. Keeping, and building upon the West Amwell brand as a desirable location for self-reliant families who value privacy.
2. Delete the section on encouraging school regionalization. Instead, Chairman Tomenchok suggested a County-wide school district. Mr. Balaam commented that the larger you go the more power you lose.
3. Mr. Cally noted that the Township has been trying to clean up the titles on some of the properties in the Connaught Hill section of the municipality. Attorney St. Angelo recommended the Township clean up any municipal held tax liens.

West Amwell Township Planning Board Minutes – 6/20/23

4. Mr. Montferrat suggested adding language to clarify that projects involving commercial or industrial zoned land parcels should be analyzed for possible negative impacts on the tax base “through market analysis.”
5. With regard to farmland assessed lots, the Board suggested the actual language defining the requirements of securing and maintaining farmland assessment status be included in the Master Plan.
6. With regard to shared services, Mr. Montferrat suggested the language be changed to “continued investigation of *all* shared services...”
7. With regard to encouraging development of the Route 31 commercial district, Attorney St. Angelo noted the redevelopment plan was adopted.
8. With regard to debt, the Board suggested the percentage be reduced from 10% to 5%.

Chairman Tomenchok made a general comment that he would like to see the Finance Committee expand their role.

Unfinished Business

Status of Draft Special Events Ordinance

Attorney St. Angelo stated she will send the final, clean draft to Secretary Andrews by the end of the week so it can be included on the Township Committee’s 7/19/23 agenda for consideration.

Approval of Bill List

A motion by John Dale, seconded by Jim Cally to approve the 6/20/23 bill list was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Correspondence

Chairman Tomenchok noted the letter dated 6/9/23 from Attorney Wells regarding the 1874 Barn, LLC Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan application with variances. Attorney St. Angelo explained that she had spoken with Attorney Wells and the expectation is that the Board’s professionals will have their review memos drafted by June 30th so the application can be on the Board’s August agenda for public hearing. She noted that any objectors must submit their presentation materials to the Board Secretary at least 5 days prior to the public hearing and she indicated she may suggest to Attorney Wells that his notice to the public include a line about the protocol for any objector’s presentations.

Open to the Public

A motion was made by Jim Cally and seconded by Chris Morgan to open the floor to public comment. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote. Dave Beaumont of 205 Rock Road West came forward and thanked the Board for allowing him to provide input on the Master Plan Re-exam but cautioned the Board on how they approach any possible school restructuring and how it may directly impact taxes. Mr. Beaumont also noted that the “No Left Turn” sign which was part of the conditions of

West Amwell Township Planning Board Minutes – 6/20/23

approval for the GMNJ application has still not been posted. Attorney St. Angelo stated it will be installed prior to the Certificate of Occupancy being issued.

Seeing no other members of the public who wished to speak, a motion was made by Jim Cally and seconded by John Haug to close the floor to public comment. The motion was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Minutes

Secretary Andrews noted the Board's 5/16/23 minutes are still being drafted and will be listed on next month's agenda for approval.

Adjournment

A motion by Jim Cally, seconded by John Dale to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved by voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.

Maria Andrews, Planning Board Secretary