

**Borough of Watchung
Planning Board Meeting
April 21st, 2009
Minutes**

Salute to the Flag.

Chairman Speeney called the meeting to order at 7:38p.m. and stated that notice of this meeting had been posted at Borough Hall, filed with the Borough Clerk and given in the way of notice to the Courier News, Echoes Sentinel, the Reporter and Star Ledger in conformance with the N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 et seq.

Present at the call of the roll were:

Speeney [X] Boyd [X] Havas [A] Haveson [X] Addario [A] Pennett [X]
Schaefer [X] Beck-Clemens [X] Panzarella [X] Ellis [A] Pote [A]

Also present was Board Attorney Frank Linnus.

Chairman Speeney stated there was a quorum present to conduct business, and asked for a motion to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the March 17th, 2009. Mrs. Schaefer made that motion, seconded by Mr. Haveson. Hearing no discussion, the Chair called for a voice vote. The vote was unanimous, and the minutes were approved.

The Chair explained the primary agenda was to bring out the work of the ordinance committee to the Board. The committee was headed by Peter Havas. Also on the committee was Alan Haveson, Chairman Speeney and Mr. Addario. The discussions of the committee involved combining the powers of the Board of Adjustment with the Planning Board. Chairman Speeney said that is allowed by the MLUL for towns with populations below 15,000. The Chair said this ordinance committee has met several times, exploring the pro's and con's of creating this merger. The Chair said he was looking for support from the entire board relative to having the Planning Board ordinance committee going forward to the Council's ordinance committee. The Chair said that the other option was for a resolution to be passed by the Planning Board and sent to the Mayor and the Council as a whole. The Chair gave everyone a handout of pro's and con's which were the culmination of the ordinance committee's work over several meetings. The Chair suggested that if the Planning Board took over the responsibility of the Board of Adjustment and continued to meet once per month, it would clearly cut expenses. The Chair stated in

his opinion, the primary purpose of both the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment is to protect the Master Plan. In protecting the Master Plan, you then protect the enabling ordinances. Chairman Speeney said that the Planning Board has been very consistent over the last four or five years when it comes to applications which requested approval for less than what is required in the zone, saying each time the Planning Board reexamines the Master Plan, we reaffirm this is how this board wants to operate. The Board of Adjustment has the legal authority to grant those variances, that's just the way it is said Chairman Speeney. The Chair stated that he feels a little more comfortable if that whole process is with this Board, rather than in someone else's hands. The Chair said this would limit the actions of homeowners, builders and developers applying for variances and conditional uses. The Chair said that he thought it possible that people have not been coming before the Planning Board of late because the reputation of the board precedes them, due to the fact that they have not approved many applications lately. Mr. Linnus said that there are scenarios with developers who might be close to a 3 lot subdivision before the Planning Board who might make the judgment if they view the Planning Board as the tougher jurisdictional agency, to try and squeeze out another lot with a density variance and at that point the jurisdiction is with the Board of Adjustment. Now the developer is going for four lots. There was a lengthy discussion and the Chair explained that he wanted to offer to the Council that we merge the powers of the Board of Adjustment into the current Planning Board. The Chair said that this was the bottom line. The Chair stated he has always been concerned about the process, and that the process should always be consistent. One way to get the process consistent is to have a board that can act as a Board of Adjustment as well. The consensus of the Board was to ask Mr. Linnus take the list written, and soften it somewhat. After a lengthy discussion, the Chair asked the board for a motion to support the ordinance committee going forward to the Council's ordinance committee to continue the discussion of merging the powers of the Board of Adjustment with the Planning Board. Mr. Boyd made that motion, seconded by Mrs. Pennett. The Chair asked if there was any further discussion, and hearing none, the Chair called for a voice vote. The board voted unanimously to approve and the motion carried. The Chair thanked the board for their support.

The Chair said the Council has asked the Planning Board via letter to look into the issue of large homes on small properties, otherwise known as "McMansions". The Chair said that a committee got together and discussed lot requirements and home sizes for different zones. The committee also discussed 40,000 square foot lots such as on Knightsbridge, along Mountain Blvd. including zones of 20,000 or 15,000. This is where the Chairman said there are some properties that looked badly out of place. Chairman Speeney said that Board of Adjustment Chairman Dan Cronheim suggested that one thing that could be done is to change the setbacks on smaller lots, so that if you wanted to build a larger home on a smaller lot, push that house back, and still maintain the integrity of the other setbacks. The Chair spoke to Councilwoman Deb Joren about this, and she will take this idea back to the Council's Laws and Ordinance committee. They decided that the 60,000 square foot zone would not need to be addressed. Lot size was sufficient that these lots didn't seem to present this problem.

Vouchers-

The Chair asked for a motion to approve the vouchers. Mr. Haveson, seconded by Mrs. Schaefer, made that motion. Hearing no discussion, the Chair asked for a call of the roll. The roll call vote was as follows:

Speeney [yes] Boyd [yes] Haveson [yes] Pennett [yes]
Schaefer [yes] Beck-Clemens [yes] Panzarella [yes]

The motion carried and the vouchers were approved.

The Chair opened up discussion to the public. Hearing none, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:57pm until the next meeting of May 19th, 2009.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carolyn Taylor
Planning Board Clerk