

MINUTES
HOPE TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MEETING
OCTOBER 2, 2023

Chairman Larena called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Roll Call:

Members present: John Koonz, Matt Koski, Steve Larena, Mayor Timothy McDonough, Chris Maier, Robert May, Betsy Peterson, Terry Urfer (via cell).

Members absent: Donna Marie, Brad Bartow

Mr. Larena then led the Board in the pledge to the flag. The Chairman announced that notice of the meeting was given in compliance with the “Open Public Meetings Act – This meeting has been advertised in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.”

Correspondence:

Memo from Zoning Officer: The Chairman and Board discussed correspondence from the Hope Township Zoning Officer regarding building heights to accessory structures on farms (i.e., barns and silos). Mr. Koonz noted that under the Right-to-Farm Act these structures are permitted already and that there is no real reason to change the ordinance. Mr. Koski noted that for anyone who has a “hobby” farm, these structures at higher heights are not necessarily already permitted and to go before the Zoning Board is expensive. Mr. Boesze had recommended heights not to exceed 55 feet. The Planning Board would like further information on how this number was reached and will also do some research on their own regarding same. It was noted that perhaps Mr. Boesze could look at surrounding towns’ ordinances to see what they have permitted. The Hope Volunteer Fire Department should also weigh in on this to ensure that their equipment would be able to assist in the event of an emergency.

Great Waters Resolution: The Township Committee recommended that the Planning Board weigh in on a Resolution that the Environmental Commission Chairwoman, Monica Sobon, asked the Committee to pass. The Planning Board was given the Resolution and all of the documentation from the Environmental Commission Chairwoman so that they could discuss this. Mr. Koonz noted that this Resolution makes him uneasy as we do not know who the Musconetcong group is that is recommending local governments to pass this. It could potentially have impacts with the DEP if this Resolution were to be used as a springboard to say that the DEP should do more to regulate development, etc. around waterways and wetlands. Mr. Urfer requested that the Planning Board look at the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan that the Township engineers have drawn up before weighing in on this Resolution. Mrs. Sobon noted that the Resolution has nothing to do with changing standards, development or any Ordinances. It merely states that the quality of drinking water and recreational activities should be protected. Mayor McDonough suggested that the Planning Board members all take the time to re-read the Resolution and reconvene on this issue at the next meeting.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes from the June 5, 2023 meeting were adopted on a motion from Mr. Koonz and seconded by Mr. Maier, all in favor by a voice vote with the exception of Mr. May, who abstained.

New Business:

None.

Unfinished Business:

POP Zone Subcommittee Update: Mrs. Peterson led the discussion regarding the work that the POP Zone Subcommittee has been working on over the past months. Discussion took place surrounding the topic of warehousing, which is the most urgent of the topics that need to be tackled in this zone, and how to safeguard that a stand-alone massive warehouse is not built on property in that zone. Several ideas were discussed such as finding a new way to label “warehouses” and redefine what the Planning Board would call a warehouse; putting bulk requirements in place for warehouses and perhaps taking them out as conditionally permitted uses in the zone and prohibiting them in any other zone in the municipality. Mr. Maier noted that we must be careful to not only take things out of the POP Zone as conditional uses, but also to ensure that things are left or put back in that would be considered for conditional use in that zone as ratables are an important issue as it relates to the residents being able to afford to continue to live in Hope Township. Flex space and multi-use space are ideal conditionally-permitted uses for that zone that may be worked into the rewriting of the ordinance. The Planning Board asked that Mrs. Peterson and the other members of the subcommittee do some more research and come back with a definition of “warehouse” and what that looks like for Hope Township and restrictions they’d like to see put in place (such as bulk requirements).

A discussion also took place regarding the idea of deed restricting the Township-owned property in the POP Zone and perhaps making it a nature preserve or recreational (such as hiking, bird watching, etc.) area in order to ensure that no warehouse is built along the Route 80 frontage. Mr. Koonz made the motion to entertain the Township-owned property being moved into deed restriction as a nature preserve in perpetuity. Mr. May seconded the motion. Mr. Maier commented that deed restricting the property generally means that it can never be sold or the restrictions reversed, and noted that the Township could never sell the property (unless it is to a conservancy or something of the like) and his concern for the taxpayers regarding this. After Mr. Maiers’ comments, the motion was roll called by the members present at the Planning Board meeting as follows: Mr. Koonz, Mr. May, Mr. Koski, Mr. Maier, Mrs. Peterson and Mr. Larena voting in favor of the motion, Mayor McDonough and Mr. Urfer abstaining due to their positions on the Township Committee.

Bills:**Dolan & Dolan – Roger Thomas, Esq.**

Re: Matarazzo Solar Farms - \$132.79 (June 7, 2023)

Matarazzo Solar Farms - \$ 55.83 (July 25, 2023)

Dolan & Dolan – Roger Thomas, Esq.

Re: General – Highlands Council Grant review - \$55.83 (June 7, 2023)

Mr. Koonz made the motion to approve the vouchers. Motion seconded by Mr. May. A member of the Planning Board inquired about Mr. Thomas' bill as it pertains to the Highlands Council grant. Perhaps a little more detail on the bills regarding "general" would be helpful for the members to understand exactly what the Board is being billed for.

Public Comment:

Tom Bodolsky – Hope Bridgeville Road. Commented on the re-working of the ordinance in White Township pertaining to the Industrial Zone and warehousing (no longer allow stand-alone warehousing). Extended his help to the subcommittee for any knowledge or help he can give them.

Monica Sobon of 156 Lake Just-It Road. Noted that the NJ Office of Planning is looking at warehousing – template ordinances will be coming out soon. Also thanked Mr. Maier for his 2019 Resolution pertaining to warehousing passed by the Township Committee. Urged that warehouses be taken out of the ordinance as conditionally permitted uses.

Charles Iulo of High Street – noted that he is not in favor of warehousing as it destroys the character of the town. He believes in the urgency of removing warehousing from the ordinance. Questioned the work being done at the gas station in town and if they had received all their approvals (which they have).

Adjournment:

With there being no further business, a motion was made by Mr. Koonz and seconded by Mr. Maier to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m. All in favor by voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted:

Robin L. Keggan
Interim Board Secretary