

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR SESSION
STONE HARBOR PLANNING BOARD

February 27, 2012

7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Conte, who stated that all requirements of the “Open Public Meetings Act of 1975” had been met.

ROLL CALL:

Planning Members Present

Perry Conte
Mayor Suzanne Walters
Wayne Conrad (Delayed Arrival)
Jill Gougher
Joselyn O. Rich

Board Solicitor

Andrew Catanese

Zoning Officer

Joanne Mascia

Board Secretary

Patricia H. Wagner

Members Absent

Thomas Hand
Robert D. Bickford, Jr.

Alternates Present

Robert Ashman
Julian Miraglia

Approve Minutes

Motion by Mr. Ashman and seconded by Mr. Miraglia to approve the amended minutes of the January 23, 2012 regular session.

Affirmative votes: Mr. Conte, Mayor Walters, Mr. Conrad, Mrs. Gougher, Mrs. Rich, Mr. Ashman and Mr. Miraglia.

Professional Planner

At the request of Mayor Walters, Borough Administrator Jill Gougher prepared a RFQ for Professional Planning Services. The advertisement will be placed by the end of this week in several different media. It is anticipated that the planner will aid the Board in the discussions for the proposed hotel/motel zone among other Planning Board projects.

Motion by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mr. Ashman to authorize the Borough Administrator to advertise for professional planner.

Affirmative votes: Mr. Conte, Mayor Walters, Mr. Conrad, Mrs. Gougher, Mrs. Rich, Mr. Ashman and Mr. Miraglia.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Encroachments into the County Right-of-Way

Zoning Officer Joanne Mascia led a discussion regarding applications that previously would have been reviewed by her and now, as a result of recent changes to the Stone Harbor Site Plan requirements, those applications are being sent directly to the Cape May County Planning Department for review and approval. The applications are for properties located along 96th Street and along Third Avenue, which are Cape May County roads. Two of the most recent applications were for the installation of new awnings. The County denied both applications.

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Martin Teller, Jr. of the CMC Planning Department sent Mrs. Mascia an email citing the following section of the CMC Subdivision and Site Plan regulations: CMC 6-1.6 Encroachments in the County Right-of-Way: Subdivision and site plans shall be designed so that no part of the County Right-of-Way is used to conduct private business. The County road right-of-way is to be kept clear of buildings, structures, any portion of a detention or retention basin, sales or merchandise displays, vehicle parking areas, vehicle service areas, service equipment and appurtenances thereto, and fences, walls, advertising signs or business identification signs unless approved by the Development Review Committee. In the event certain items are allowed to remain an encroachment agreement will be required. [Res. 423-08] (as amended by Res. 599-99, 7/27/1999; and by Res. 423-08, 5/27/2008)

If the County Planning review does approve an application it is then sent to Mrs. Mascia who will then review for compliance with Stone Harbor zoning regulations.

Mrs. Mascia said if the County chooses to enforce this section it could affect the present placement of awnings, benches & flowering urns. The Board feels these items add to the aesthetic value of the Borough's commercial area and do not want them removed. Mrs. Mascia noted that while the property lines are all in alignment the actual buildings are not. Some are set back further and some come right up to the property line.

Mr. Catanese noted that if the County has any improvements to be made to their roads they could have additional problems when they have to remove permanent improvements placed by private individuals or the Borough. Once any of the private or municipal improvements go over a property line they become subject to the County's rules. He further noted that with the recent updates to the Borough's zoning ordinance, the subcommittee had provisions put in place to regulate items in the county right-of-way.

At the request of the Board Mrs. Mascia was asked to invite members from the Cape May County Planning Department to come to the March 26, 2012 meeting. Board members feel this will facilitate an open discussion between the County and the Borough for a better understanding of good planning practices especially as it pertains to the goals listed in the Borough's Master Plan.

Water Allocation

Board members discussed 2011 water consumption figures provided by Utilities Collector Kim Stevenson. Borough Administrator announced that the Borough Engineer is preparing the paperwork to make an application to the State of New Jersey to increase the Borough's allotment for water consumption. She stressed there are no guarantees this will happen and the process could take upwards of two or more years to complete.

Board members asked Mrs. Gougher to find out how the State arrived at the monthly and annual amounts. What standards did they use to develop the allocated numbers and do they take into consideration the increase and decrease in our seasonal demands. Mayor Walters said the allocated amounts have not been changed for many years.

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Mrs. Gougher stated the Borough's Utilities Committee is meeting on March 9, 2012 with local landscapers to review and encourage compliance with new water conservation regulations and methods for irrigation systems. Mr. Conte would like to see all separate irrigation meters have mandatory rain sensors installed. Board members would like for the Borough to set an example by installing the newer methods of water irrigation on the Second Avenue islands. Mayor Walters said this will be placed for discussion on the Public Works agenda.

Proposed Hotel & Motel Overlay Zone

Building height and parking were discussed.

Board members continued their discussion on the proposed height of 42' for hotels/motels. Mayor Walters would like to wait until the professional plan is hired before any decisions are made. She would like for the planner to develop a video representation of what impact a building of 42' in height would have on the surrounding neighborhoods. A similar video was done when the Borough was discussing burying wires underground on 96th Street. Mr. Conte and Mrs. Rich agreed with this idea.

Mr. Ashman showed the Board a diagram and photo of an unidentified hotel structure to illustrate what a 42' building would look like. Several members and Mrs. Mascia noted the photo only showed the front façade and not what affect a building of that height and bulk would have on its neighbors.

Mr. Conte asked that if, as a result of a review by a professional planner, the Borough's need for additional hotel/motel rooms are met with the construction of the Shelter Haven property, should the Planning Board continue the discussion of establishing the overlay zone.

Mr. Ashman noted Mr. Conte's point, but feels the current hotel/motel owners in the proposed zone will not be there in the future if they can't expand to a taller structure. He feels our restrictive zoning doesn't allow for a viable project to be invested in. Mrs. Rich, Mr. Conte and Mayor Walters disagreed and feel there could be other legitimate reasons why the owners leave.

Mr. Miraglia suggested that the Board wait until they have a professional planner on board and make the decision to do what is best for the Borough.

Mr. Ashman wants a consensus so the Board will be able to ask the planner for specific things that the Board wants delivered to it, as opposed to the planner developing something without the Board's input. He feels that until the Board gets their views together the impact is too scattered.

Mr. Conrad, noting his own experience as a planner, reminded the Board that professional planners are not without their own biases. The Board needs to be clear on what our charge is to the planner and for them to implement our specific vision or to offer alternates to that vision. He also feels the shoulder season needs have to be addressed. Apart from the Shelter Haven project, the need exists for properties not quite as upscale as the Sprandio project.

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It was noted that the Golden Inn at 79th Street is open year round and many families are renting an entire house for their use in the shoulder seasons.

Mr. Conrad feels motel rooms would appeal to a certain niche within the hotel/motel market that comes to Stone Harbor on a whim for just the weekend rather than planning in advance. This is important because these people would be a stimulus for the retail business district.

A subcommittee was formed to review resumes for the professional planner. The committee will then interview the potential candidates and make their recommendations to Board. The committee will be Borough Administrator Jill Gougher, Board Vice Chairman Perry Conte and Board Member Wayne Conrad, who will act as the committee chair.

NEW BUSINESS

Mrs. Rich, who is the Council Committee Chair for Natural Recourses' inquired whether a monitoring program for natural resources as mentioned in the Master Plan is in place or does one have to be developed. She believes it is time for the Borough to begin looking at creative ways for dredging the back bays.

Several members noted there were different reports written which were to be combined by the Natural Resources Committee. Board members feel this is a Council Committee action and not the responsibility of the Planning Board.

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION

Mr. Conte opened the meeting for public comment. No one spoke. Public session was closed.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at hand Mr. Conte called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

A motion to adjourn the meeting by Mr. Miraglia and seconded by Mrs. Rich. All members present voted in the affirmative.

APPROVED: March 26, 2012

ATTESTED: _____
Patricia H. Wagner, Secretary Stone Harbor Planning Board