

## **SUSSEX COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**

### **MINUTES**

**JANUARY 5, 2015**

The meeting was called to order by Planning Director, Eric Snyder at 4:00 p.m. The meeting is held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-2 of 1975, as amended. Present were:

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Andy Borisuk, Chairman Michael Francis Wolfgang Gstattenbauer, Vice Chairman Gene Crawford, 1 <sup>st</sup> Alternate Dan Flynn, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Alternate Walter Cramp, County Engineer George Graham, Freeholder Member Rich Vohden, Freeholder Alternate
MEMBERS EXCUSED:	Daniel Conkling Dr. John Ford
STAFF PRESENT:	Eric Snyder, Planning Director Alice Brees, Principal Planner Antoinette Wasiewicz, Recording Secretary
ALSO PRESENT:	None

### **REORGANIZATION**

Eric Snyder asked for a nomination for Chairman of the Sussex County Planning Board. Michael Francis made a motion to nominate Andy Borisuk as Chairman. The motion was seconded by Wolfgang Gstattenbauer. No other nominations were made. Mr. Snyder asked for a motion to close the nominations. A motion was made by Michael Francis to close the nomination. The motion was seconded by Gene Crawford and carried unanimously. All were in favor of Andy Borisuk being Chairman.

Chairman Borisuk asked for a nomination for Vice Chairman. A motion was made by George Graham to nominate Wolfgang Gstattenbauer as Vice Chairman. The motion was seconded by Michael Francis. No other nominations were made. All were in favor of Wolfgang Gstattenbauer being Vice Chairman.

A motion was made by Wolfgang Gstattenbauer that the Herald and the Sunday Herald will be the newspapers in which notices would appear. The motion was seconded by Gene Crawford and carried unanimously.

### **MINUTES**

Minutes were not available.

### **SITE PLAN/SUBDIVISION DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None

### **APPEALS AND WAIVER REQUESTS**

None

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

#### **COMPLETE STREETS STUDY:**

Eric Snyder said Walter Cramp wished to discuss some issues on Complete Streets. Walter said there is a policy on the Federal Highway level called Context Sensitive Solutions which DOT adopted some years ago. It is the idea of listening to all stakeholders as part of any development or project. Part of that is need for historical accommodations on roadways and bridges, pedestrian accommodations and other user accommodations. This is a federal program, a subset of which is Complete Streets. It is a bit broader and a bit more inclusive and because of the nature of the County's regional transportation system, it seems more appropriate than Complete Streets. The sidewalks that are being built now in our community are local initiatives by townships, usually using State or Federal grants to achieve streetscapes and put in sidewalks. It is a local responsibility and therefore it appears to make much more sense to stay with the Federal Program called Context Sensitive Solutions, locally called Context Sensitive Design. Walter said he is working on a briefing memo for this, which will be presented to the Planning Board later. He said Context Sensitive Design looks at all users, all needs, including architectural elements, etc. Walter said they already do this in Engineering. When designing a bridge, they look at the local needs and talk to the town. He gave an example of whether or not a town wants a sidewalk on a bridge. It appears to be a more appropriate way to achieve the local needs. They either put a sidewalk on a bridge where they have sidewalks, where it's commensurate with needs or where they plan to put in sidewalks. It is aesthetic treatments to match historic character or as part of a pedestrian circulation plan. He will develop something to offer to the Board and the Freeholders at future date.

Wolfgang Gstattenbauer asked what the fundamental differences between the two are. Walter said Complete Streets emphasizes all users and creates the idea that a street is not complete unless it has a sidewalk. It doesn't speak of the context and confuses people. Context Sensitive Solutions looks at what is appropriate for the context. There is a clear need for sidewalks in some places and the County recognizes and works with

the towns as regard to their local circulation plans. However, if a town does not want sidewalks, even though they may be needed, the County can't make them do something they don't want to do.

George Graham said there was talk of County roads and local roads. He asked if the State follows something of this nature. Walter said before there was Context Sensitive Design the State did a highway "full speed ahead" and disregarded the local needs. Public outcry at Public Hearings delayed a lot of the projects and they realized they had to start listening to the stakeholders. Then the State had training for its consultants to orientate them into Context Sensitive Design. DOT has adopted Complete Streets however the only time they need complete streets is when they are doing a major project. There was a scoping project on Newton Sparta Road and there was an intention to put sidewalks in certain areas in Sparta, around the Quick Chek and Sparta said they did want the sidewalks there. The County does roadway and bridge improvement projects. It does not do site specific or spot specific sidewalk projects. George talked about the one side of Route 206 in Newton. The State seems to be not in favor of putting in sidewalks but that seems to be an area where sidewalks are part of the context of the community.

Dan Flynn said Newton continually asks the State about the sidewalks on Route 206. They finally received a response from the State asking who will maintain the sidewalks. He said the town agreed to the maintenance and upkeep of the sidewalk but they would not take care of the snow removal. By ordinance, the snow removal is the responsibility of the property owner. The State responded by thanking the town for agreeing to maintain and upkeep the sidewalk but said they do not have the manpower to remove snow. There was a discussion as to who owns the property. Eric said Ken Martin owns the property. Rich Vohden said DEP also owns a small lot on that side.

Walter said before DOT goes to construction on a project, they create a jurisdictional map. At the intersection of a State highway and a County highway, the State has jurisdiction over the lanes, the striping and the signal. The County has jurisdiction over certain things in the intersection. If there are sidewalks, they are under the jurisdiction of the local municipality. There was some discussion about the jurisdiction agreement process.

George asked if Context Sensitive Design will mesh into Complete Streets. Eric said said, "Yes." George said it seems to penalize small subdivisions into creating sidewalks to nowhere. He asked if we have the flexibility to step away from that because it's on a County road. Walter said it comes down to good planning. If there is a true pedestrian circulation plan for a community and if sidewalks fit in to that overall circulation plan for the town, it makes sense; if you're in the middle of nowhere, then not now. Eric said the approach Walter is talking about makes it easier to understand. It is designed to who is actually using the road or who is likely use the road. If people are walking the shoulder of Route 206 no matter what the weather, they're using the road. It would make sense to give them a safer place to use the road. At the same time, to have sidewalks in the vast majority of places in Sussex County makes no sense. He said we need to have a process that tells people how you're going to go about doing it.

Rich Vohden said new standards and environmental regulations have made it very difficult to put in sidewalks. He said he heard putting sidewalks on Route 206 would be considered impervious surface and would require another environmental impact study. Utilities would have to be moved or weave the sidewalk around utilities, which may take eminent domain to accomplish. Also, it may put the 206 repaving project off until the sidewalks are put in as part of the project. There was some discussion on the DEP's rules on impervious cover.

Walter said we are trying to do in a given context what is appropriate. If you're on a rural winding road, the shoulder is the pedestrian accommodation. If you're in Newton, you do need sidewalks to keep people separated from traffic. There are at least two or three projects currently ongoing to create sidewalks: in Hopatcong, possibly one in Montague, Franklin is discussing one and Ogdensburg just finished theirs. DOT has a Complete Street policy, yet we're fighting to put up something that seems like a no-brainer. Eric suggested to Dan that Newton agree to do the snow plowing because they know have an ordinance that takes care of it.

Eric said he will talk to Montague Township about the Strategic Growth Plan update and the Complete Streets issue. Next week he will talk to the Stillwater Township Taxpayers Association.

Rich Vohden said the Highlands Regional Master Plan is being reviewed and they are taking public comments. There is a meeting on Monday, January 12 at Vo Tech from 7:00-9:00 p.m. He said it will be embarrassing if nobody from Sussex County attends. When the Highlands Council has meetings or hearings, paid environmental lobbyists come out in force. There have been 20 or 30 of them at every meeting making comments about global warming, climate change, carbon footprint and scenic vistas (which are not about water.) They are trying to increase the strength of the Regional Master Plan. This is the opportunity to come out and state your mind. People have a lot of complaints but then they don't show up. Rich said if you belong to any groups, Planning Boards, the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Agriculture to let them know about the meeting. Rich said he was told at one of the first committee meetings that all of the discussions on the Regional Master Plan and revisions will be based on comments. Rich had a flyer about the meeting. Eric said the flyer will be scanned and sent out to all the Mayors, Municipal Administrators and Planning Boards and County Boards, Committees and Councils.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

NONE

**NEW BUSINESS**

NONE

**OPEN TO PUBLIC**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

All business having been completed, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Michael Francis. The motion was seconded by Wolfgang Gstatenbauer and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 4:52 p.m.