

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
BOROUGH OF MOUNTAIN LAKES  
June 5, 2017**

**ATTENDEES:**

Members Present: David Shepherd (Chair), Chris Richter (Vice Chair), Janet Horst, Cynthia Korman, Mark Laurenzi, Andrew Schinder, Austin Ashley, Rich Sheola

Members Not Present: Khizar Sheikh, Martin Kane

Guest: -

Attending from the Public: Steve Arnold

**REVIEW OF MINUTES:** The committee reviewed the May 1, 2017 minutes and agreed that they reflected the substance of the discussions.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

1. The meeting began at 6:00PM
2. Mission of the EDAC – David Shepherd led the meeting by re-stating the mission of the Committee: the objective of the EDAC is to bring business to Mountain Lakes in a way that is consistent with the Master Plan. Citing language from the Borough’s Plan, he said the focus of any development regulations should be consistent with the overall development pattern and the character of the Borough. In particular, development regulations should be designed:
  - a. “To foster development and redevelopment which contains the traditional, unique (and in some cases historic) character of residential neighborhoods.
  - b. To promote the development and especially redevelopment of commercial areas on Route 46.

Chris Richter then explained that the process for translating the policies of a Master Plan into reality involve the drafting of specific ordinances. He noted that while the policy objectives set forth in the Master Plan are clear, it has been decades since the Borough has seen any interest by the market/business community to develop (or redevelop) any of the designated commercial areas. The fact that the market has not brought us projects similar to those in many nearby towns is an indication that we have ordinance issues – in other words, our specific ordinances are out of line with what the market is looking for.

David Shepherd then said that EDAC discussions are intended to dive into the details of the designated commercial areas, and advise the Council on the Borough’s options so that the intent of the Master Plan is realized. He also reminded all members that the EDAC has no policy-making capability.

3. Affordable Housing Committee – Cynthia Korman reported that the Affordable Housing Committee will meet on July 11.
4. Discussion regarding Particular Areas for Consideration:
  - a. The committee began to review the maps in detail. Chris explained that commercial zones are designated as B, OL-1, and OL-2 on the zoning maps.
  - b. There are 4 areas the Committee is reviewing in detail
    - Route 46 Eastbound parcels
    - Morris Avenue near Fanny Road at the Boonton boundary line
    - Route 46 Westbound parcel at the Denville boundary line
    - Midvale Road - The Market/Mountain Lakes Garage Area
  - c. There are 2 areas that are fairly targeted and contained Route 46 West and Morris Avenue near Fanny Road at the Boonton boundary line. If the Committee sought to promote economic development or re-development at these sites, this could be accomplished by recommending the re-zoning as follows:
    - Route 46 West – re-zone a few parcels from Residential to OL
    - Morris Avenue near Fanny Road – add B to the OL zones
  - d. The Committee discussed the Midvale Road-Market/Mountain Lakes Garage Area at length.
    - Chris explained that the current business zoning of this area limits structures to: 2 stories and 35 feet tall; 40% maximum coverage (low density); and 60% to 80% approved lot coverage. While these were customary constraints years ago, they are considered to be an ‘old’ model for town centers and are a major constraint to re-development.
    - Chris then explained that newer zoning regulations include four stories above the parking deck, multi-use (business and residential); the number of parking spaces is often used to regulate density. Under this type of zoning, the Market Area could probably accommodate 50 to 70 residential units.
    - A number of Committee members noted that there seems to be a need for rentals due to various family structures (e.g., young singles returning to town, empty-nesters wanted to stay in town, young couples with or without small children, divorced spouses, etc...).
    - Mark Laurenzi asked Chris to outline the process to go from current zoning to any of the new visions. Chris explained that there are 2 general approaches:
      - Redevelopment Plan: This approach gives authority to a Borough a special Borough committee to work with developers and collectively design a plan that meets Community standards and market needs. This is often an effective solution for areas where re-development is inhibited due to disjointed ownership of parcels, but does not require condemnation of land. Rather, it generates a unified solution that is acceptable to a municipality and developers, but leaves it up to market forces as to whether it will be realized.
      - Modify Zoning and Additional Controls: This is the more traditional approach, where a municipality makes specific changes to its regulations, then waits to see how the market response. The risk with this approach is

that it could be could result in piecemeal response as it may take a number of iterative zoning changes to achieve the desired response from the market. Also, an initial market response may be compliant with new regulations, but still fall short of the overall desired solution and preclude further changes.

- Cynthia Korman raised the possibility of utilizing the NJ Transit Village Program, as a way to get assistance and financial support to study areas and craft new solutions. This could also help to reduce parking requirements for the site.
  - Andrew Schinder noted that railroad station is any good location for the Borough, and if service were improved it would be a real asset to the community. Many towns don't have this feature.
  - Chris agreed, and noted that in the long-term, train service is bound to transition to a more of a "European" model as more people seek to avoid congested roads and demand more of this part of our infrastructure.
- e. As the Committee wrapped up this part of its discussion, Chris stressed that the goal should be to create the right ground rules – if that is done correctly, developers will come.

5. Next Steps:

- a. David stated that the Committee should start to think about how it would generate specific recommendations to the Borough Council, and suggested that we should focus on the targeted areas, develop ideas and rationale, then share that thinking in the form of detailed memo to the Council. This work should include recommendations to transition zoning to mixed-use, where needed, address different types of housing needs within the Borough, and include some of our affordable housing requirements as well.
- b. Chris mentioned as an example a recent Woodland Park resolution for new Master Plan and Ordinances that came about following a targeted Redevelopment Plan (Rich said he would circulate this document following the meeting). This would give the Committee members an idea of how these plans handle uses, features, commercial versus mixed-use etc.
- c. Chris suggested the following approach for the targeted areas under discussion:
  - Route 46 Eastbound - Either re-zone or establish a Redevelopment Plan
  - Morris Avenue near Fanny Road - to be discussed
  - Route 46 Westbound - three properties re-zoned to B
  - Midvale Road - The Market/Mountain Lakes Garage - Redevelopment PlanAt the next meeting, the Committee would assign members to each area to prepare draft recommendations.
- d. Cynthia asked whether we should be looking at other areas as well – e.g., business condos on Route 46, given the size of the parcel, their location, and access to Rt. 46. Chris stated that as a fully developed property with very disparate ownership, redevelopment of the entire site would be very unlikely even with different zoning.
- e. There was some discussion about other tools that could be used, such as:
  - Transit Village assistance

- f. Cynthia asked what would be the criteria for a proposed Redevelopment Plan, for instance: Increase ratables? Impact / relocation of current users? Desired uses versus non-desired uses? How to address potential historic status (e.g., Mountain Lakes Garage). Rich stated that some of these questions are addressed in the typical form of ordinance (like the one he will circulate from Woodland Park), and other questions will need to be discussed by the EDAC and ultimately by the Council and the Borough's Zoning and Planning Boards.
- g. Steve Arnold added to Cynthia's list: enhance property value and enjoyment for residents.

6. The meeting adjourned at 7:45PM

**Next Meeting:** July 10, 2017 at 6:00pm in the Borough Hall

Prepared by Mark Laurenzi