

**LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**  
July 10, 2018

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee meeting, which was held on Tuesday, July 10, 2018 at 6:37 p.m. in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building, Lower Level Conference Room.

**Statement of Adequate Notice:**

Adequate notice of the regular meeting of the Lawrence Township Growth & Redevelopment Committee has been provided by filing an annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk and by filing the agenda with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building and mailing to the Trenton Times and the Trentonian.

**Roll Call:**

Present: Frank Comstock  
Lovette Love-Stevens  
Charles Lavine  
John Conroy, Chairperson  
Robert Pluta (arrived 7:27 p.m.)  
Joan Brame  
Maria Connolly  
Peter Ferrone  
Brian Vaughn  
Andrew Frank

Absent: None

Excused Absence: Tushar Patel  
Teresita Bastides-Heron  
Nina Reeder  
Melissa Clark  
Christopher LaFlamme  
Ryan Kennedy

Also Present: Christopher Bobbitt, Council Liaison  
Andrew Link, Liaison  
Susan Snook, Secretary

**Minutes**

The June 12, 2018 minutes were unanimously approved.

**Public Comment**

None

**Securing Awards Program Sponsors and A Speaker**

There are two awards that need a speaker, the Podmore/Dwyer Historic Award and Ralph Copleman Environmental Award. Ms. Connolly stated she tried to reach out to Costco several times and they do not respond and stated she will try again.

Mr. Link stated Mr. Kennedy is trying to work out the sponsorship with Squibb and does not have it secured yet.

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Speaker:

Chairperson Conroy stated he was talking to LRK, a Planning Organization and they have done some key planning initiatives in the area. Christopher S. Cosenza is available, see attached flyer. Mr. LaFlamme's also suggested Jennifer Gardello. Chairperson Conroy asked Mr. Link to send out an e-mail for a vote on the two speakers for a decision.

**Sign Ordinance**

Ms. Connolly gave a recap of the sign ordinance and stated two years ago the Committee started talking about making some amendments to the sign ordinance. She met with Rich Krawczun, Manager and James Parvesse, Engineer with proposals and recommended changes and there was not a lot of momentum. The Manager was not interested in making any changes at that time. She stated we will probably want to re-open that discussion again and she spoke with Mr. Parvesse and he is willing to meet again and is open to changes in the sign ordinance and of course to include Mr. Nerwinski, Manager.

Some of the changes that were made, clarification of when temporary lawn signs are allowed, not political signs, temporary signs that are defined in the ordinance. The second recommendation was making a brochure or a handout to help people and businesses understand temporary signs. The third recommendation was allowing A-frame signs in shopping centers located in the Highway Commercial zone (like Lawrence Shopping Center, Mercer Mall) which they were against. Mr. Parvesse informed me to tell the Board that to mention to the Committee members that if they would be willing to change it but the problem is that places like the Mercer Mall and Lawrence Shopping Center that they would put the signs up on Route 1 in the right-of-way and that is what the Township does not want. It has to be on the sidewalk in front of the store and there would have to be conditions.

Ms. Brame and Mr. Pluta stated they would join a sub-committee and suggest talking to the Manager and Engineer and getting their perspective and refresh their memory and where it should go and come up with a meeting with the Town. Ms. Connolly will send an e-mail to Ms. Brame and Mr. Pluta to see what their suggestions will be. Ms. Connolly stated another recommendation was to allow some temporary banner after a grand opening period. The current ordinance states you are only allowed to put out a banner during a grand opening or when going out of business. However, this would allow the business to have a banner up when you are having a sale or special event. Mr. Parvesse told Ms. Connolly they would not benefit a business that is set back off of the road like Auto Lenders. Ms. Connolly stated we did not want to make too many recommendations only focus on specific signs.

Mr. Parvesse also told Susan to inform Mayor Bobbitt that we do not enforce the realtor signs to have the property owner sign and attach it and we have had no complaints about real estate signs and have not taken any.

**Lawrence Shopping Center**

Chairperson Conroy stated we have been getting conflicting messages from the Town and he spoke to the Mayor a couple of weeks ago to just talk. An e-mail was sent requesting a meeting between Daniel Haggerty, Kevin Nerwinski and Mayor Bobbitt and they said no. Mr. Haggerty reached out to Chairperson Conroy stating that life is too short and trying to do volunteer work to help the community out and being disrespected and not going to deal with it. Chairperson Conroy stated all he was requesting was to have a conversation and the Town is not interested in that. So the next approach to be is to reach out to the community and see what they want to do and share our thoughts and ideas and get their thoughts and ideas.

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Mayor Bobbitt responded that the problem is that you are reaching out to the Jemal brothers and having a Land Use attorney reach out and have scared them to discuss anything with this Committee. It is an odd thing when the Chairperson of this Committee says publicly that a façade renovation is nothing more than just slapping a coat of paint on it and that is unfair to the business owners. It is also unfair on what they are trying to do in terms of new tenants. Initially the Mayor's goal was for this Committee working with other committees to discuss open space mobility and out of the box thinking, not to tell them what they need to do with their property in terms of losing leasing usable space. When the Municipal Manager mentions that LA Fitness is coming in and the furniture store and being torn down and the Mayor asked directly whether we could get some of the property owners to come into Council and explain to the community what is going on, the Manager felt that they are unwilling to do that in part because of the reception they have gotten from members of this committee. The owners do not feel the need to come before this Committee or even Council because it is privately owned land and pay taxes and in compliance with all Township ordinances.

Chairperson Conroy stated all he asked for was to have a conversation and that we have some suggestions. Not that this needs to be done, but would like to discuss with them and have them gain their support and have them gain our support and moving forward. Mayor Bobbitt asked if this Committee approved any sort of plan to then move forward and discuss it with others. Chairperson Conroy stated we were trying to get more involvement with other committees, which we have done, and next trying to get some discussions with the Town, and we were denied that. Mayor Bobbitt stated that when the Chairperson reached out to the property owner and sort of surprised him and don't know what was said and at that point he called the Township Manager concerned whether this was an official Lawrence Township position. He was informed that this is a volunteer advisory committee and at that point is when the relationship started to break down between this Committee and the property owner.

Mayor Bobbitt is concerned that they are doing the right thing and not asking for any tax abatement, not asking for any help from the Township and that this Committee is going down a path that does not jive with what the property owners would like to do. Chairperson Conroy stated he understands his position but has refused to have a conversation. Mayor Bobbitt stated when the Chairperson jumps over the Council Liaison and the Manager and goes directly to the property owner that is the point that the relationship started to fray.

Chairperson Conroy stated when you take a respected individual in Town to do volunteer work. However, Mayor Bobbitt asked what is the point to have a Land Use lawyer involved and what his role was. Chairperson Conroy stated if we had the conversation we could have figured that out. It was all about just having a conversation. Mayor Bobbitt asked what are we doing with the neighborhood and Chairperson Conroy stated that the problem in that neighborhood goes beyond the Lawrence Shopping Center.

Mayor Bobbitt stated that the Committee should focus on mobility, open space and signage that would help the businesses right now and not master plan the neighborhood. Chairperson Conroy commented that if you look at Lawrence and it had the cheapest tax rates in the county, since then it is going in reverse and no one wants to be here because other communities that are taking the initiative to do planning and putting it in place which leads to construction and creates desirable locations that people want to be at. We have had some very bad planning things accomplished here in Town and we need to look at that and to start looking globally on how we can make Lawrence a better place. The images put together started very passionate discussion about that and what we are trying to do and feed it to the rest of the communities on how they would like to see things developed and then move it forward.

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There were further conversations about New Jersey Department of Transportation, New Jersey Transit approvals for bus stops, design moves, pathways, a community center and discussions with the Community and the Town. Mr. Lavine commented that he does not understand what his presence would be at a meeting between the Chairperson, the Mayor and Manager when you involve a Land Use attorney the property owners can get very defensive. Chairperson Conroy stated having a discussion with the Mayor and Manager and as he reached out to the community and different communities in the Town, Mr. Haggerty reached out to us and asked if he could help.

Mayor Bobbitt stated the owners of the Shopping Center are good right now and they have a plan. Chairperson Conroy commented that some of the things end in a disaster and should involve the community. Mayor Bobbitt stated he questions whether he allowed this committee to go too far on its own but it is a difficult thing then to turn around to the other members of Council and say this committee is not going to overstate who they are or who they represent. There are other issues that are going on in this Township that this committee should be looking at.

Ms. Brame asked to summarize on where we are and how we are going to proceed. Chairperson Conroy stated that Mr. Haggerty is no longer a part of this plan. Ms. Brame stated she thought it was also inappropriate to reach out to the property owner because we are in an advisory role to the Council and should have gone through Council rather than us reaching out. They are complying with the laws of our community as property owners. Ms. Connolly stated we have reached out to other property owners. Mr. Comstock made a motion that we authorize to meet with people on the Land Use Committee and advise an agenda. Chairperson Conroy explained the conversation he had with the Jamal's and they stated they were not interested and it was dropped. Ms. Connolly suggested that if the Township is not comfortable with us moving forward with this we should drop it for now. However, this committee should be involved with redevelopment opportunities and not sure how we do this. Ms. Brame stated the role of this committee is to advise and how do we do that. Mayor Bobbitt stated he would work on that and that we would work with the Open Space Committee and the Planning Board when Land Use Ordinance issues come up.

Mr. Ferrone suggested that some of the committee members sit in some of these other meetings and when a new business comes in to the Township that we should ask them what we could do for them instead of telling them what they can't do. Ms. Brame suggested to focus on the sign ordinance and get it done.

**Communication Issues/Strategies to Engage Town Business with Growth and Redevelopment Committee**

Ms. Connolly spoke about the app and it is \$1,000.00 to start and \$75.00 a month to have it continue. Mayor Bobbitt asked if it was for Township type things or the business type community and would it be more appropriate to reach out to Lawrenceville Main Street and GEPNA. The developer maintains it and would have other community events. Chairperson Conroy stated there is more than one developer doing this app. and we need to talk to three and ask them to come here or have a conference call.

Ms. Connolly stated it would list all the services and is all at one place which would be better communication because it would be for news, Township news, emergencies, garbage collection, recycling, leaf pickup, shrub pickup, potholes, committee meetings and would be an advertisement for the Township.

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**Other Business:**

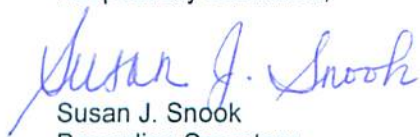
Chairperson Conroy reminded the Committee members:

- Pass around and review the resume of the two speakers
- Vote for a speaker
- Resend the nomination form

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan J. Snook  
Recording Secretary

Minutes approved: August 14, 2015