

GROWTH & REDEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
November 10, 2015

The following are the minutes of the Growth & Redevelopment Committee Meeting, which was held on Tuesday, November 10, 2015, at 6:42 p.m., in the Lawrence Township Municipal Building, Lower Level Conference Room.

Statement of Proper 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, the Trentonian and the Lawrence Ledger.

The roll was called as follows at 6:43 p.m.:

Present: Christopher Bobbitt, Ryan Kennedy, Lovette Love-Stevens, Tushar Patel, Charles Lavine, John Conroy, John Schloesser, Jose Ramos,

Excused Absence: Donald Addison

Absent: Danielle Delprato, Boynton R. Weekes, Andrew Bedryk, Howard Nelson, Cathleen Lewis, Council Liaison

Also Present: Andrew Link, Principal Planner/Business Advocate, Susan Snook, Secretary

Approval of Minutes:

The September 8, 2015 minutes were unanimously approved.

Mr. Patel congratulated Chairperson Bobbitt on his election as Councilperson.

Approval of 2016 Meeting Schedule:

Chairperson Bobbitt stated the first meeting will be held in February of 2016. Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated it is very difficult to have a meeting in January anyway because other committees have not appointed their representatives. Mr. Patel stated the building is closed and Mr. Lavine stated maybe Constitution Bank would like to host a meeting for us. Chairperson Bobbitt asked the committee members if they wanted to meet on January 12th; however, Andy and Sue will not be here. The meeting schedule was approved.

Public Comment:

Jude Martin-Cianfano asked to make her an official member of the Board. Mr. Link asked Ms. Martin-Cianfano if she applied to the clerk and she stated the Board needs to figure out a Class for her, and then she will apply. Ms. Martin-Cianfano mentioned she is the Co-chair of the Lawrence Chapter of the Chamber and would that make her legal. Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated there is a form that you need to fill in stating what Committee you are interested in being on and the Committee will need to clear a spot. Mr. Ramos stated she could only be a Class III member. Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated unfortunately there is no Class III available.

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Recap of Awards Program:

The Board's comments were it could have been better; there could have been more attendance. Ms. Martin-Cianfano asked if she gave the members an e-mail list of all the Lawrence businesses and her suggestion is you grab that list a month or two months before and do some kind of e-connect or constant contact, save the date so people will know. Mr. Lavine stated next year we will have a better attendance from looking at it from a point of people look for a certain venue, certain group and our venue was not the absolute greatest and the Chamber members look for a more upscale environment; however, we were there for a reason. Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated we were there for a great organization.

Committee Membership:

Chairperson Bobbitt stated this came up because we keep having a problem with getting a quorum and we have to figure out how we can get people who are interested, but don't live in the Township. Chairperson Bobbitt opened the floor to the Committee members for thoughts and suggestions. Vice Chairperson Kennedy asked does this Committee have the ability to remove people and if so is there a standard for it or do we make a recommendation to Council for them to remove someone.

Mr. Link stated he thought the standard was three (3) unexcused absences consecutive, then you could take action and not sure where that came from, but it goes back away. Chairperson Bobbitt stated beside Howard Nelson and the Environmental Committee, that is not the case, everyone else has an excused absence or has been at the meeting. Mr. Conroy stated you should make 60% of the meetings. Vice Chairperson Kennedy asked how Council makes appointments for the Committees, do they wait for our input, and do they have a sub-committee or wait to see who is interested.

Mr. Lavine stated who is interested, what seats are available, looks at all Boards as a whole and go forward. Chairperson Bobbitt stated there is also an interview process. Mr. Ramos asked if Howard Nelson resigned and Mr. Link stated he did not and our Clerk sent him a letter asking him to resign and has not notified anyone that he is not coming back. The Board went over the different classes. Vice Chairperson Kennedy stated the Class III members are himself, Howard and Don.

Mr. Conroy asked why the Committee can't send a letter stating you have not showed up and you have been removed from the Committee. Vice Chairperson Kennedy asked if the seat will be filled before January 1 meeting; and they will not. Chairperson Bobbitt stated when we do not have a quorum and when someone is here, but not a member, where they could be a fill in and asked if the Board would like to have people from the different business communities like the Chamber or someone from Main Street or GEPNA.

Chairperson Bobbitt stated the question right now is it is a large committee and have 19 members and not all are filled; so if we take out and Chairperson Bobbitt fills two spots - Class I from planning and 4 at large (resident); there are 12 at large members (resident) which they are not appointed by another Board to represent that Board. Mr. Conroy stated we do not want more people we just want flexibility on who we can bring on. Mr. Lavine stated it might be an ordinance requirement because we are an advisory group. Mr. Lavine stated we are an advisory group and it doesn't matter if we have 9 or 10 and could function and the single worst thing is to have people come and we have no quorum and we end up going home.

Mr. Link stated the quorum was made for seven because the committee couldn't get a 50% plus 1 member showing up so it was made artificially low to assist in getting a quorum. Mr. Lavine stated we don't spend any money, we don't make bodily decisions, we don't rule on anything so a quorum makes no sense. Chairperson Bobbitt asked why we don't have any interest. Mr. Conroy stated we have 12 people at large who live in the Township and the people with the interest in joining the committee are the ones who work in the Township, it makes perfect sense because it is Growth and Redevelopment. If you are a citizen you do not want things to change, you want things to stay stable and keep the neighbors that you have and to make things prosper you need more business people who are interested in creating a more business in the Town.

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Chairperson Bobbitt asked the members why they joined: Mr. Ramos stated community service; Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated she grew up in the community; Vice Chairperson Kennedy was asked to join by Mr. Powers; Mr. Conroy stated trying to properly grow the Town in its physical development; Chairperson Bobbitt stated it was a great way to meet people; Mr. Lavine stated had an interest in this area for 25 years and sat on Zoning Board and looked at what was being done and the businesses being approved so it was a natural fit; Ms. Love-Stevens stated resident of Lawrence and a vested interest in the community and neighborhood and not represented a lot with a business background; Mr. Schloesser stated resident of the Township; the best interest and areas that need growth like Route 1 corridor to promote the Town in a positive way; Mr. Patel stated being a long time resident and business owner.

It was suggested that we reach out to Riders about having a student on the Committee with a planning background or the Boys & Girls Club. The best is to increase the visibility of the Committee. If the Committee does the outreach and gets 10 residents but 50 businesses, then that might be the way to go. Mr. Conroy stated we do not need to increase our membership we need to re-categorize it, why can't we have 8 (Class 4) and 7 (Class 3) and solve the problem because we are missing one for a quorum.

Mr. Lavine asked how we declare it vacant if the person has been sent letters and they are not responding then it should be declared vacant. Chairperson Bobbitt suggested sending it back to Council because they do the appointments. Mr. Link will find out about an individual who has not been attending, no correspondence so declare it vacant. Vice Chairperson Kennedy made a motion to ask Council to remove any appointed members of the Committee who have more than three consecutive unexcused absences and seconded by Mr. Conroy. The motion was approved by a unanimous vote. Chairperson Kennedy stated, he thinks, there would have to be an ordinance to change the structure of the Committee, stated his motion was for requesting a one-time action to remove or unappoint any members currently who have three absences. The Board went over the list, see attached attendance record. The Board felt there was too much effort on a quorum and it is per an ordinance, see attached.

Chairperson Bobbitt is hearing that to clear out people who are not interested so we can get a Class III in; and outreach and getting people to be made aware. Mr. Ramos stated what is the point of Class II is no one is going to be appointed by either one of those committees and that needs to be addressed too; because if the Committees are not going to fill them so fill them with people who want to be on the committee. Mr. Conroy stated that is the problem, we do not have enough business people. Ms. Martin-Cianfano suggested flip-flopping Class IV where it should be more business owners and Class III residents. However, there is a technicality where it has to be a majority of residents stated by Mr. Conroy and get more business owners in the Township so get the pulse of what is happening on the business side.

Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated we have an audience that we can reach in January the Lawrence Chapter Charter Club that is meeting at Mrs. G's to say we are looking for people. Mr. Lavine said he cannot pay \$35.00 for breakfast someplace and it would be good to have somebody there. Ms. Martin-Cianfano said it is free to breakfast club members and Lawrence is a member.

Mr. Link asked to state the motion again. Vice Chairperson Kennedy made the motion that Council removes one time action, any of our members that have three (3) unexcused absences in a row.

Lawrence Shopping Center:

Ms. Martin-Cianfano stated that Burlington Coat Factory's lease prohibits any other shoe stores from coming in. There are so many restrictions on leases in the Shopping Center of the big giant and that is the big problem. Mr. Lavine commented lost people or businesses because of the deteriorated conditions of the Mall. Vice Chairperson Kennedy suggested having Council ask the Planning Board to look at the property and see if it is in need of re-development; maybe access to some tools like grants; loans; trust fund loans to fix up things; pilot agreements for improvements or tax schemes.

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Ms. Martin-Cianfano commented that she attended the merchants meeting to keep the merchants that were there and give them support. People were talking about not paying their rent, spring of 2014, and the big box stores have 99 year leases (Acme and Burlington Coat Factory). The biggest problem is the two (2) big box stores have 99 year leases preventing new businesses from coming in. There was some interest until they saw the leases and could not come in.

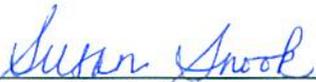
Sign Ordinance:

Mr. Conroy suggested that there should be no further discussion until someone takes charge of it and then the Board could discuss the ordinance.

Other Business:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.



Susan Snook, Secretary
Growth & Redevelopment Committee