

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES APRIL 26th, 2023

The meeting of the Planning Board of the Borough of Somerville was called to order by Chair Bernard Navatto at 7:00 PM and stated that adequate notice of this meeting had been provided in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act”.

Board Members Present: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Deidre Rosinski, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes, Lisa Werner

Board Members Absent: Arthur Akins

Professional Present: Kara Kaczynski, Esq. Board Attorney and Michael Cole, Board Planner and Engineer

Approval Minutes

Upon a motion by Jason Kraska, seconded by Councilman Roger Vroom, the minutes of April 12th, 2023, were approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes, Lisa Werner

Nay: None

Abstain: Deidre Rosinski

ARB Consideration

Tessuto
5 West Main Street
B119 L9

E-Z Check Market
157 E Main Street
B68 L17

Upon a motion by Jason Kraska, seconded by Al Kerestes, ARB Consideration for 5 West Main Street and 157 E Main Street were unanimously approved upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Deidre Rosinski, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

Land Use

Ord. 2706 – Amending chapter 102 section 74 removing the requirement for minor site plans for sidewalk cafes that are seasonal in nature and establishing the regulations for seasonal sidewalk cafes in chapter 150 article III.

After lengthy discussion regarding lack of enforcement and repercussions for violators, conflict created by the installed sidewalk planters, and lack of application being submitted the consensus of the board to make two recommendations to Council.

The first of the two recommendations would be to table until the board has had time to connect with the DSA as well as Restaurants Owners in the community to receive feedback on what may or may not be working with the process and procedures outlined in the current ordinance as well as to understand why there has been a lack of application being submitted annually.

If the Council chooses not to accept this recommendation the board will make a second recommendation to Council in which Board Attorney Kara Kaczynski, Esq. will prepare recommendations to address technical corrections including the last two sentences of section 102-74 Minor Site Plans to provide a clearer communication and definition to match Section 150-23 A. In addition to Section 102-74 E. for grammatical issues, section 150-23 B. to include a designation of the ARB for review and to lastly make changes to section 150-24 B. to increase fine fee per violation.

Upon a motion by Deidre Rosinski, seconded by Jason Kraska, the resolution for ordinance 2706 was amended upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call: Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom,
Deidre Rosinski, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland,
Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

See transcript.

Land Use

Ord. 2707 – Amending schedule “A” permitted uses and structures for the eastern central business district.

Colin Driver, Director of Economic development for the borough addressed the board to discuss an opportunity for an business to occupy a vacant space here in town for a Meadery. The requested amendment would allow for the sale of mead and cider within the ECBD redevelopment plan thus allowing this new business to proceed with their plans to move forward with the unoccupied space.

Upon a motion by Deidre Rosinski, seconded by Jason Kraska, the resolution for ordinance 2707-23-0403 was amended upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call: Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Deidre Rosinski, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

See transcript.

Items Not on the Agenda

Ordinance – 2704-23-0403 Amending Chapter 102 Section 115 of the land use code entitled special improvement district specifically section C entitled “review required by the architectural board” eliminating the need to have an applicant that solely requires a sign review to received approval for the planning board.

Chairman of the Board Bernie Navatto continued conversation on ordinance 2704-23-0340 that was reviewed at the previous planning board meeting on April 12th regarding timeline expectations and eliminating the boards oversight of signs in the SID in order to uphold historic and aesthetic standards. Conversation continued and the need for several definitions including the definition of development and the definition of zoning officer were discussed along with needed changes to section 128 C and section 115. The board decided to provide two recommendations to council. The first would be to recommend no changes be made to the current ordinance. The second would be to rework the ordinance so that it is no longer confusing and is consistent.

Upon a motion by Deidre Rosinski, seconded by Andrea Adair, the resolution for ordinance 2704-23-0403 was amended upon a roll call vote.

Roll Call: Aye: Bernard Navatto, Mayor Dennis Sullivan, Councilman Roger Vroom, Deidre Rosinski, Andrea Adair, Jason Kraska, Al Kerestes, Larry Cleveland, Christopher Adickes

Nay: None

See transcript.

50 Division Street B117 L2

Chairman Bernie Navatto began discussions on 50 Division Street regarding the parking deck and a report that was conducted addressing the parking decks current conditions. The report deemed that the parking deck was deteriorating, however is still acceptable for use while repairs are ongoing. The report did not specify what was deemed a “car” in terms of weight and was left open ended and vague therefore clarification needs to be made.

The board engaged in discussion with Board Planner and Engineer Michael Cole with major concerns about the public safety issue as well as why the deck was still in use after being deemed unsafe. Councilman Vroom provided information that a board hired structural engineer had completed a report on the structure approximately 6 months prior and deemed the structure safe for use at that time and that a copy of that report can be provided for review. It was also noted that there was a stop work order for one of the fit outs within the building at this time that was issued by the construction official.

Board Planner and Engineer Michael Cole asked for the boards permissions to investigate the status of the parking structure further so that they can have a clear understanding of what the total weight that is allowable as the parking deck currently stands and address any additional concerns with the structural engineer directly.

The board accepted with Michael Cole’s request and will allow him to investigate further.

See transcript.

Chairman’s Comments

No comments.

Meeting Open to the Public

Arthur Adair presented several topics that he wanted to discuss in an open forum with the board including an announcement of retirement for Zoning Board Member Dan Radziewicz, the need for a change to allow 2 family homes in the POR Zone and needs for zoning officer / code enforcement officer, houses and business division in the R2 zone, and parking requirements to ensure that on street parking is not being take advantage of.

See transcript.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.