



**CITY OF ABSECON
Municipal Complex
500 Mill Road
Absecon, New Jersey 08201**

PLANNING & ZONING

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**DECEMBER 13, 2011
PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

The meeting was called to order by Henry Gorohoff at 7:00 p.m.

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

Present: Dey, Thomas, Elco, Ciccone, Roswell, Savell, Howell, Hayden, Gorohoff

Absent: Camp, Hunter

NOTIFICATION OF MEETING

OLD BUSINESS:

Vote: Minutes of October 25, 2011 meeting

Motion to approve – Glenn Hayden – second – John Thomas

Vote: D&R for Application #6-2011 – 405 Hotel Realty, LLC – Fairfield Marriott – Block 224, Lots 16-19 for Site Plan Amendment and Variance Approval

Eligible to Vote: Elco, Ciccone, Camp, Roswell, Thomas, Dey, Hunter, Hayden

Motion to approve – Glenn Hayden – second - Bob Dey

ROLL CALL: Dey, yes; Elco, yes; Ciccone, yes; Roswell, yes; Thomas, yes; Dey, yes; Hayden, yes

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion and Public Hearing on the Master Plan

Glenn Hayden – the State Municipal Land Use Law states we address the issues that come up periodically within the Master Plan and make recommendations. The 2011 Re-examination report is essentially the Absecon Planning Board's checklist of items that we believe should be addressed over the next few years. It lists portions of the Master Plan and the Developmental Ordinances and regulations that should be amended or at least studied. This report is essentially a commentary on the Master Plan and it's a statement that we as the Board believe should be addressed and perhaps

changed in the near future. It's a guideline for the governing body to consider. We can't pass ordinances. It is understand that the governing body is not required to adopt any land use ordinance changes as we recommend. However, they should propose land use developmental ordinances to address changes within the community as the years go by. The committee has been working probably over 6 months on this plan. Even today we received recommendations from Board members and tried to address them. He thanked Bob, Henry and Rob for their work in this reexamination report. He briefly went over the highlights and then let Rob get into the details. We will be addressing portions of the sign ordinance; the biggest issue is addressing the concerns within the multi-unit zones. We looked at the density, the age-restricted component and affordable housing component in our recommendations. There are 3 districts or areas in question: the train station overlay, HDI zone on the White Horse Pike and the Visions property on Pitney Road. We have asked for input from our members and the public during this process and this week Mayor Elco asked us to look further at the age restriction portion. Our first recommendation was to rise from 20% to allow 75% all age. The committee is comfortable sending to council a recommendation that would provide for ½ of the units within these 3 zones to be age restricted and ½ non age-restricted. The economy has driven these projects to where they are now.

Rob – went over the notable changes of the Master Plan and some of the exhibits, research and what the recommendations are. Our population has increased an average of 1% per year for the last ten years, which is a small growth in his opinion. The housing has increased 1.2% per year for the last ten years, which is low compared to 1977 to 1999, where the growth rate was around 6%. Residential construction within the last 6 years is down 77%; townhouse construction is down 6%; school enrollment is down 8% since 2005; but there has been an increase of 3.8% in the school tax levy. HSHS enrollment is down to 45% from 70% of Absecon children attending there. There has been a slight increase of income to 2.5% on an average of each year. Renter occupied residences went from 13.9% to 13%; vacant units went from 4.4% to 6%, but the county has a rate of almost 19%. Our affordable housing obligation still exists and that number is 270 units. The DCA is working on modified regulations, which will change from 20% to 10% obligation per project. He went through the highlights of the recommendations some of which were: a reduction of permitted density in units throughout the multi-unit districts; reduction in number of bedrooms per dwelling unit; etc. He explained table 7-1.

Exhibit A – a colored rendered of our zoning map showing the different zones. He then went over the map and explained the different zones and what is allowed in each zone.

Henry opened it to the board for questions.

Jeff – commended the committee for their work. In the past years, the original premise for the overlay districts was senior housing, now with the Sarlo Bill it sort of changes that. He feels that the overlays should be taken away. HDI should be made commercial since it's on the highway; the old Memorial Field on the Pike is 6 acres and that should be commercial use and with regards to the Visions property on Pitney Road all real estate is dead, it's not just age-restricted. There are seniors who will move down here but it will take the market to come back for it.

Glenn – the HD1 zone has received a lot of discussion and we don't have a problem if that overlay goes away completely. He never thought it was a good zone for housing. Bottom line projects are stalled and age restricted is overbuilt. He then said work could be done with the developer to cluster the buildings within the project to separate the housing. He also agrees with the ball field site being a commercial site one day.

Bern – would not be happy with removing the age-restricted housing at Visions. He feels he would never be able to sell his house. Feels you can mix types of housing but not mix the ages of owners. Seniors buy a lifestyle. It should be one or the other.

Jerry – he was on the original Master Plan committee years ago. Brought up the trailer park that was approved and also the building on NJ Avenue that now stands there.

Henry – told him we are discussing the Master Plan tonight and not the issues he is bringing up.

Jerry – would like to see 20% of age-restricted allowed in developments. We put in overlay districts and didn't abide by them. If you have a fine project, it will fill up eventually. We need to decide what we want our community to look like. If it's on the highway, it should be commercial. The number of housing units allowed should be lowered.

Glenn – appreciates the input and it's been discussed for months. The HD1 zone can be looked at again and he agrees the overlay district could be lifted. The other areas have been looked at and the numbers are reality. This project will be stalled unless something is done and will not go anywhere. We can wait for a lawsuit and for some judge to decide what is going to happen to our community or we can take some initiative here to try and bring developers to the table whom can live within guidelines that we try to set up. I don't want judges making decisions for our community and the legal costs will be significant and huge.

Henry opened it to the public.

Jack Plackter, Esq. – attorney for AB Visions, owned by Amboy Bank now. They have had no offers for age-restricted at this site from any developers. They commended the Master Plan committee for recognizing that some of these age-restricted projects, particularly Visions has a problem and we need to find a solution. We know if nothing happens, this project will remain shut down and unfortunately, the 17 homeowners won't be able to sell them for what they paid. They are sympathetic to that plight.

Art Bernard, planner for the bank – he has worked in this field for 35 years and he stated his credentials. He then went over the reexamination report and points that affected the age restricted areas. Commended the board and Mr. Reid for his work. It included statewide trends and how they affected Absecon. Feels that you don't have to leave this development age restricted. That's why the conversion bill was introduced. Addressed the affordable housing obligation for the city. There is not a lot of land in Absecon to address it and the State regulations require them to use land efficiently. Feels the Visions property is suitable for higher density housing and could satisfy a good number of the affordable housing requirements. Does not feel the Planning Board should change the density.

Bern – spoke about the traffic and the project only having one way in and out. Just having a stop sign isn't going to handle the traffic; a traffic light is going to be needed. Units would have 3 or 4 cars.

Mike F. – spoke about legislation and the Sarlo bill and the possibility of litigation and the City's exposure regarding affordable housing. The end result could be something worse due to State legislation or from litigation. It all has to be factored in. It's been talked about for years but nothing taken seriously. Something is going to have to happen with that property.

Bob Vargo - 811 Stoneybrook Drive – he is shocked what Mr. Bernard said about using the Visions property for the city's affordable housing requirement. Likes the lower number of units and wonders why we are even talking about lifting the age restriction. It's raw land and we are stagnant but the marketing has been taken away. Yes, it probably would be slow with the economy but it hasn't been given a chance. The first market to return will be senior housing.

Bob Kusnirik – 200 Briarcliff Place – this is not mandatory that we do this now since we have until 2015, but it's because of the Visions property. Agrees with Mr. Roswell that having a mixed-use development won't work. Seniors buy a lifestyle and we have a lot to offer in Absecon.

Tom Melchiorre - 815 Stoneybrook Drive – unfortunately Visions has turned into a rental community and they have stopped selling them and they have stopped marketing. Feels the density is absurd for that area even at 260 but at 369 it's just too many. Since it's been turned into a rental community a drug bust has occurred behind the clubhouse. Opening it up to all ages will just create more problems with people coming and going all night.

Joe Courter – 615 Hay Rd. – at the being of the Master Plan it says the board wants to be proactive rather than reactive, but yet it seems like you are being reactive. You're reacting to a down market that is a down thing, whether it's for seniors or any housing. You're making decisions on a temporary market and he feels the board shouldn't operate like that. Agrees reducing the density is a good idea; it's just too high for Absecon. Also the overlay districts are confusing and would rather see a plan that tells you what that district is.

John Sanders – 804 Stoneybrook Drive – grew up in this community and he agrees with Mr. Roswell. He doesn't like the idea of having mixed-use at Visions. We bought there because we thought it was for 55 and over. Why can't you table this for some time? The map was shown tonight that had other areas that could be developed. Explained the problems up there now.

Eileen Kusnirik – 200 Briarcliff Place – asked Rob to explain where the HD1 zone covers. Went over two areas that could be used for development. Not in favor of the Safety Bus site. Doesn't see how the mixed-use will work at the Visions property. It shouldn't be changed.

Denise Wintemberg – 814 Stoneybrook Drive - owns at Visions and they bought it for a retirement home and they bought a lifestyle. Talked about quality of life in the development. There is not room for 369 units.

Susan Rasera – 49 W. Church St. – thought it was supposed to be a plan for the future. She stated what she thought of Absecon and ideas that could take place.

Barb Brown – 101 W. Church St. – everyone is worried about state legislation about what may or may not even happen, but there is little regard for the citizens of the town or the quality of life for them.

Joe Ritzler – Woodland Ave. – wanted a clarification of affordable housing and section 8.

Glenn – explained that affordable housing is low and moderate-income working families.

Louise Speitel – 205 Tremont Ave. – clarified the zoning of the old Memorial Field and what the density of that area is. Are there any changes in the Master Plan to it? No

Judy Courter – 615 Hay Road – feels it would be worthy for the board to take more time to vote on this.

Henry closed public portion.

A 15-minute break was taken.

Mike F. – seems some revisions need to be made so he suggested Rob be given some direction to work on and some re-drafting of some issues. We can continue the hearing until next month.

Glenn – this is a difficult process and at the end it won't be a perfect document and they never are. These are recommendations that are given to Council. They review them and act on them if they feel so. It was agreed about the HD1 not having the overlay district.

Henry – we will need another meeting on this and that will be at the Jan. 10, 2012 meeting.

Glenn – acknowledged Councilman Seher in the audience, who is chairman of the Finance Committee. He knows the budget is tight, but if this is going into next year, then we are going to need a budget for it, if we are going to make changes and bring it back again.

Mike – asked Rob if he could look into the issue of mixing the age restriction. He has never seen it at this type of scale.

Rob – you physically can design it to work but no matter what you have to share the community facilities because the project is too small to have separate ones. This is an issue for existing projects. You don't do this in the Master Plan process. It will never be a perfect market situation. We have existing units already there and buildings. It can only be done through a detailed, well thought-out land development ordinance with design details, design requirements, criteria and a detailed review of a site plan application itself.

Mike – explained what the bank could do or another developer if the city doesn't do anything. The city can lose control of the situation.

Henry – commended Glenn, Rob and all the members.

The plan was to hear this again after the Reorganization meeting on January 10, 2012.

Approval of Bills

Andy Previti – Fairfield Marriott - \$956.25

Rob Reid - Levine for Kumon Learning Center - \$495; \$4,950 for General Planning Board matters

Al Litwornia – Bel Air Lakes (Beazer Homes) - \$86.25

Mike Fitzgerald – General Planning Board Matters - \$394.16; General Planning Board Matters - \$1,079; Fairfield Marriott - \$1,131; Levine for Kumon Learning Center - \$299; Absecon Gardens - \$39; Lawsuit for Absecon Gardens - \$585; Lawsuit for Absecon Gardens - \$5,638.40

Motion to approve bills made by Bern Roswell – second – John Thomas
All were in favor.

Henry - read C.C.O.'s that were issued for businesses.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting – Pete Elco – second – Glenn Hayden
All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Tina M. Lawler

Approved: _____