BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE Mayor & Borough Council Meeting Minutes March 27, 2023

Mayor Mary Jane Canose called this meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were Council Members Jay Ambelang, Diane Greenfield, Jena McCredie, Chad McQueen, Al Ribeiro, and Christine Zamarra. Also present were John Pidgeon, Borough Attorney, Tom Czerniecki, Administrator, and Anthony Suriano, Borough Clerk.

STATEMENT OF PRESIDING OFFICER

Notice of this meeting was provided to the Bernardsville News and Courier News, filed with the Municipal Clerk and posted on the Municipal Bulletin Board on December 15, 2022.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

PRESENTATIONS

Borough Clerk Anthony Suriano administered the oath of office and swearing-in of the following Police Officers who were recently promoted/appointed: Patrick Minardi, Patrolman; Steven Seiple, Sergeant; Jeff Melitski, Lieutenant; Michael Paradiso, Lieutenant; Dan Buttel, Captain.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. McQueen moved approval of minutes from February 27, 2023 and March 13, 2023. Ms. McCredie seconded and the motion was approved with six yes votes.

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public.

Johanna Wissinger, Washington Corner Road and Environmental Commission Chair, said the Environmental Commission has given the 2023 Stewardship Award to Kerry Haselton. A plaque will be displayed on the first floor in Borough Hall.

Aaron Duff, Crestview Drive, spoke about Ordinance #2023-1960 (Palmer property redevelopment plan) which is on for introduction later in the meeting. He commented on the process that got us to this point. He said John Szabo, Borough Planner, was appointed to start working on this project in October of 2022. He said Mr. Szabo's firm had not done any public outreach or public meetings for this project and feels that residents deserve to be a part of the process. He suggested not introducing the ordinance tonight and sending it back to Mr. Szabo, and have his firm talk to the people of Bernardsville and come up with a redevelopment plan that takes into account the public's interest, goals, and vision.

Glenn Miller, Fire Company member, thanked the Mayor and Council for their support of the purchase of a new fire truck. He said we ordered it in July 2021 and it has appreciated \$200,000

since then. He said it came in today and is in the Firehouse but not in service yet.

Paul Sedlak, Charlotte Hill Drive, thanked Mr. Czerniecki for his work as Borough Administrator. He said his tenure was short but his impact was large. He thanked council for selecting a leader and talent like Mr. Czerniecki.

Kathy Peachey, Chilton Street, asked what the four downtown subdistricts are? Mr. McQueen answered Downtown Core, Downtown Gateway, Downtown, Claremont, Downtown Corridor. Ms. Peachey asked if there are already transit improvements planned and if so, what are they? Mayor Canose said we are in the process of applying to be considered a Transit Village. She said we've done everything they've asked of us to do and now we're waiting for them to come back and see whether we've qualified. She said the Transit Village award would make us eligible for a lot of improvement efforts.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Canose closed the open session.

ORDINANCES (Public Hearing)

Mayor Canose opened the public hearing on Ordinance #2023-1957, SUPPLEMENTING AND AMENDING ARTICLE 12 OF THE BOROUGH LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS ENTITLED "ZONING" TO AMEND THE DOWNTOWN ZONE ESTABLISHING A MAXIMUM RESIDENTIAL DENSITY LIMITATION.

Aaron Duff, Crestview Drive, said he applauds the council for taking up this issue. He said it's important and something that the Planning Board has been mentioning over the last several months in that there is a problem with the zoning code and its failure to code any type of residential density. Mr. Duff said he's glad that there is this ordinance but does not think it does enough to really deal with the type of development that we're seeing. He said 35 units per acre is at least three times greater than the highest density zone in any other town in Somerset Hills. He said it's 10 units per acre greater than the densest zone district in Somerville and it's essentially on par with Morristown's densest zone Town Center District. He said a common refrain that he recalls when people talk about redevelopment at meetings is that we didn't want to look like Somerville or Morristown and asked why we are zoning like Somerville and Morristown. He said whenever anyone commented on high density apartments under construction being part of redevelopment or revitalization, council would say we're not going to allow redevelopment that's inconsistent with preserving the small town character of Bernardsville, and he doesn't feel that 35 units per acre does. Mr. Duff handed out a document of the Greyfield property at 106 Mine Brook Road which has 18 units approved on a half-acre, or 36 units per acre. He said of the picture in the document, if you envision that from the Firehouse all the way to Basking Ridge, halfway up Claremont Road, he does not feel it represents a small town/big community given that level of residential development in our downtown. He said he's not telling council not to pass the ordinance because 35 units per acre maximum is better than nothing, but he thinks there's a lot more work to be done. He said he would like it to be addressed with a sense of urgency because whenever another development like that comes to the Planning Board, if this is our law it's going to go through. (Note: After the meeting, Mr. Duff sent an email to the Borough Clerk indicating the document he distributed was the second version of the Greyfield property project design and there was a third version he was not aware of that was ultimately adopted by the Planning Board. He sent the third version in the email which was forwarded to the Mayor and Council).

Mayor Canose said at the last Planning Board meeting, John Szabo gave a good explanation of how the 35 units per acre fits in to all the other layers that have to be taken into consideration.

Kathy Peachey, Chilton Street, said 35 units per acre was noted mid to upper end and she wondered why Mr. McQueen had said he wished it were a little bit more. Ms. Peachey referenced John Szabo's past comments about other property's units per acre and asked if all the districts will stay at 35.

Paul Sedlak, Charlotte Hill Drive, said he thinks what the town is doing here is smart. He said a lot of work has been done to figure out about setbacks from the road, building heights, and other factors. He said he is concerned that as stated in a previous council meeting, 93% of our budget to run the town is solely based on the backs of homeowner property taxes and that is tough to carry for homeowners. He said he feels the council is doing the right thing and being strategic and visionary. He said 35 sounds like it's about the right number.

Hearing no further comments, Mayor Canose closed the public hearing.

Ms. Greenfield said if you look at the information provided by Aaron Duff and also the information provided by Mr. Czerniecki, it shows that Far Hills is 10, Peapack/Gladstone is 8, Bernards Township is 6, Bedminster is 12, Watchung is 6, Chatham is 8, Clinton is 10, Mendham is 10, Berkeley Heights is 20, Summit which has a population three times ours, has one zone of 29 and one zone of 17, Madison which has a population twice ours is anywhere between 20 and 38 with 38 being COAH. She said if Madison can have a density limit on COAH then why doesn't Bernardsville and suggested we investigate that. She said based on facts and information and comparables with surrounding towns, it is obvious that 35 is too high, and the number of 30 that she had previously suggested is also too high. Ms. Greenfield suggested a range of 16 to 18 saying that it's higher than the surrounding towns which will spur economic growth, and also ensure there is not a massive apartment building on every street corner in town.

Mr. Ambelang asked Mr. Czerniecki what he found in his review of the density subject. Mr. Czerniecki said in addition to the towns that Ms. Greenfield mentioned, which were accurate, he also looked at Hoboken and Morristown. He said Hoboken is 52 in a non-redevelopment area and Morristown is 50 in Town Center and up to 45 in Multi Family.

Mr. McQueen said when the initial redevelopment plan for Bernardsville was deliberated and conceived, the vision was to have a streetscape from about where the Firehouse starts to just past where the 206 intersection is. He said he agrees with that vision and sees a Bernardsville that's walkable where people go as a location to eat and shop. He said because he shares that vision, he is okay with some density in the area that's being

considered for redevelopment. He said since he has lived in Bernardsville, he has seen stores come and go along with constant store vacancies. He said when we did the initial plan the core reason was the fact there weren't enough people living, eating, and shopping in Bernardsville downtown. He said the unfortunate reality is residents don't spend enough time in the downtown area, so if we want to have a Bernardsville with the Town Center, which he does, he believes we need the density to support it.

Mr. Ribeiro said allowing it open right now makes for a kind of unfettered access and development if someone should choose. He said this is a step in the right direction and there might be more that we have to look at and eventually do, but every time we delay we just continue to keep that open. He said he would be in favor of passing this ordinance tonight and to continue to take a look at other factors, such as trying to make Bernardsville an area where young families want to come and raise their families and send their kids to school. He said there are factors such as making sure that this continues to be a favorable place to invest and a place that's walkable.

Ms. McCredie said first and foremost is stopping the funnel. She said we can look at the different numbers of units per acre in other town's codes, but the key point is that you can't look at it just as those facts from the units per acre. She said we have to look at it as a whole including the setbacks, parking, and everything else because it's not a single tunnel vision entity.

Ms. Zamarra said everything that was mentioned about the 35 units per acre and giving a hard number for each town doesn't give a clear picture because we didn't look at setbacks. She said we haven't discussed that we're a unique town not only in topography but also in our other zones within the town. She said other towns do not have a ten acre zone on the mountain and there's no way to develop any of that land. She said we really have a tiny amount to work with. She said it's been said that we didn't gather people's feedback but we actually did and the fact that this process is taking such a long time, new residents are coming in and thinking that we didn't. She said it was a vision that started many years before 2022. She said as a council, we have been looking at this very closely for a year and to say that we haven't seen any input is unfair because all the meetings, council, Planning Board, and Zoning Board, have been in public. She said she agrees with 35 units per acre because she wants people to come and invest in this town. She said we can't guarantee it's not going to be overdeveloped, but we're still paying attention, so if it becomes an issue we can always make a change.

Ms. Greenfield said in regards to the 2017 survey that has been referred to as indicating the entire town being in favor of redevelopment, the word redevelopment is not listed on it. She said the survey says revitalization and asks how important revitalization is to downtown Bernardsville. Ms. Greenfield read the definition of revitalization as to impart new life or vigor and the definition of redevelopment as the demolition of old, redundant, or unfashionable buildings or infrastructure and the construction of new ones on the same site. She said it's been stated that people want redevelopment but what people want is revitalization. She said there is a difference between redevelopment and revitalization and suggested taking a new survey.

Ms. Zamarra said redevelopment revitalizes the downtown.

Mr. McQueen said he hasn't mentioned the survey and has been pretty clear about the fact that he supported the changes that were being made. He said surveys are point in time snapshots and his decisions are based on the way that he's run his campaigns and the feedback he's received from the community.

Ms. Zamarra said the survey included a very large public meeting where not only the results were discussed but it included active participation.

Mr. McQueen moved to pass this ordinance on final reading and adopt as published. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion was approved by the following roll call vote. Mr. Ambelang, Ms. McCredie, Mr. McQueen, Mr. Ribeiro, and Ms. Zamarra voted yes. Ms. Greenfield voted no.

ORDINANCES (Introduction)

Mr. Ribeiro moved that Ordinance #2023-1958, APPROPRIATING \$24,854.00 FROM THE CAPITAL FUND RESERVE FOR MITIGATION PROJECTS, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, April 10, 2023. Ms. Zamarra seconded and the motion to introduce was approved with six yes votes.

Ms. Zamarra moved that Ordinance #2023-1959, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SALARY ORDINANCE #2023-1955, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, April 10, 2023. Mr. McQueen seconded and the motion to introduce was approved with six yes votes.

Mr. McQueen moved that Ordinance #2023-1960 APPROVING A REDEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR 35-39 OLCOTT SQUARE & 5 MORRISTOWN ROAD, be introduced by title, passed on first reading, published according to law, and that a public hearing be scheduled for a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., Monday, April 24, 2023. Ms. Zamarra seconded. Ms. Greenfield said she is wondering why we're introducing something that doesn't include the actual plan. She said it doesn't show a floor plan, how many apartments, or how much retail there will be. She asked if we are having a presentation for the public on this. Mr. DeMarco said this is the redevelopment plan. He said the floor plan and design is a site plan which is a different application. He said this is essentially a robust zoning ordinance, and consists of words and not necessarily pictures, plans, or things of that nature. He said this ordinance will get sent to the Planning Board to do a consistency review, which would be April 13th. He said it would then come back to council for a second reading and public hearing, which would be April 24th. Ms. Greenfield said there are things the public wants to see things like where it's going to be on the lot, how much parking is there, how the corner is going to be fixed with the traffic, if there is going to be a park, or is there going to be green space for the community to enjoy. Mr. DeMarco said that is all in the ordinance in words. He gave various examples of what is in the ordinance

such as the size of the building, which cannot be more than four stories. He said there is a definition of what a story is, which is anything between the floor and the ceiling of a livable space. Ms. Greenfield said there are no drawings to correlate that. Mr. Ribeiro said he similarly wants as much public input as possible. He said he understands this to be the framework by which we give to the developer which allows them to then do the blueprints, sketches, and plans. Mr. DeMarco discussed the redevelopment process with council.

The motion to introduce was approved with six yes votes.

RESOLUTIONS

#23-86A	AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF BILLS
#23-87	AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERIM MUNICIPAL COURT ADMINISTRATOR FOR THE SHARED MUNICIPAL COURTS OF BEDMINSTER TOWNSHIP, BERNARDSVILLE BOROUGH, BERNARDS TOWNSHIP AND PEAPACK-GLADSTONE BOROUGH
#23-88	AUTHORIZING TRANSFER OF APPRORIATION RESERVES
#23-89	APPROVING TEMPORARY BUDGET APPROPRIATIONS
#23-90	RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH STORMWATER COMPLIANCE SOLUTIONS FOR SERVICES RELATED TO A NJDEP WOOD WASTE RECYCLING AND LEAF COMPOSTING GENERAL PERMIT AT THE COMPOST FACILITY
#23-91	RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING VIRIDIAN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS TO INSTALL GROUNDWATER MONITORING ON THE PILL HILL PUMPING STATION PROPERTY AT 33 ANN STREET
#23-92	AUTHORIZING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE BOROUGH OF BERNARDSVILLE AND THE BERNARDSVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY
#23-93	A RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE 2023 BUDGET DEDICATED SEWER UTILITY

Ms. Zamarra moved to adopt Resolutions #23-86A to #23-93. Mr. Ribeiro seconded and the motion was approved by the following roll call vote. Mr. Ambelang, Ms. Greenfield, Ms. McCredie, Mr. McQueen, Mr. Ribeiro, and Ms. Zamarra voted yes.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Mayor's Update, Mayor Canose said on March 14th, she attended a Community Connection quarterly meeting and spoke about the Mayor's Wellness Committee. On March 16th there was a shared Municipal Court meeting where they discussed the Court budget for next year. On March 17th, Mayor Canose attended the Somerset County Stigma Free Committee meeting. On April 19th Mayor Canose is going to be participating in a virtual meeting to try to introduce Stigma Free initiatives to Mayors of other towns that may not have signed on and explain what it's about and how they can participate. Participating at the meeting will be someone from Community In Crisis, Mayor Canose, and the Chair of the Stigma Free Committee. Mayor Canose said today our new District 21 Senator is John Bramnick. She said we hit a snag again with the development of the train station building because of its concessionaire's license. She said in trying to get a concessionaire's license the rules are you have to finish the build out before they will give it to you and no one wants to invest in a build out not knowing that they're going to get the license. Mayor Canose said she called Senator Bramnick about fixing this issue and he connected her with the Director of the ABC. She said we met with the Director, along with staff and legal consultants, at the train station building and spent about an hour showing them exactly what needs to be done, what it looks like, and why it's going to need a lot of investment to get heating and plumbing up to date. She said it was a great conversation and a good thing to talk to people in person so they know what we are dealing with. She said the Director reassured the owners of MV that they are 99% likely to get the concessionaires license. Mayor Canose said she attended the open house at Summit Rug. Mayor Canose said a Downtown Bernardsville business mixer was held at Paul Miller Volkswagen. On March 23rd there was a meeting with Dr. Chang who owns a building on Mill Street and is interested in doing something with his parking lot, potentially a pocket park. Mayor Canose said she had a meeting with the Fire Company Trustees where they introduced their new officers and procedures. She said they asked to come to a future council meeting to talk about their operation. Mayor Canose said she officiated a wedding on the March 24th at Borough Hall. On Friday, March 25th, the Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission had a gallery reception called Farm To Frame. She said they asked mobile artists to go to some of the preserved farms in the county and do paintings or photographs to put on display in the lobby at the Administration Building. Mayor Canose said one of the artists that is now exhibiting at Studio Seven got an honorable mention. Mayor Canose said earlier tonight she was at the Firehouse to see the new fire engine arrive and there will be a wetdown in the future.

Administrator's Report, Mr. Czerniecki said tomorrow he will have his third meeting with the new Administrator and things are going very well.

Mayor's Update (continued), Mayor Canose said she wanted to mention a flyer about the Foodstock Challenge. She said it's a competition between all the 21 towns in Somerset County to see who can donate the most food by weight. She said it's boxed or canned food, nothing with glass or perishable. We are in the group with Raritan, Bedminster, Bound Brook, and Manville.

Municipal Attorney Report, there were no comments or questions on Mr. Pidgeon's report.

Mr. Ambelang moved to accept the monthly reports as listed on the agenda. Ms. Greenfield seconded and the motion was approved with six yes votes.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Safety Committee, Ms. Greenfield said the committee met on March 16th and discussed Round Top Road's speed survey and will be looking into adding advisory speed reduction signs at blind curb locations. Ms. Greenfield said they discussed the Bernards Avenue and surrounding streets parking survey and the planning for traffic control in the area during the upcoming street construction. She said Chief Remian is looking into whether a police explorer program for 14 to 20 year olds would be a good fit for the borough.

Finance Committee, Mr. Ribeiro said the committee has not met since the budget introduction last meeting. He thanked Mr. Ambelang, Mr. McQueen, and Mr. Czerniecki for presenting the outlines of the budget. He thanked Leslie Roberson for all her hard work on the budget. Mr. Ribeiro said the public hearing for the budget will be on April 10th.

Organization Development and Personnel Committee, Mayor Canose said the Council Organization Development and Personnel Committee did not meet. She said they have been investing a lot of time in interviewing for a new Administrator.

Engineering, Technology, and Public Works Committee, Ms. Zamarra said the committee met on March 21st. She said they discussed the projects in the works which are Boylan Terrace and we are waiting for the Governor to review the next steps. Ms. Zamarra said the main item of discussion was The Pavilion at Polo Grounds and they reviewed a concept plan and cost estimate from the architect. She said they sent it to the Mayor and Council to review and provide feedback and it will also be sent to Bob Markowick for him to review with the Recreation Committee at their next meeting in April. Ms. Zamarra said the Bernards Avenue project meeting with residents went well and they are getting some questions from residents who are unable to attend. Ms. Zamarra said if residents see a street light that is out they can contact JCP&L and ask them to come and change the light bulb. She said there is a pole number on each light pole which helps but is not required to report to JCP&L. She said if anyone has a question about this they can email her and she will help them. Ms. Zamarra said the pickleball courts are open and it's first come first serve for anyone who wants to use them. She said we're going to keep that system as long as it works well. Ms. Zamarra said dam remediation is moving forward. She said a plan has not been finalized yet but Doug Walker is working on that. Ms. Zamarra said now that the architects have completed the Pavilion plans, they are going to work on the library roof replacement and library restroom remodeling. She said we received a grant from NJDOT for Campbell Road and we're proceeding to move forward with repaving and drainage. Ms. Zamarra said we submitted a grant application for the Polo Grounds walking path. Mr. McQueen said he does not recall deliberating and recommending a budget to the Recreation Committee for the Polo Grounds project. Mr. Czerniecki said he will resend the initial estimates for each phase. It was noted the Finance Committee will review and make a recommendation to council. Ms. Zamarra said on April 15th Raritan Headwaters is doing a stream cleanup, on April 22nd we are having our town wide Earth Day cleanup, and April 29th is e-waste cleanup day.

OTHER COMMITTEE REPORTS

Library Board, Mr. Ambelang said the Library Board met and is adjusting to the budget. He said he made a recommendation that residents can reach out to him if they have strong feelings about the Library and how the budget process works, because he think it's important to hear from residents especially going into next year. He said this year he feels that the Library is going to do pretty well and next year they're going to have a shortfall and could require some changes. He encouraged people to come forward with concerns.

Housing/Zoning Committee, Ms. Greenfield said the Housing Committee met on March 17th and continued discussion on accessory and detached dwelling units. She said the committee's recommendation will go to the council for discussion. Ms. Greenfield said they discussed parking in zone five, abandoned vehicles, and information from this discussion will be brought to Public Safety for their review. She said they also discussed issues pertaining to the outdoor dining ordinance and what tweaks are necessary to improve it.

Recreation Committee, Ms. Greenfield said the Recreation Committee did not meet this month but the subcommittees were active. The Trails Committee members have been working on creating a new Perimeter Loop Trail at Peters' Tract which will be the second trail in that location. She said they are also looking to create a trail at Moraine Crest Park and looking to work with the Audubon to schedule an Old Army hike or a possible trail run. Regarding facilities, as mentioned by Ms. Zamarra, the pickleball court had a soft opening on March 20th and we are scheduled for April 10th at 10:00am for the grand opening and ribbon cutting ceremony. Ms. Greenfield said on March 21st the Event Subcommittee met and on April 1st the Recreation Department in conjunction with Downtown Bernardsville will be co-sponsoring the second annual Easter Eggs-travaganza at the Polo Grounds from 11:00am to 3:00pm. She said the event will feature two egg hunts at 11:30am and 1:30pm. She said also at the event will be inflatable bouncy houses, slides, food trucks, face painting, and a DJ. The Easter Bunny will be present for pictures.

Planning Board, Mr. McQueen said on March 16th the Planning Board met. He said a major item that was discussed at this meeting was the review and finalization of the Park and Recreation Master Plan. Mr. McQueen said the Board has two applications that are pending consistency and completeness reviews.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS

Summer hours

Council consent was given to approve summer hours for employees in 2023.

Palmer School Project - Chicken Coop for the month of May 2023

The Palmer School is going to provide more information on their request, and this topic will be

moved to a future meeting.

Somerset Hills Ball Club – Request for Sign at Kiwanis Field

It was noted that Joe Olechnowicz of Somerset Hills Ball Club submitted an email withdrawing his request for consideration of a sign at Kiwanis Field at this time, stating that they do not have the details to provide yet and may come back at a future meeting.

Correspondence

Ownership of alley nearby 30 Center Street, Mayor Canose asked what we can do about this property that no one owns. Mr. Pidgeon said it's not a borough matter and the requester could do a title search. It was decided to get more information as to what is intended to do in that area.

Letter from Aaron Duff – Zoning Density, Mayor Canose acknowledged Aaron Duff's letter regarding zoning density that was sent to council via email on March 15th.

Unfinished Business – None

New Business – None

OPEN SESSION

Mayor Canose opened the meeting to the public.

Fran Daley, Library Director, thanked council, Mr. Pidgeon, and Mr. Czerniecki, for their creativity and cooperation in trying to help the Library meet some of their budget shortfall.

Aaron Duff, Crestview Drive, thanked Ms. Greenfield for her comments on the Palmer redevelopment plan ordinance. He said if the developer can get 78 units on a three-story building, an extra floor, two parking spots for every two or three bedroom house instead of one and a half spots, then that does not say a lot for our performance-based zoning. He said that as another reason to take a harder look at the zoning density. He suggested not listening to an "it could be so much worse" approach and taking a look at the application and seeing if it conforms to zoning.

Hearing no further comments from the public, Mayor Canose closed the open session.

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved to adjourn to an executive session to consider Personnel Matters and Contract Negotiations and that the time when and circumstances under which the matter can be disclosed to the public is when it is finally resolved. The motion was seconded and approved with six yes votes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm.	