

**Town of Westfield
Planning Board
MINUTES
December 19, 2019**

The Westfield Planning Board met on December 19, 2019, at 7:30 pm in the Council Chambers in the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street, Westfield, NJ.

In compliance with Chapter 231 P.C. OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT in the State of New Jersey, adequate notice of this meeting was provided to all members of the Planning Board and the newspapers that have been designated to receive notice, the Star Ledger and the Westfield Leader.

Chairman Newell called the meeting to order and opened the meeting by calling all present to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Robert Newell, Darielle Walsh, Mayor Shelley Brindle, Michael Ash, Michael La Place, Linda Habgood, Anastasia Harrison, Matthew Ceberio, Ann Freedman, Ross Goldstein
ABSENT: Kris McAloon
ALSO PRESENT: Alan Trembulak, Planning Board Attorney, and Linda Jacus, Administrative Secretary

ADOPTIONS OF MINUTES:

Chairman Newell called for a motion to adopt the minutes of the November 4, 2019, meeting. Darielle Walsh made a motion to adopt; Anastasia Harrison seconded.

ALL IN FAVOR: Robert Newell, Darielle Walsh, Mayor Shelley Brindle, Michael Ash, Michael La Place, Linda Habgood, Anastasia Harrison, Matthew Ceberio, Ann Freedman, Ross Goldstein
OPPOSED: None
ABSTAINED: None
ABSENT: Kris McAloon

Motion carried.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS:

None.

Master Plan Reexamination Report

Public presentation of the Master Plan Reexamination Report by Jeff Janota of H2M Associates.

Mr. Janota stated by law the master plan has to be reviewed every 10 years, whether it be a full master plan or a reexamination. Throughout the year long process of preparing this report, public input was crucial. We spoke to residents about their issues and concerns, wants and desires, and this plan is built around those comments. This report includes an evaluation of Westfield's planning and development regulations and documents, and identifies which policies or objectives have changed, and which have stayed the same since the last reexamination report. The recommendations from these past planning efforts and new recommendations are included in a checklist format at the beginning of each element. These recommendation checklists are designed for the purpose tracking recommendations over the next 10-years as a way to measure progress. The elements that were examined in this report include land use, circulation, housing, economic development, community facilities, and historic preservation.

Forty nine percent of residents found the issue of residential teardowns and intensification of building coverage as very important. Over half of residents are very unsatisfied with the subdivision of larger lots, and believe existing homes should be restored. Some key land use and housing recommendations include increased demo permit fees to hire a teardown specialist. The zoning regulations should be reexamined to keep new construction in scale with existing neighborhoods. Redevelopment tools should be used on existing underutilized sites, and mixed-use structures over multifamily buildings should be provided where feasible. Transit oriented developments should be encouraged near the train station and a unified land use and circulation plan should be completed.

The top transportation issues include one passenger rail service to NYC and parking in the downtown. When survey participants were asked how Westfield should improve mobility some suggestions included, improve biking & walking conditions, add more parking downtown, add more streetscape amenities, improve technology, i.e. better traffic lights/signal timing, and improve access to the train station. The key transportation recommendations include a unified land use and circulation plan be completed, transit-oriented development be promoted, and a sidewalk fund and PILOP Program should be developed. More bike racks should be added to the downtown, as well as a one-seat ride to NYC, and the potential of a parking structure in the downtown should be explored.

Downtown Economic development issues include the need for more experiential retail and more entertainment options. Traditional and non-traditional employers should be attracted to the downtown to diversify the tax base, support downtown businesses and offer residents an opportunity to work where you live. The downtown lacks public spaces and needs placemaking to create interesting public nodes. A comprehensive streetscape plan should be drafted to link the downtown through cohesive design, including street trees, furniture, sidewalks and plantings.

Residents expressed their concern over the condition of the parks and recreation facilities, and felt there is a need for a performing arts/cultural/community center. The center should not be specific to any one age group, such as teens, or seniors, but rather a place for all community members that offers a variety of activities. Seventy percent of respondents said local code should require green building construction techniques. The key community facility recommendations include the implementation of the Parks Strategic Master Plan, which is being prepared concurrently with the Reexamination Report. A town community center should be

considered, public art and murals should be installed throughout the town, and there should be an investment in technology across civic departments. Various "green" audits of town-owned properties should be completed and green purchasing should be encouraged.

When asked which technology services Westfield should implement, survey respondents chose free wi-fi in the downtown, online parking registration and bill pay, and being able to submit building permit and applications online. Westfield should consider the plethora of online services available that would allow for efficient processes, civic engagement and transparent government.

Eighty percent of people thought historic preservation is crucial and a worthwhile goal. There is a lack of communication about the benefits of historic preservation and property owners should be educated on the benefits of historic designation. Buildings or areas that should be designated historic include Stoneleigh Park, Boulevard, Dudley, and Wychwood. The key historic preservation recommendations include maintaining a list of historic structures and threatened homes, exploring the adoption of architectural regulations, and encouraging an adaptive reuse of historic structures.

Westfield's only redevelopment study, at the time of this plan preparation is for the area known as the Elite North and South Affordable Housing Overlay Zone Site, located on South Avenue. It is zoned as the SWAHO overlay zone, which was part of the Town of Westfield's adopted 2018 Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. Future redevelopment opportunities that should be explored in more detail include a reassessment of the South Avenue Train Station Parking Lot, properties owned by Hudson's Bay Corporation (HBC), the parent company of Lord and Taylor along North Avenue, and all municipally owned parking lots.

Open to public comments and questions.

Stephen Lowe (116 Marlboro Street) asked about the solar panel ordinance and commented on tear downs.

Bill West (663 Summit Avenue) had a concern about the estimated population growth.

Brad Chananie (239 Avon Road) thinks the plan is excellent.

Bruce Baron (763 Boulevard) thinks the plan is excellent, likes that a lot of issues were addressed, and really likes the bike and pedestrian plan.

Tim Van Eff (Green Team Member) thinks the plan is excellent and likes that sustainability was integrated throughout the report.

Brad Noack (214 N. Euclid Avenue) is directly impacted by stormwater runoff and feels it's an issue that needs to be addressed.

David Siegler (441 Downer Street) thinks it a great plan and likes the checklist in each section. He also liked the public outreach throughout the process.

John Markos (534 Arlington Avenue) stated he has concerns about the population growth numbers.

Evan Topilow (355 Orenda Circle) stated he understands the town's concern about tear downs but as a builder, buyers are looking for newer homes.

Ketan Parekh (20 Barchester Way) stated there are issues with parking on his street as well as speeding, and thinks the plan is well done.

Don Villane (633 Cumberland Street) stated as builder and developer the increase in fees will make it tough to keep new homes affordable. He also commented on using rails to trails as an option for bike paths.

Dave Barbosa (305 Roanoke Road) stated a lot of buyers are not looking for small homes and that is why builders are tearing down the older homes and rebuilding them larger.

Maria Boyes (122 Ferris Place) stated she was thrilled to see that historic preservation is as an important part of the plan, and she has research that shows people are looking for older homes to renovate. She stated the preservation plan element has not been updated since 2002, and it needs to be updated.

Closed to public comments and questions.

The Board agreed the reexamination report was a very comprehensive report. It embraces the importance of maintaining the historic past and character of Westfield, as well as looking at future trends.

Chairman Newell called for a motion to adopt the master plan reexamination report with the suggested revisions in Jeff Janota's letter dated December 13, 2019, and with the recommendations made regarding the population numbers, stormwater, the bike and pedestrian plan be an appendix, and that the preservation plan element needs to be updated. Darielle Walsh made a motion to approve; Anastasia Harrison seconded.

ALL IN FAVOR: Robert Newell, Darielle Walsh, Mayor Shelley Brindle, Michael Ash, Michael La Place, Linda Habgood, Anastasia Harrison, Matthew Ceberio, Ann Freedman, Ross Goldstein

OPPOSED: None

ABSTAINED: None

ABSENT: Kris McAloon

Motion carried.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made, seconded and carried. The meeting adjourned at 10:36 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Jacus
Administrative Secretary