

GLEN ROCK PLANNING BOARD
Minutes of the January 8, 2015 Meeting

The regular meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob VanLangen at 7:30 p.m.

In attendance were Mr. Knapp, Mayor van Keuren, Joan Orseck, Robert Tirserio, Ken Hrasdzira, Scott King and Tim Macdonald. Kenneth Kang was absent. Also in attendance was Borough Attorney, Spencer Rothwell. The Secretary called the roll and read the Sunshine Statement from the Open Public Meetings Act.

The Board reviewed the minutes of the December 4, 2014 regular meeting. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Mr. King seconded by Mayor van Keuren and passed unanimously.

Reorganizational Meeting:

As Chairman of the Nominating Committee, Mr. Knapp stated it is the Committee's recommendation to nominate Mr. VanLangen as Chairman for 2015 and Mr. Knapp as Vice-Chairman for 2015. Mr. Knapp made a motion with Mayor van Keuren seconding the motion. The voice vote was as follows:

Mr. VanLangen asked if there were any additional nominations. There were none.

AYES: Mr. Knapp, Mayor van Keuren, Councilwoman Orseck, Mr. Tirserio, Mr. Hrasdzira, Mr. King, Mr. VanLangen
NAYS: None

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp and seconded by Mr. King to appoint Stuart Liebman, Esq. as Board Attorney. The voice vote was as follows:

AYES: Mr. Knapp, Mayor van Keuren, Councilwoman Orseck, Mr. Tirserio, Mr. Hrasdzira, Mr. King, Mr. VanLangen
NAYS: None

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp and seconded by Councilwoman Orseck to appoint Mrs. Nancy Spiller as Board Secretary. The voice vote was as follows:

AYES: Mr. Knapp, Mayor van Keuren, Councilwoman Orseck, Mr. Tirserio, Mr. Hrasdzira, Mr. King, Mr. VanLangen
NAYS: None

A motion was made by Mr. Knapp and seconded by Mayor van Keuren for the ratification of Mr. Albert Roughgarden, Stantec Consultants as Borough Engineer; Christine Cofone, Cofone Consulting Group as Borough Planner, as well as the ratification of the current By-Laws. The voice vote was as follows:

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AYES: Mr. Knapp, Mayor van Keuren, Councilwoman Orseck, Mr. Tirserio, Mr. Hrasdzira, Mr. King, Mr. VanLangen

NAYS: None

Old Business:

Discussion and possible recommendation to Mayor and Council for adoption of the Sustainable Land Use Pledge, a required action to attain recertification in the Sustainable Jersey program.

Mr. VanLangen asked if everyone has had an opportunity to read the Sustainable Land Use Pledge and, if so, are there any comments.

There were no comments from anyone on the Board.

A motion was made by Mr. King, and seconded by Mr. Hrasdzira, to approve the Sustainable Land Use Pledge as presented. The voice vote was as follows:

AYES: Mr. Knapp, Mayor van Keuren, Councilwoman Orseck, Mr. Tirserio, Mr. Hrasdzira, Mr. King, Mr. VanLangen

NAYS: None

New Business:

Discussion regarding the creation of a formal effort to market Glen Rock and all its commercial districts to new businesses.

Mr. VanLangen commented that during the Master Plan Reexamination it became apparent that we do not do anything collectively to market our commercial district. Mr. VanLangen shared some of his thoughts on this matter.

The goal is to better market all of our commercial districts. Initially, the thought was who could help us achieve this goal. Mr. VanLangen asked the Board what their thoughts were in achieving this.

Mr. Knapp shared the following:

- ✓ Any new businesses that come in to town could have their fees waived. Mr. Knapp did note he is unaware of any legalities with this suggestion.
- ✓ Meet with landlords and try to convince them to lower or maintain their rents.
- ✓ While visiting a west coast city, vacant businesses were made into residential dwellings; thus bringing more people into the area to shop the local merchants.

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- ✓ Install more public outdoor eating areas; picnic tables, benches thus encouraging people to buy from local eating establishments and enjoy the outdoors.
- ✓ Arrange a “gathering place” for our young residents ... possibly take an empty building and make it an organized locale for teens and young families.
- ✓ Staple stores are “missing”, i.e. 5&10, clothing store, hardware store

Mr. VanLangen agreed that this group needs to determine what it is that we want and what do we need.

Mr. Hrasdzira commented he has often felt that a name brand store would help; i.e. Apple. This would draw residents from other towns into Glen Rock. Mr. Hrasdzira also commented he believes we have somewhat of an identity crisis; not many people are aware of where Glen Rock is.

Mr. VanLangen stated that he and Nancy Spiller will be working on getting additional merchant information onto the Borough website. Information that would help perspective merchants determine if Glen Rock is a good “fit” for them. We need to have the information readily accessible to perspective merchants and we need to be more pro-active in soliciting people to come to Glen Rock.

A Board member asked if the goal is to get consumers into town or merchants.

Mr. VanLangen replied, both! The first thing to do is to go out and get the merchants.

Are there incentives that we can offer to merchants over other towns?

Mr. VanLangen reiterated Mr. Knapp’s suggestion and asked if it is legally possible for permit fees to be waived for new businesses.

Mr. Rothwell stated he is not aware of any State law that prohibits the waiving of permit fees.

Mr. VanLangen also asked if tax incentives could be built into building owners properties.

Mr. VanLangen questioned how the Herold’s Farm property will be developed. He envisions a non-invasive, two-story structure similar to Route 208. The real estate tax structure in Glen Rock needs to change, where currently 10% come from commercial properties and 90% come from private properties.

Councilwoman Orseck commented downtown needs an “anchor” store. For whatever reason, the residents of Glen Rock simply do not support the local merchants.

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Mr. VanLangen stated the point of this group is to develop who should come into town and go after them.

Nancy Spiller noted the office buildings are fully rented, adding Prospect Street also has very little turnover. The retail space in the Central Business District has the largest percentage of vacancies.

Mr. VanLangen noted that the “800 pound gorilla” is Broad Street, Herold’s Farm and the CVS office area. If we filled up all of the vacant spaces in the CBD we have only done 30% of our goal. Our goal should be to re-invigorate the downtown areas, and secondly, we have to help relieve the pressure of taxes in town. We need to look at what can be done with Herold’s Farm, Broad Street or 175 Rock Road. We need to find other opportunities to fill the tax base other than residents. This group will help identify who can develop these spaces and then help us go after it more proactively. We cannot keep waiting for things to happen.

Mayor van Keuren commented that it sounds as if the reason we are trying to reinvigorate the downtown is to relieve some of the tax burden on the residents.

Mr. VanLangen replied that is a piece of it.

Mayor van Keuren commented he believes this community is strongly in favor of creating, maintaining and enhancing the education system in town. The education system is responsible for 70% of the taxes. If we are trying to offset something that is responsible for 70% of the taxes, in a borough that is highly residential, there are certain limits that can be accomplished. Mayor van Keuren believes we need to do something that draws outsiders into the commercial district, which means more parking needs to be provided.

Mr. Knapp commented regardless of whether or not the storefronts are occupied, the landlord of the building is still paying taxes to the town.

Ms. Spiller noted that the assessed value of a commercial property is based on the rent they get. If a landlord cannot get the rent they would like, the landlord could apply to have their taxes lowered.

Mr. VanLangen commented he would simply like this Board to be a proactive force to accomplish these goals.

Mr. VanLangen questioned what the landlords are doing to market their properties in Glen Rock and suggested reaching out to them in an effort to work together.

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Speaking as an elected official, Mayor van Keuren noted that to tell the residents of town, which make up 92% of the tax base, that the 8% commercial properties are going to receive a tax break would not be very well received.

Mr. VanLangen commented it would be great if we could convince someone to develop the Herold's Farm property and then encourage them with the types of businesses we would like to see occupy the building.

Mr. Hrasdzira suggested the realtors be consulted and try and get information as to what realtors are facing and what problems they find with the open businesses.

Mayor van Keuren commented there are two things we could offer to commercial landlords; one being zoning changes, tax abatement and various amenities (extended parking).

Mayor van Keuren noted that no landlord has approached the town asking for assistance or guidance.

Mayor van Keuren noted landlords are facing challenges of their own. They are trying to find a client to fit into their existing parameters, with that choice becoming more and more limited. Ten years ago there wasn't the on-line business that exists today.

Mr. VanLangen asked who the marketer from the Borough's standpoint is.

Mayor van Keuren asked if we had more parking available in the CBD, would we be having this discussion.

Councilwoman Orseck commented when you visit Wyckoff, there isn't a lot of parking however their stores are full. What does Wyckoff offer that we do not?

Mr. Hrasdzira noted in this area of Wyckoff a lot of previous residential homes are used for businesses.

Mayor van Keuren commented Wyckoff is larger in area so they have a greater tax base. Secondly, their school district is not K-12, but have a regional high school. Glen Rock is more equally compared to Midland Park or Waldwick, though

At this point, Mr. VanLangen stated he would come back to the Board with more information on some of the issues discussed. This subject is definitely in its infancy with a guarantee for growth. Mr. VanLangen urged the Board members to talk with merchants, realtors and landlords to get their feedback.

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As there was no further business before the Board a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mr. Knapp, seconded by Councilwoman Orseck and passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Spiller
Board Secretary