

Borough of Califon Planning/Zoning Board
MINUTES
JUNE 15, 2022
7:30 PM

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF THE BOROUGH OF CALIFON, COUNTY OF HUNTERDON, STATE OF NEW JERSEY WILL HOLD A REGULARLY SCHEDULED PUBLIC MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2022 AT 7:30 PM. THE FOLLOWING IS AN AGENDA FOR SAID MEETING AND FORMAL ACTION MAY OR MAY NOT BE TAKEN ON A PORTION OF THIS AGENDA. THE PUBLIC IS INVITED AND MAY ATTEND SAID MEETING SUBJECT TO THOSE AREAS OF CONSIDERATION DESIGNATED, IF ANY, FROM WHICH THE PUBLIC MAY BE EXCLUDED PURSUANT TO SECTION 7B & 8 OF THE LAWS OF 1975.

I. Chairman Arthur Owens Called the meeting to order and read the Open Public Meeting Statement

This is a regularly scheduled meeting of the Borough of Califon Combined Land Use Board. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act as follows: Notice was sent to and published in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Hunterdon Review and the notice of this meeting was posted on the bulletin board in the Borough Municipal Building and filed with the Borough Clerk.

II. Pledge of Allegiance: Led by Chairman Arthur Owens

III. Roll Call

Mayor Daniel: absent

Leo Janas: present

Thomas Bedell: present

Arthur Owens: present

Jason Ruggiero: present

Jason Bittay: present

John Lynch: present

IV. Approval of Minutes: moved to end of meeting

V. Open Space and Recreation Plan Workshop

Jim Kyle, Borough Planner explained that the Highlands council has given the borough a grant to update their Open Space and Recreation Plan. Part of that process is Green Acres has specific requirements that the Borough needs to meet to take advantage of cost sharing in land acquisition. One of the requirements is that the Borough has an Open Space Tax that was approved by voter referendum, which the Borough does.

The first part of the process is to map all the existing open space within the borough and then identify the priorities for acquisition of land.

The Board had one meeting so far to discuss general goals and objectives. The Board is taking a conservation focus with acquisition. The other part of the conservation has been focusing on

active recreation such as the park, and ballfields. Part of the assessment being done is to determine if the recreation programs are adequate for the population.

The planner has so far mapped using data from Hunterdon County as well as the Highlands Council, the existing Open Space of the Borough. This also includes lands in the adjacent municipalities. Jim Kyle displayed and explained the map to everyone present.

Last month the Board discussed priorities for acquisition. To date the focus has been to try to preserve priority properties along the River. One of the goals is to provide better access to the river and Mill Pond. Small scale opportunities for parking were also discussed.

Part of the process and a general interest to the Board is to hear how the public feels and what their thoughts are.

One of the goals is to provide connections to trails, unfortunately there aren't much opportunities for this.

Some previously discussed topics were:

- Permanent bathrooms
- Security to control garbage dumping
- River access
- Seating options
- Create meadows, pollinator gardens in the park
- Warming station
- Skating Rink in the winter
- Dams
- Discussions about County donating land that would become part of park

Acquisition priorities are only lands that are privately owned. John Lynch commented that he felt it would be beneficial to acquire both dams even though there may be toxicity issues. Thomas Bedell asked whether it would be a liability issue if there is concern that these are toxic.

Public Comments

Brian O'Sullivan 1 First Street. Commented that one of the properties marked for acquisition is owned by four families and none are interested in selling their property.

Margaret Medeiros, 31 First Street, stated that one of the properties being shown as a priority actually runs thru her driveway, she was concerned about the trail running thru this property.

Jim Kyle explained that the majority of that property was the river so that is why it was of interest when the Board thinks about recreational access however this is why the Board wanted to have this meeting, in order to gain public comment before moving forward.

Wesley Lynch, 78 Main Street, asked why the Board was targeting underwater land. She was curious what the long-term plan is. Why target 1st street which is a narrow road, and the properties are in front of peoples front yards. She didn't feel it makes sense. She also stated that

taxes are a concern in Califon. If you build a more permanent facility, they need to be maintained and this could be an issue.

Thomas Bedell stated it was a conceptual idea to have contiguous access along the river.

Jim Kyle stated there is a difference between obtaining land for conservation purposes and obtaining it for active recreational use. Most of the land discussed would not be for active use.

Karen O'Sullivan expressed concern that their property was a target property. She stated that the Board was thinking about out of towners and not the residents of Califon.

Jason Ruggiero stated that this is the reason for this meeting. It is off base to say that the Board is not thinking about the community. This is the whole reason for this meeting, to get resident input.

Tom Bedell stated that the Board has been taking this project in stages and that the public is always welcome to participate and comment during meetings. This is the stage where the Board wants to get public input. The Board did not try to intentionally exclude anyone.

There was discussion among the Board members regarding how the properties shown on the map became listed as acquisition targets. It was determined that these properties were all discussed at the last meeting. Jim Kyle stated that he prepared the map based on the discussions of the last meeting, there is nothing official about this map, it is for discussion purposes.

John Lynch discussed Califon Dam removal. If the Dam is removed it will expose 100's of feet of property on either side. As landowners along the Mill Pond they have not been included in any of the discussions. Wesley Lynch commented that as owners they want to be included in the discussions about the Dam. Seeing this property listed for acquisition was a bit concerning especially because it is already a sensitive issue.

Leo Janas stated that the Borough can not just take the Mill and do anything to it, it is privately owned. This is not a process in which the Borough is looking to condemn properties. The Board was simply discussing a list of desirable properties, if the properties went up for sale at any point and the Borough was able to obtain funding these properties would be of interest.

Chairman Arthur Owens stated that when the Board spoke about possible acquisition, they were looking for possible acquisitions for people to park on to access the river so that people would not be trespassing on privately owned land. There was no intention to hurt landowners. The idea was, is the owner of the listed properties interesting in selling, if they are that's great if not then that's the end of the discussion.

John Lynch stated that he believes that everyone believes mill pond needs help. Also that river reclamation is necessary. All that is missing is a discussion on these topics.

Chairman Owens stated that everyone agrees that they would like the Mill Pond to remain because it is a part of the Borough. It is listed in the reexam. He recommended that the public go to the Town Council to ask that they reach out to Raritan Headwaters and the DEP.

Jim Kyle read paragraph 3 of the recommendation of the reexam that discussed the Mill Pond and the Dams.

Kathy Schwartz commented about the bathrooms in the park. She stated that Long Hill had temporary facilities and when they moved to permanent bathrooms it became a nightmare.

Jason Ruggiero commented that the reason the topic came up is the porta johns are continually dumped with garbage, so they are close to being removed. It is a major issue. So we are looking for a resolution. The DPW won't service the garbage in the park. The Board was unsure why the private companies won't service the park.

Jason Ruggiero commented that Karen Mastro is looking into a grant to get some sort of cameras to provide surveillance in the park.

Jim Kyle stated that it wasn't yet determined if permanent bathrooms were even feasible due to if a septic system was able to be put in.

Jim Kyle stated that once it is determined which properties are of priority it will then be determined who owns the properties.

Tom Bedell suggested that if anyone wants to serve on the Planning Board they should speak to the mayor.

VI. Minutes: February 16, 2022, minutes are tabled until next meeting.

March 16, 2022, No changes, no comments.

Motion to adopt: John Lynch

Second: Tom Bedell

Mayor Daniel: absent
Thomas Bedell: yes
Jason Ruggiero: abstain
John Lynch: yes

Leo Janas: yes
Arthur Owens: yes
Jason Bittay: yes

VII. Public Comment: none

VIII. Comments from Board Members on non-agenda items: none

IX. Adjournment: Motion to adjourn until next meeting on July 20 made by Tom Bedell

Second: Jason Bittay

Tom Bedell commented that he will not be present at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm

Prepared by Catherine Innella

Approved_____