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Florence, New Jersey 08518-2323
May 16, 2010

The regular meeting of the Florence Township Planning Board was held on the above date at the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, NJ. Chairperson Hamilton-Wood called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Chairperson Hamilton-Wood then read the following statement: "I would like to announce that this meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice has been provided and posted in the main hall of the Municipal Complex."

Upon roll call the following members were found to be present:

Mayor Bill Berry	Wayne Morris
Mildred Hamilton-Wood	Paul Ostrander
James Molimock	Frederick Wainwright

ABSENT: Council Representative Dennis O'Hara
Tim Lutz
Solicitor David Frank
Planner Joseph Petrongolo

ALSO PRESENT Dan Guzzi, P.E.
George Stevenson, P.P. (substitute for Joseph Petrongolo)

SWEARING IN AND SEATING OF NEW MEMBERS AND/OR ALTERNATES

Mayor Berry administered the Oath of Office to Class IV Member James Molimock.

RESOLUTIONS

There were no resolutions for approval at this time.

MINUTES

Motion of Morris, seconded by Molimock to approve the Minutes from the regular meeting of April 18, 2011 as submitted. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence for review at this time.

APPLICATIONS

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There were no applications at this time.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Hamilton-Wood stated that the Board would be opening the public hearing for a Preliminary Investigation for Determination of Area in Need of Redevelopment and Redevelopment Plan for the former Duffy School Area, Block 45, Lots 8, 9, 10, 13, 14 and 15.

George Stevenson from the firm of Remington, Vernick and Arango stated that he would be giving the Board a brief presentation on the Preliminary Investigation for an area in need of Redevelopment and a Redevelopment Plan for the former Marcella Duffy School site and an adjoining residential parcel.

Mr. Stevenson stated that the Board's task this evening is to make a recommendation to the governing body as to whether or not the subject area satisfies the criteria necessary for an area of redevelopment declaration and also to make a recommendation with respect to acceptability of the redevelopment plan itself. He stated that the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law (LRHL) sets forth a process and criteria that if there be substantial evidence of just one of those criteria (of the 8 that are mentioned in the statute) then you can declare the area "in need of redevelopment". Mr. Stevenson reminded the Board, since they don't deal with this type of study every day, that everything begins and ends with the governing body. The governing body has directed by resolution that this Board take a look at this area, study it, and come back with a recommendation for redevelopment eligibility and prepare a plan for the governing body's consideration.

Mr. Stevenson said that the second thing that the LRHL does is sets forth a list of 8 criteria. In this case there are only 2 of the criteria that are applicable, Criteria "a" and Criteria "d". Criteria "a" is where a building basically has become unfit for occupancy. Criteria "d" is any time you have deterioration, dilapidation, and/or faulty arrangement. In this case you have to be able to identify these conditions and demonstrate that there is some detriment to the building.

Mr. Stevenson stated that area in totality is approximately 1.14 acres and is located on the north side of West Second Street in the block of West Second that is bound to the west by Summer Street and bound to the east by Spring Street. There are only 2 major improvements within that area, one is a single family home at the northwest corner of Second Street and Spring Street and the remainder is the land that made of the Marcella L. Duffy School campus.

Mr. Stevenson stated that in regard to zoning, Lots 9 and 10 at the northwest corner of Spring and Second Streets contain a single family home and is located in the RA, low density residential zoning district. Lots 8, 13, 14 and 15 the proposal is for multi-family age restricted affordable housing, which is what the prevailing zoning anticipates for that site as it is zoned for high-density age restricted affordable housing district. He also

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stated that this is a PA2 area under the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. Under the State plan the PA2 areas are viewed as being growth areas and redevelopment is strenuously encouraged.

Mr. Stevenson stated that the residence on the corner, based on an exterior inspection, appears to be in very good condition. There is a provision in the statute that does allow you to include properties even if they do not exhibit any of the statutory criteria if it is reasonable to assume that including them allows for an ultimately better development in the end. He stated that he is suggesting that because any time you have additional land it gives you greater flexibility and design and more opportunity for a developer to address issues that result from development that may be of concern to adjoining property owners.

Mr. Stevenson said that the school building has been vacant for over 3 years. There are instances of severe deterioration inside the building, outside the building and even on some of the site improvements. In terms of the exterior, there is cracking in the brickwork. There is some very significant cracking in the rear elevation; which could indicate some structural problem and could be an unsafe condition. There are many boarded windows. There is pavement that is severely deteriorated on both the east and west sides. There are concrete wheel stops that are deteriorated. Inside the building there are areas where the ceiling tiles have collapsed. There are instances of leaking. There is severe flecking of paint; given the age of the building it is most likely lead based paint. He stated that there is roof damage. The front wall appears to be pulling away from the building. There are instances of crumbling foundation and brick support columns that are crumbling. From a health standpoint in addition to the flecking paint, there are dead birds in the building and avian feces. This building is an attractive nuisance and therefore there is an increased likelihood of fire, vagrancy and criminal mischief. He said that he has documented through the police department at the time that the report had been prepared there were 5 instances of criminal mischief and one more instance of criminal has been reported since the report was prepared.

This building is in such a state of severe deterioration and the health issues that emanate from that are such that Criteria "a" can be leveraged. It is an unsafe, unfit structure for occupancy. Criteria "d" is met in the fact that there is significant dilapidation or deterioration for all the reasons that have just been articulated.

Mr. Stevenson stated that the bottom line is that the Board has two bases to be able to recommend to the governing body that the entire area can be declared to be in need of redevelopment. This is Criteria "a" and "d" with the school and even though there is no criterion being manifested with the house the statute does allow including parcels where you feel that a plan for redevelopment would benefit from the inclusion of that additional parcel.

Mr. Stevenson stated that there is also a plan that accompanies this report. Initially the Master Plan anticipated that this building would become an adaptive reuse and ultimately used for age restricted affordable housing. The thinking now is that the building would actually be demolished and a similar building could be constructed at that location. We

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would be doing what the Master Plan had anticipated but with the one change of the demolition of the building instead of the adaptive reuse.

Mayor Berry said that the Township had a significant plan in place in 2009 with a company that was going to come in and rehab the existing building. A plan was developed and was submitted to the State. At that time there was a significant amount of grant money being awarded for these types of projects. He stated that we thought that we had a strong enough application to be able to receive some of this grant money, that with along with COAH Trust Fund money would offset the 15 million dollar cost of the project. Florence was in the top 2 or 3, but was disqualified. We reworked the plan and were disqualified again. The company who was working with Florence Township on this plan advised Council that they thought that the application would be better received if the building were demolished and a new building, very similar in appearance, were built. That is the plan that we are working on now.

Mr. Stevenson stated that the objectives of this plan include a more productive utilization of land, a safer neighborhood due to the removal of the vacant structure, housing for seniors in an area where there is a range of services and providing affordable housing. One of the benefits of going the redevelopment route is that the Township has more control over the future development of that site. Once the plan is in place any redevelopment activity that occurs has to be in accord with the redevelopment plan unless the governing body chooses to amend the redevelopment plan. There is greater control over the project as it is a partnership between the public sector and the private sector and the Township has the ability to refine existing development standards to the extent that is necessary to make the project work.

Mr. Stevenson stated that there is no eminent domain here. The school is municipally owned so there would be no reason for eminent domain. This plan continues the Township's policy that eminent domain is not utilized against properties. This plan that calls for the demolition of the building and construction of a 3 story building (approximately 64,000 sq. ft.) for about 65 age restricted units. This plan is consistent with the affordable housing goal of the community to make affordable housing available. It is in accordance with the re-examination of the Master Plan that calls for a provision of age restricted affordable housing through a municipally sponsored project. This site was specifically identified as a site for municipally sponsored 100% affordable development in the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan that was adopted in 2008 the only difference being the demolition and reconstruction as opposed to the reuse. This is also in accordance with the Burlington County Route 130 Corridor Study. There is no significant relationship or impact on master plans of other municipalities.

Mr. Stevenson summed up by saying that he has no reservations in advising this board to recommend to the governing body that based on Criteria "a" and "d" the subject property be declared an area in need of redevelopment.

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Member Morris asked if the homeowners of Lots 9 and 10 were in agreement with this plan. Mayor Berry stated that Administrator Richard Brook has had some significant conversations with Mr. and Mrs. Burkhardt who own the single family home.

Member Morris stated that he serves on the Historic Preservation Commission and the HPC was given the opportunity to tour the building. He stated that it was enlightening to go through the building and he was definitely in agreement with the recommendations and suggested that in the future it would be beneficial for the Board to have the opportunity to tour sites such as this as well.

Member Wainwright stated that he is glad that the homeowners are in agreement with this plan because he doesn't want to see the Township use eminent domain.

Motion of Berry, seconded by Morris to open the hearing to public comment. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

William Burkhardt stated that he and his wife Norma lived on Lots 9 and 10 in the subject area. Mr. Burkhardt stated that they realize how bad a shape the building is in. Mr. Burkhardt stated that they are willing to sell their home but they would like a fair price for their house. Mayor Berry stated that should the Township decide to acquire the Burkhardt property a fair and equitable price would be offered. He also stated that this does qualify for the COAH Trust Fund, so the COAH Trust Fund could be used to acquired additional property to go with this project.

Motion of Berry, seconded by Ostrander to close the public portion. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

Motion of Berry, seconded by Morris to recommend to Florence Township Council to find this area in need of redevelopment and accept the redevelopment plan under Criteria "a" and "d".

Upon roll call the Board voted as follows:

YEAS: Berry, Hamilton-Wood, Molimock, Morris, Ostrander, Wainwright
NOES: None
ABSENT: Lutz, O'Hara

PUBLIC COMMENT

Motion of Berry, seconded by Wainwright to open the meeting to public comment. Motion unanimously approved by all members present. Hearing no one wishing to speak motion was made by Berry, and seconded to close the public comment. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

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Mr. Stevenson complimented the Florence Township Land Use Department and the entire administrative staff of Florence Township. Mayor Berry stated that he is very proud of the job that is done by all of the Township's administrative employees.

Motion of Berry, seconded by Morris to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

Paul Ostrander, Secretary

PO/ne