

**Franklin Borough Planning Board**  
**Meeting Minutes for**  
**May 1, 2024 – Workshop Meeting**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by the Chairman, Mr. Christiano who then led the assembly in the flag salute.

Mr. Christiano read the Statement of Compliance pursuant to the “Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, PL 1975.”

**ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS:**

John Christiano – Chairman (Present)  
John Friend – Vice Chairman (Present)  
Wes Suckey (Present)  
Jim Williams (Present)  
James Nidelko (Present)  
Michael Raperto (Present)  
Floy Estes (Present)  
Councilman Concetto Formica (Present)  
Mayor John Sowden (Present)  
Sharon Schultz, Alternate 1 (Present)  
James Affinito, Alternate # 2 (Absent)

**ALSO, PRESENT:**

Robert Correale, Planning Board Attorney  
Tom Knutelsky, Planning Board Engineer  
Jesscia Caldwell, Planning Board Planner

**PRESENTATION:**

Zinc Mine Property Presented by Tom Prol.

Mr. Correale stated that he had a conversation with Ms. Schultz before the meeting started and Ms. Schultz stated that Mr. Prol is her attorney.

Mr. Correale would ask that Ms. Schultz not participate in the presentation.

However, Ms. Schultz can be present in the room.

Mr. Christiano thanked Mr. Correale and asked Ms. Schultz if she was ok with everything that Mr. Correale stated.

Ms. Schultz stated yes and thanked them.

Mr. Christiano asked Mr. Prol to come forward to start his presentation.

Mr. Prol introduced himself with a brief introduction of himself.

Mr. Prol stated that he was born and raised in Franklin and his very familiar with the Zinc Mine property. He is hoping like so many others that this property sees the recognition that it deserves after being so dormant for so long.

Mr. Prol stated that he wanted to introduce some people tonight who are working on this property.

Mr. Prol stated that he would introduce them one at a time to come up and give brief presentations on the aspects of the property that they are involved with.

Mr. Prol stated obviously we want to work with you and come up with something that is adaptive to the community’s needs and something that would be appealing to the town and local residents.

Mr. Prol stated that he would like to first bring up Johnathan Klien. Who is here tonight on behalf of the developers.

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Mr. Correale asked if he could just interject for a minute to make sure that Mr. Prol and his team of professionals are aware that this meeting is just a conversation and nothing is promised or set in stone. This is just to give a presentation of ideas and concepts that could be possible.

Mr. Prol agreed and stated that this is just a friendly informal presentation to make the town and powers that be aware of what could become of this project.

Mr. Klien introduced himself and gave a brief background of his role in this project as the land coordinator for the developer who is looking to develop the Zinc Mine property.

Mr. Klien stated that the developer he is representing is a small family run business who have worked on six other projects like this one.

Mr. Klien stated that every project they work on they work with the towns just like they plan on working with Franklin to get to know the town. Help them make their vision into a reality.

Mr. Klien stated that I know Main Street is very near and rear to the residents of Franklin that's why one of our ideas is to put the amenities of the project be in the front of the property on Main Street. Making it for the townspeople.

Mr. Klein stated that they have a big project before them as most of you all know the property has been left in disrepair for 70 plus years now. However, the developers are up for the task and are willing to invest in this property. They see a lot of good that can come from developing this property. A diamond in the ruff in Franklin Borough.

Mr. Christiano asked who the current owner of the property was.

Mr. Prol apologized and stated that he should have mentioned that in his introduction.

Mr. Prol stated that Toni Patire is the current owner.

Markstone Group is the contract purchaser.

Mr. Christiano thanked Mr. Prol & Mr. Klien.

Mr. Prol introduced Ken Dykstra as the project's engineer.

Mr. Dykstra gave a brief description of his credentials as a professional.

Mr. Correale stated although this is not an application the board will qualify you as an expert engineer.

Mr. Dykstra presented the board with a rendering of a concept plan that was developed to show the possible plans intended for the property. Dated April 18, 2023. Done by Lancing engineering.

Mr. Dykstra stated that he has smaller versions of what the board shows for all the board members. Mr. Dykstra passed out the papers to the board members.

Mr. Dykstra went over the plan by the according color schemes. Noting the areas of construction of townhouses, store fronts, new roadways and or access roads to be added to the area of Junction, Fowler & Catlin

Mr. Dykstra stated that the property has property on Main Street, Junction & Sterling Street.

The property consists of three block & lots with just over 20 acres.

First floor would be stores fronting Main Street with three story apartments on top of the retail space. The town houses towards the back of the property are four stories. This particular plan does show the change house but we do not know at this time what will happen with the change house.

Mr. Dykstra stated that the property was a unique property with three different levels and elevations.

The railroad elevation would have town houses that would be five stories high then 4 then 3 stories as the property moves more towards the high elevation on Main Street.

Mr. Dykstra stated that there are 500 units planed. Mr. Dykstra stated that number is not set in stone. Geometry and parking would all have to work out in order for that 500 number to stick.

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Mr. Christiano stated that he sees the change house on the plans. He does not see the Zinc Company Time House on the plan.

Mr. Dykstra stated that particular building is not on this plan.

Mr. Christiano stated is the proposed plan here to knock down the time house building.

Mr. Dykstra stated yes.

Mr. Christiano stated he would hold comments till the end of the presentation and asked Mr. Dykstra where the access roads would be located.

Mr. Dykstra showed Mr. Christiano and the rest of the board members on the diagram where the access roads would be. Fowler, Catlin & Junction.

Mr. Friend stated one way in, one way out for each level.

Mr. Dykstra agreed and explained its one big loop around to access all three areas that will have development.

Mr. Christiano asked about the two chimneys that were left on property.

Mr. Dykstra stated that it is his understanding that they can not be saved and will be removed.

Mr. Christiano asked if there was any structural data to proof that.

Mr. Dykstra replied with no, he does not.

Mr. Christiano mentioned the proposed plan for the Rail to trails project that is very close to being underway in the next few weeks.

Mr. Dykstra stated that he remembered that being mentioned at one of the preliminary meetings with the town and he does not think that this project will interfere with that and will be an added amending to those who reside there.

Mr. Raperto asked if the buildings will be 5 stories that it will exceed the height ordinance.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that would not apply because it is located in the Zinc Mine zone.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that the height restrictions were part of the redevelopment and the height restrictions in the other zones do not apply to this zone.

Mr. Dykstra stated this project will come with road improvements and a new sidewalk system.

Mr. Dykstra stated that he knows Mr. Knutelsky will definitely want to see roads widened and improved to support the amount of traffic that will be created with the proposed project.

Mr. Christiano stated that two out of the three lots are out of the sewer service system how will the developers be addressing that.

Mr. Dykstra stated they are going to ask for that to be amended and for those lots to be placed back into the sewer service system.

Mr. Christiano asked if there were any thoughts of making this a commuter center with the railroad there.

Mr. Dykstra stated no.

Mr. Dykstra and the board discussed at length the access roads and where the residents of the development will enter and exit. The board members shared their concern of the traffic that will be created and the road not being big enough.

Mr. Dykstra insured the members that this was all just the beginning stages and there was a lot more research and data to come forth. Mr. Dykstra stated that there will be a traffic study done as well. There is a lot more data that needs to be collected to be certain that these access road areas would be the primary ways of entering and exiting the development. Mr. Christiano stated that the only thing he does not see with this plan is how the residents in the new development will stay on Main Street. Mr. Christiano stated that there is nothing on Main Street besides the small area of mixed use and the little to nothing that is currently on Main Street now. Mr.

Christiano stated that people are still going to get in their cars and go to Rt 23 which is creating more traffic. Mr. Williams asked if there was anyway that there could be stores put right in the

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center of the project for the development for that development's residents. Mr. Dykstra stated that he does not see the reason for adding a super market or a restaurant in the middle of the development. Which will cause more traffic. Mr. Suckey stated the best place for a pizzeria or a small restaurant would be in the front facing main street which is proposed. Mr. Dykstra agreed. Mr. Christiano briefly mentioned the idea of an elevator to get from the lower lot to the upper lot. Mr. Dykstra stated that is something that can most likely be considered and acuminated. Mr. Christiano asked Mr. Dykstra what keeps the change House on the plans. Mr. Dykstra stated that he could not answer that as he is just the engineer. That would be a question for the applicant. Mr. Christiano asked if there was anyone here tonight that could answer that question. Mr. Prol stated that the answer is that they do not know. They are willing to hear the towns ideas and consider what they can but to state point blank what makes the change house stay is a hard question to answer at this time. Mr. Prol stated what he does know as the change house stands today it would be very costly. The applicant is willing to capture the history of what went on at this property years ago and wants to give it the respect that it deserves, how we do that is still a working progress. The developers are willing to work with the town to come up with a plan to do just that. Mr. Christiano stated that he knows that the council with the exception of one council member voted to tear down the Change and Time House. Mr. Prol stated that there's a lot of voices and they are all rooting for the change house and I understand that but I do not see how the change house survives as the time change as it stands right now.

Mr. Prol stated that he knows how important the history of the change house is and the overall property. He and his client will do their best to preserve what they can. Mr. Prol stated I just don't have a direct answer for you to what keeps the Change House, there other than making sense finically. Mr. Prol stated this is exactly why we wanted to have this meeting as a conversation to see where everyone stands and what they want or don't want. Ask questions and have the dialogue needed to work out the details. We all know this is a huge project. Like mentioned earlier from Mr. Correale nothing discussed tonight is a commitment. This is just for the board to hear from us and us to hear from the board.

Mr. Prol asked Mr. Dykstra if he was finished with his presentation and if he was, he would like to call up Mr. David Lott. Their environmental expert who did a deep dive into the environment issues that we all know will come with this property.

Mr. David Lott introduced himself. ADR environmental out of Branchville.

Mr. lott stated that he did a preliminary assessment of the lots. Mr. Lott stated that they researched and uncovered all documents that have been recorded with the municipality, county, state, DEP, all past environmental studies, site testing's, anything we could get our hands on we read and went over thoroughly.

Mr. Lott went on to state that they then did their own tests and investigations and 55 areas of potential contamination. Two of which we know are contaminated. The biggest one being due to the process of the mining and the crushing of the ore. The whole entire site is contaminated with Ore, Zinc, lead, arsenic, etc. 40 large underground oil tanks. Transformers, a transformers house. The chemical company also played a big part in the contaminated. Then there was the explosion of 1976 which left the grounds contaminated on the upper lot closest to the change house. Mr. Lott stated that there has to be so many more tests done before this site plan is approved for any sort of residential housing. If contaminated there is remediation that needs to take place which is a big process. Mr. lott stated that their report is 8,000 pages of findings and

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documentation. Mr. Prol thanked Mr. Lott and gave him much kudos for all of his time and work that he put into his report. Mr. Prol stated that the board can clearly see that there is a lot more that will need to be done and explored before any sort of construction is done. Mr. Prol stated that the first step is getting the redevelopment plan prepared by Jessica approved and go from there. Mr. Williams asked about water and how that will be addressed. Mr. Prol explained that they would put in an application and work with the town to weigh out the different options. If the town is in need of some water, we would be more than willingly to work with them as well to come up with a plan. Mr. Christiano stated that if this concludes the presentation, I will now open the meeting to the public. Mr. Christiano reminded the public that this is a concept meeting and nothing that was discussed or mentioned tonight is being approved. Mr. Christiano stated that tonight is just to throw ideas around and work together to see how everyone feels about the project.

**OPEN PUBLIC SESSION:**  
**Phil Crabb – Jenkins Road.**

Mr. Crabb stated that when he was on the freeholder board the freeholders granted Franklin funds to work on the viaduct bridge and to remove the hump coming up from Susquehanna Street. Which would improve the interception on Caitlin Rd. Mr. Crabb stated that he heard plans of possibly widening Caitlin Road, Mr. Crabb stated that he does not know how that would work as Caitlin is an old railroad bed road. Mr. Crabb also stated that he also wanted to follow-up with what the chairman said earlier in regards to the council with the exception of one member voting to tear down the buildings. Mr. Crabb stated that he does not understand why the council interjecting themselves into this. There have been seventy councils before them and they never interjected themselves on a property that they do not own, we have a serious developer who is looking to think creatively. Mr. Crabb stated that he just hopes that this board will keep a good eye on this and keep an open mind to saving the history this property.

Mr. Formica followed up with stating that the expenses of the change house was brought to the councils' attention. Mr. Formica stated that the council gave the developer options to do what they see feasible fit for their project. Mr. Christiano stated that the 4 years ago the plans that Mr. Patire brought to the board the change and time house were staying on those plans. Mr. Formica stated that was the old owner the current developers are not looking to have those buildings on the site. Mr. Christiano stated that the new plans have yet to be decided.

**Dawne Rowe Munsonhurst Rd-** Ms. Rowe wanted to make sure that she heard it was 22 buildings per acre. Mr. Dykstra stated that it is 35. Ms. Rowe stated that means that its more than 440 units. Ms. Rowe stated that it is 5 levels not 4 because of parking being the lower level. Ms. Rowe asked about the destiny calculation including or not including the buildable areas. Mr. Dykstra stated that yes. Mr. Christiano asked if there was anyone else from the public that wanted to come forward. Mr. Christiano stated not seeing anyone. **I will close the meeting to the public.**

Mr. Christiano stated that he would like to go around to all of the board members and take a sense of how the board feels about the concept of this project before us tonight. Each board member expressed both their hopes and concerns about the project and for the most part everyone is looking forward to the application coming forward and working out all the details such as access roads, traffic, building heights, retail and keeping the rich history of our town at the time of the application officially coming forward. Mr. Christiano stated that there is no

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denying that something needs to happen on this property it has been an eye sore since the day the mines closed. Mr. Christiano stated but not at the expense of sacrificing the historical structures we have there. The time change and the need to work into this plan. Mr. Christiano stated that we need to stick to the master plan. The master plan speaks in several different areas about the history that Franklin Borough has. Mr. Christiano stated we need to preserve our historical buildings like stated in the master plan. Council and this board need to Stick to the Master Plan period. Mr. Christiano addressed Mr. Prol and his team of professionals and stated I believe you get the drift of where this board wants to go with this project. This board wants those buildings part of your plan. Both Mr. Estes and Mr. Formica stated that the cost of keeping those buildings may not be feasible smart for the developers, as much as we would like to safe them, at the end of the day the developer is who is the one spending the money to do so.

Mr. Christiano **re -opened to the public** for a hand that was raised in the back of the room.

**Abel Soares – Fowler Street.** Mr. Soares stated that the neighborhood which in he resides out is abundant of children who are always walking and playing ball in the road. Mr. Soares stated that he concerned about the amount of traffic this project will bring to the neighborhood with so many children, Mr. Soares is extremely concerned about the safety of the children and all of the residents who live in the neighborhood in such close approximability. Mr. Soares stated it just does not seem feasible with roads that don't have that much room to work with. Mr. Christiano **closed the meeting to the public.**

**Zinc Mine Redevelopment Plan Presented by Jessica Caldwell**

Mrs. Caldwell briefly went over her report. Mrs. Caldwell stated that the report highlights the areas of need and that there is a lot of potential for this property for both residential and with some commercial especially on the Main Street frontage. Mrs. Caldwell stated that this will be something not only the residents residing in development can enjoy, the whole town will benefit from this kind of concept plan as described in the redevelopment plan that was prepared.

Mrs. Caldwell went into why there has been so many discussions with the governing body. Mrs. Caldwell stated that the council voted not to necessarily tear the buildings down the vote was to not make it mandatory that the developers to keep the buildings. Mrs. Caldwell stated that there were council members who felt passionate about keeping the buildings and there were some that would like for the buildings to be saved but was not making it mandatory. The council believed that saving the plan overall was a better idea then missing out on this opportunity. That is why the council voted to let it be the developers discission.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that she hears the board this evening and she knows that this board would like for the two buildings to be saved and added to the developer's plan. Mrs. Caldwell stated that is what the recommendation should be going back to the council for them to review.

Mrs. Caldwell stated most of what the board has discussed this evening is what is in the report. Mrs. Caldwell stated that she would talk with Mr. Knutelsky to help her with the language needed to had to the traffic issues as far as road improvements etc. Mrs. Caldwell stated that if the council adopts this plan, it would take the place of the current zone.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that the plans heard before us tonight are still just in the conceptional stages. When this is before this board as a full prepared application the board can get into the application. A lot more details will be given and reports made.

Mr. Christiano stated that the conception plan that was heard tonight covers everything that is in your report.

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Mrs. Caldwell agreed.

Mr. Christiano asked for Mr. Correale to write up a resolution for what the planning board would like to see as part of this Zinc Mine redevelopment plan listing all of the items mentioned tonight. The board will receive that document prior to the next meeting. At the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting we will vote and memorialize the resolution and send that to the council as our recommendation. Mr. Correale agreed and stated that you need a motion.

**Mr. Raperto** made the motion to have Mr. Brady prepare a resolution accepting the plan but giving the conditions of what the planning board would like to see in this plan as discussed tonight. The planning board would also like for the plan to be consistent with the Master Plan. Seconded by **Mr. Estes**

**Upon Roll Call Vote:**

**AYES: Christiano, Friend, Williams, Nidelko, Suckey, Raperto, Sowden**

**NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: Formica**

**Approved**

Mr. Christiano stated that the board would be taking a **10-minute recess**.

Mr. Christiano brought the meeting back to order.

Mr. Christiano stated that he would like to table the 120 Rt 23 Redevelopment plan to the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

The board discussed to doing it tonight instead.

Mr. Christiano asked Mrs. Caldwell if it will be a brief report and Mrs. Caldwell stated yes.

Mr. Christiano asked Mrs. Caldwell to proceed with her report on 120 Rt 23.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that this is very similar to what we just did with the Zinc Mine property. It is the council asking for your input to the plan before finalizing. Mrs. Caldwell stated that good thing about this plan you have already heard this plan and it came before the board over a year ago as an interpretation plan.

**120 Rt 23 Redevelopment Plan Presented by Jessica Caldwell**

Mrs. Caldwell read from her review highlighting the basic ideas for this area of redevelopment.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that this property is also known as the “old Walmart Site “A plan to develop a super Walmart was brought to the board many years ago and never came to light.

Mrs. Caldwell stated in present day it is known for the Ryan Homes project.

This area just like the Zinc Mine Property is in a re- development zone. Which primarily focuses on one family residential and townhomes with option of commercial uses that are also currently permitted on this zone. (HC-1)

Mr. Williams asked if there was going to be a bridge in that area towards the back by the access road south of Weis. Mr. Knutelsky stated not a bridge but a Covert. Mr. Stated that they are still following up with DEP and working on the final plan. Nothing has been official as to what they are looking to do there besides what we heard over a year ago, when they came before the board.

Mr. Raperto asked if there was going to be an access road next to the Staples building.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that would be used for construction but once construction was over it would be a walking path.

Mr. Raperto asked if that was something they would consider leaving for an emergency vehicle.

Mrs. Caldwell stated that is something that can be addressed when the application officially comes before the board but she does not see why not.

Mr. Christiano wanted to confirm that all the traffic going back to the development would have to go through the Weis light.

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Mr. Knutelsky stated yes.

Mr. Christiano asked if there was anyway there could be another way in and out.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that he does not see that happening but again we have not seen the plans since the first meeting which was just concepts.

Mr. Christiano remembered at the TCC meeting that there was no real pushback from his project.

Mr. Friend stated that it seems like it would be a good fit for that property.

Mr. Christiano did a sense of the feel from the board members on this and each board member was for this as long as there is a service road available for emergency vehicles worked into the plan.

Mr. Christiano just wanted to add that there needs to be a tree safe plan and a landscaping Plan when it comes to the board officially.

The motion would be that the board excepts the 120 Rt 23 plan presented by Jessica Caldwell. With the conditions that the construction access road become an emergency vehicle access road once the development is fully developed.

**Mr. Friend** Made the motion

Seconded By **Mr. Raperto**

**Upon Roll Call Vote:**

**AYES: Christiano, Friend, Williams, Nidelko, Suckey, Raperto, Sowden**

**NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: Formica**

**Approved**

**Historic Preservation Plan – “A Journey Through Historic Franklin “**

Peter Oileman, He stated that this relates to the DEP permit to build the franklin viaduct.

He read from the report explaining the project and what he needs from the Planning Board.

Mr. Olieman stated that he just needs the board to give their blessing for considering the plan to be added to the Masterplan.

Mr. Olieman stated that he is not looking to give testimony he is not a planner.

He just needs the board to state that they will consider this plan for consideration for the Master Plan.

Mr. Olieman stated your consideration is the last piece of the puzzle that needs to be done to finalize the project for the Viaduct.

Mr. Friend stated so what is it that you need from this board. Mr. Olieman stated I just need the board to say they reviewed the document and will consider this as part of the Masterplan.

Mr. Christiano stated that if they were to adopt this document there would have to be many changes. However, if you only need us to consider this document for what you need that we can do.

Mr. Christiano stated that the Master Plan is “owned “by the planning board and they have every right to be able to add and discuss whatever it is that needs to be added.

**Mr. Suckey** Made the motion to consider the document presented under consideration.

Seconded By **Mr. Nidelko**

**Upon Roll Call Vote:**

**AYES: Christiano, Friend, Williams, Nidelko, Suckey, Raperto, Sowden**

**NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: Formica**

**Approved**

**OPEN PUBLIC SESSION:**

Mr. Christiano opened the meeting to the public.



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Dawne Rowe – Munsonhurst Rd

Addressed the concerns that she has with the traffic that these developments will bring to Rt 23 especially coming down from the mountain.

Mr. Christiano thanked Ms. Rowe for her concerns.

Mr. Christiano asked if anyone else.

Mr. Christiano closed the meeting to the public.

**DISCUSSION:**

NONE

**OLD BUSINESS:**

NONE

**NEW BUSINESS:**

NONE

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Mr. Williams** made a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Mr. Suckey** seconded it.

**All were in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 10:20