

Franklin Borough Planning Board

Regular Meeting Minutes for

March 17, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Mr. Christiano. Mr. Christiano 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 PRESENT:

Mr. John Christiano Chairman (Present)
Mr. John Friend Vice Chairman (Present)
Mr. John Sowden, Mayor (Present)
Mr. Concetto Formica Councilman (Present)
Wes Suckey (Present)
Mr. James Nidelko (Present)
Mr. Floy Estes (Absent)
Mr. Jim Williams (Present)
Mr. Michael Raperto, (absent)
Ms. Sharon Schultz, Alternate #1 (Present)
Mr. James Affinto, Alternate #2 (Present)
Mrs. Keri Marino Alternate #3 (Present)
Mr. George Drossel Alternate #4 (Present)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Michael Selvaggi, Planning Board Attorney
Filling in for Mr. Brady.
Tom Knutelsky, Planning Board Engineer
Jessica Caldwell 'Dykstra Planning Board Planner

Mr. Christiano stated to the board and the members in the public that he wanted everyone to be aware that during the re-org meeting in January the board voted on changing the meeting time from 7:30 – 7:00. However, the municipal calendars were already printed and state 7:30. Just be aware and let others know that the Planning Board Meeting will be held at 7:00 from now on.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mr. Selvaggi administered the Oath of Allegiance to Planning Board Member

Mr. James Affinto

APPROVAL OF ESCROW REPORT:

Mr. Williams made the motion to approve the Escrow report.

Seconded by Mr. Friend.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: **Christiano, Friend, Suckey, Nidelko, Affinto, Williams, Schultz,**

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Christiano asked for approval for the **January 21, 2025 Re- org** meeting minutes.

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the **January 21, 2025 Re-org meeting** minutes.

Seconded by **Ms. Schultz**

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: **Christiano, Friend, Estes, Williams, Raperto, Schultz, Marino**

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: **Affinto**

Approved

Mr. Christiano asked for approval for the **January 21, 2025 Regular** meeting minutes.

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the **January 21, 2025 Regular** meeting minutes.

Seconded by **Mr. Nidelko.**

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: **Christiano, Friend, Suckey, Nidelko, Formica, Sowden, Williams, Schultz, Marino**

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NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: **Affinito**

Approved

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION:

Herbert & Eugenia and. Linda Amato. Minor Subdivision approval extension
82 Davis Road. Block 1702 Lots 2 & 3 PB# 03-22-01

Mr. Knutelsky stated that the resolution is just giving them an extension of time to sort through what they need to in order to file the deed for lots 2&3.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that there are a lot of lawyers involved and is taking a lot of time for everyone to review and add their thoughts or concerns during the process. The board discussed at length a fair amount of time to extend the deadline to document the deed.

Mr. Christiano asked for a motion to memorialize the motion with revisions to revise the resolution to read 120 days to extend the deadline to file the deed.

Mr. Williams excused himself from partaking in the conversation and vote due to a conflict of interest.

Mr. Friend made the motion to approve the resolution.

Seconded by Mr. Nidelko.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Christiano, Friend, Suckey, Nidelko, Affinto, Schultz, Marino

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: Sowden, Formica, Williams

Approved

APPLICATIONS FOR COMPLETENESS:

**Brook Lane Holdings LLC - 175 Rt 23 and 41 & 43 Taylor Rd. Block 1404 Lots 5,6, & 7
PB# 1-24-02 Preliminary & Final Site Plan. With Both C & D Variances.**

Mr. Knutelsky read from his report dated March 14, 2025. Mr. Knutelsky stated that most waivers recommend were granted during the last application for this property. The only other waiver that Mr. Knutelsky recommended was for the water storm management Plan. That was also in heightened review from the DEP due to the last applications checklist obligations. Mr. Knutelsky Stated that he feels comfortable waiving that checklist item at this time. Mr. Knutelsky continued to read and summarize his completeness report. Asking if the applicant or if the board had any questions at this time, recommending temporary waivers be granted for checklist items 23, 24, 28, 37. 43- 47

Hearing no questions or concerns.

Mr. Christiano asked for a motion to deem this application complete.

Mr. Selvaggi stated to be clear that the councilman & Mayor would not be able to partake in voting due to the D variance in the original application.

Mr. Friend made the motion to approve the resolution.

Seconded by Mr. Nidelko.

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Christiano, Friend, Suckey, Nidelko, Affinto, Schultz, Marino

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: Sowden, Formica

Approved

APPLICATIONS TO BE HEARD:

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Brook Lane Holdings LLC - 175 Rt 23 and 41 & 43 Taylor Rd. Block 1404 Lots 5,6, & 7 PB# 1-24-02 Preliminary & Final Site Plan. With Both C & D Variances.

Councilman Formica and Mayor Sowden were asked to leave the meeting due to the original application having a D variance. However, Mr. Christiano would like to go over the other items on the agenda before they accused themselves from the application.

Mr. Christiano asked the applicant and his team if that was ok.

The applicant and his team stated yes, that it was fine to move on with the other agenda items before addressing their application.

TCC UPDATE:

Mitchell Ave – Dr. Bonnett’s Property –

The Property that was discussed was the empty parking lot of what use to be the old Shirt Factory. The property was already previously approved for an office building.

The applicant now is thinking that he would ask for a mixed-use variance. To accommodate the medical offices and have apartments on the second and third floors. The Committee and applicant discussed other ideas and options as well. Resulting in the applicant to leave with many options and ideas to thing about before going forward with the project.

399 Rte. 23. – Former Provident Bank Property-

There is a new owner of the property who is not exactly sure what he wants to do with the building. He was asking for suggestions on what the town would like to see there. He wanted to know if there was a need for a specific business or store needed in the Borough of Franklin. This was a very open-ended meeting with a lot of options discussed. Leaving the applicant with many ideas and thoughts to think about before coming down to a specific project.

Mr. Christiano stated he left the meeting educated in the building and about the zone.

Mr. Christiano believes he will be back narrowing down his ideas. Mr. Christiano is hopefully something will come about that property and its success.

Zinc Mine Property – 95 Main Street –

This project was a much larger project located at the old zinc Mine site 195 Main Street. The proposal is to build a combination of 489 rental units and 15,000 sq. ft. of retail space. Facing Main Street would be a mixed-use building containing the retail space and 170 apartments. That would be Phase 1. Phase 2 is on the lower part of the site with four apartment buildings containing 319 units. A third phase would face Sterling Street and consist of seven three-bedroom townhouses. The apartments would be a mix of one and two-bedroom units. There would be a 15% set-aside for low- and moderate-income units. There are some bulk variances required for the proposal. The applicant was also made aware of the issues that could hinder the project as far as the water sewer hookup not currently available to the lower portion of the property along with some other environmentally issues.

Mr. Selvaggi stated that because it is in the redevelopment zone there are certain procedures that need to be followed as the board is already well aware off.

Mr. Christiano thanked Mr. Selvaggi and stated that he would like to add that he was present at that TCC meeting. Mr. Christiano stated that there were a lot of professionals there at the meeting. The questions they came to us with and the number of people that were involved it should have been a meeting that should been in front of the whole board, it went well above a TCC meeting. The board members have a lot of interest in this property as well and

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they should all have a say as to what happens with this property site. Mr. Christiano stated that if they are interested in having another TCC meeting it should not be a TCC meeting but rather a concept meeting in front of the entire board.

Mr. Christiano stated that he would like to move on the application here tonight which is Brooks Lane Holdings.

Mr. Formica & Mayor Sowden exited the meeting room at 7:45 Pm as they were asked to recuse themselves as the original application before the board tonight involved a D variance. Mr. Christiano asked the applicant to come forward and present his application and thanked them for being patient while the board discussed housekeeping items prior to hearing them. Mr. Daniel Benkendorf introduced himself as the applicant's lawyer. and the application which is known as Brooks Lane Holdings which the board is familiar with as they were before the board a before and received approval for their application. The property is located on 175 Rt 23, 41, 43 Taylor Rd.

Mr. Berkendorf stated that the applicant is back before the board because of the conditions that were in the memorialized resolution dated September 16, 2024 it has caused for the right away buffer to be impacted along with a utility pole that was not represented accurately on the site plans. Which has resulted in a new organization of the ingress and egress configuration. Mr. Berkendorf stated that this reconfiguration has actually benefited the parking area and the engineer will testify about that now.

Mr. Berkendorf Asked Taylor Vandervalk to come up and be sworn in under oath.

Mr. Selvaggi wore in Mr. Vandervalk in under oath.

Mr. Vandervalk listed his education and his career qualifications to be sworn in as an expert engineer.

The board accepted Mr. Vandervalk in as an expert.

Mr. Vandervalk stated that he would be following and hitting key points that were addressed in Mr. Knutelsky's' report and would like for Mr. Knutelsky to stop him if he needed better clarification in anything specific that he touches on.

Mr. Knutelsky asked if they have met with the fire department to get their feedback.

Mr. Vandervalk stated not as of know but he knows they are working on a date to meet.

Mr. Knutelsky stated that any other conditions that are not being affected with this new application should be carried as a remaining condition in new approval resolution.

Mr. Benkendorf stated yes, that he assumed that and they would have no issue with that.

Mr. Knutelsky went through his report asking questions that have not been addressed thus far. Parking, landscaping sidewalks, fencing, garbage area, etc.

Mr. Knutelsky stated he is satisfied with the questions he had as far as his report.

Mr. Christiano stated that he sees the buffer is narrower does it change in length.

Mr. Vandervalk said no, the length remains the same. Which is the entrance into the parking area.

Mr. Christiano asked if the islands would be affected and if so, would the landscape be correctly accommodated. Mr. Vandervalk said yes, he believes they just have to remove one shade tree in that specific island closest to the entrance.

Mr. Christiano asked if there were any questions.

There were none from the board.

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Mr. Christiano stated that there are very few tweaks from the original application. Mr. Vandervalk stated that if he was completely honest the changes discussed today as small as they are seeming to work out better for the area in general. Makes things much easier and copasetic.

OPEN PUBLICSESSION:

Mr. Christiano opened the meeting to anyone in the public who would like to come forward and ask questions or make comments in regards to this application on only what has been discussed this evening.

Mr. Dick Durina 23Lowzaw Rd

Mr. Durina stated that he was concerned with two things. One being the traffic that this will cause to the area of rt 23 which is already congested along with the traffic that it will create on Taylor Rd.

The second concern is the storm water management plan. Mr. Durina stated that as you all know or should know by now Franklin is in need of water. There are a lot of applications coming in and that's great but there is an issue with our water. The borough has not upgraded the water system in over 40 years.

Mr. Durina suggested a storm water management plan that he can review.

Mr. Durina also said that he received his letter in regards to this meeting only four days ago.

Mr. S. stated that the applicant notice was satisfactory

Mr. Durina thanked the board and walked back to his seat.

Mr. Durina expressed his concern for the dangerous intersection near this property.

Mr. Durina stated that he has been in three different accidents in the exact area of where this development is going. He is very concerned that there will be more traffic which means more accidents.

He would like the board to consider all of that traffic issues that may be brought to rt 23 because of the extra business and apartments.

Mr. Christiano asked if there were any other questions or statements from the public at this time.

Not seeing anyone come forward Mr. Christiano closed the meeting to the public at this time.

Mr. Christiano asked for a motion to approve the application amended primary & final site plan along with the conditions from the previous approval for this application. Amend the bulk variance and buffers, bulk table coversheet needs to be updated, setbacks for garbage enclosure, fencing,

Mr. Affinto made the motion to approve the application with the older conditions from the first approval along with the added conditions discussed tonight.

Seconded by **Keri Marino**

Upon Roll Call Vote:

AYES: Christiano, Friend, Nidelko, Affinto, Schultz, Marino

NAYS: None ABSTENTIONS: Suckey

Approved

DISCUSSION:

Resolution from Governing Body – Authorizing Participation of the Borough of Franklin in the State Development and Redevelopment Plan. Cross acceptance Progress. Its time for it to be approved again.

Jessica Gave a brief summary of what the plan of what it details which is a very broad concept of plans that they would like the borough to support. Jesica stated that nothing would be specific and everything addressed is very broad.

Jessica explained that the governing body has already stated that they are in favor of approving and supporting the plan. However, because it falls under the Borough's Master Plan it comes before the Planning Board for their input as well.

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The board still felt like they were not certain on exactly the plan was and would like to have a better idea of what they were actually agreeing on.

Jessica stated that she would share and prepare something for the next meeting to show the board a better idea of what the states plan consists off.

Mr. Christiano thanked Jessica.

OLD BUSINESS:

NONE

NEW BUSINESS:

NONE

OPEN PUBLIC SESSION:

NONE

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Christiano asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Suckey made the motion and asked for a five-minute recess before starting the regular meeting.

Seconded by Mr. **Williams**

All were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Babcock
Planning Board Secretary