

**SPARTA TOWNSHIP
PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 7, 2007**

The Planning Board Meeting of Sparta Township was held in the Sparta Township Municipal Building and was called to order by Chairman William Hookway at 7:30 PM with announcement that adequate notice of this meeting had been given to the public and the press under provisions of the "Open Public Meetings Act", N.J.S.A. 10:4-1 et Seq.

Members Present: Mr. Gall, Mr. Spekhardt, Mr. Battaglia, Mr. Hogle, Mr. Dolce, Mrs. Sachs
Mr. Goldberg, Mr. Hofer, Mr. Keene, and Ch. Hookway

Members Absent: Mr. Kulsar

Others Present: Thomas Collins, Esq.
David R. Troast, Township Planner

SCHEDULED APPLICATIONS:

JOINT PLANNING BOARD AND TOWNSHIP COUNCIL MEETING

Mr. Murphy was present from Township Council. Mr. Seelagy and Mr. Brady were absent.

**SUSSEX COUNTY ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
NEWTON-SPARTA ROAD
ROBERT DENZER # 2302**

PUBLIC HEARING:

MINUTES APPROVED:

Mr. Hofer made a motion to approve the minutes from January 17, 2007. Mr. Spekhardt seconded the motion and the roll was as follows:

Mr. Gall	Yes	Mr. Spekhardt	Yes
Mr. Goldberg	Yes	Mr. Hofer	Yes
Mr. Keene	Yes	Mrs. Sachs	Yes
Mr. Battaglia	Yes	Mr. Dolce	Yes
Ch. Hookway	Yes		

RESOLUTIONS MEMORIALIZED:

Mr. Hofer made a motion to memorialize the resolution for the Capital Improvement Project for Sussex County Technical School decided on December 20, 2006. Mr. Keene seconded the motion and the roll was as follows:

Mr. Gall	Yes	Mr. Spekhardt	Yes
Mr. Goldberg	Yes	Mr. Hofer	Yes
Mr. Keene	Yes	Mr. Battaglia	Yes
Ch. Hookway	Yes		

Mr. Hofer made a motion to approve the Capital Improvement Project at the Sparta Lake



Firehouse decided on January 17, 2007. Mr. Keene seconded the motion and the roll was as follows:

Mr. Gall	Yes	Mr. Spekhardt	Yes
Mr. Goldberg	Yes	Mr. Hofer	Yes
Mr. Keene	Yes	Mr. Battaglia	Yes
Mr. Dolce	Yes	Ch. Hookway	Yes

SUSSEX COUNTY ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT NEWTON-SPARTA ROAD

Chairman Hookway announced that the County had presented the original plan to the board last May 17, 2006. At the request of the Township Council, the Planning Board has reviewed the plan and the sub-committee has had several meetings with the County who has been trying to address the concerns of the Board and the public. The County has also met with the stakeholders and the Lake Mohawk Country Club. The Board's role is to make a recommendation to the Township Council.

Eric Grove, Sussex County Engineer, John Risko, Asst. County Engineer and Corey Stoner, of Harold E. Pellow's office, the design engineer, were sworn in to testify.

Mr. Grove stated they started this project about three years ago and it is a scoping project to look at improvements to Newton-Sparta Road (Route 616) from Woodside Avenue in Newton to Route 181 in Sparta. This is one of five scoping projects in the County and they are looking for grants and funding to improve key corridors. They have had numerous meetings with the stakeholders and the Planning Board and Council, which have brought about numerous changes to the plan. We have received the approval from both Andover Township and Newton and are looking for the approval of Sparta to finalize the plan and move forward with State and other approval and pursue the funding.

Mr. Stoner reviewed a power point presentation for the Board with the original plan presented which included four lanes, several jughandles and no left turn lanes. The projected growth was looked at for ten years out to 2016. We started with a 2% growth rate and have backed that down to 1%. We have changed the plan to propose 52 foot total width, with 11 foot lanes in each direction and 8 foot shoulders, to allow for bicycle lanes.

Mr. Hogle asked if they did traffic counts?

Mr. Stoner replied, yes from 2003 to 2005, they were in the 1% area. He continued to review the plans and described the changes from Andover to the Pinkneyville Road intersection, which has been the site of numerous accidents. They propose to realign the intersection and designate a left turn only lane. The traffic count numbers do not warrant a traffic signal at this location. The one lane road will continue to Sussex Mills Road, which will also have the intersection realigned. This intersection could warrant a traffic signal due to the numbers of left hand turns, and we will keep check on it. Between Sussex Mills Road and Route 517, there will be a shared left turn lane. This is the area of very high rear end collisions, which goes up to Upper Lake Plaza. There have been 40 accidents in the last 5 years. The proposal includes sidewalks from Upper Lake Plaza to Pope John High School, which are shown in purple. They have also included on street parallel parking along Route 517 near Pope John High School for additional parking. A jughandle is proposed at the intersection of Route 517 and Route 616 due to the high number of left turn movements that can cause traffic to back up to South Shore Trail. They have redesigned the



section at South Shore Trail to allow dedicated left turns and access to Upper Lake Plaza. The issue is left hand turns out of South Shore Trail. They are considering allowing them during off peak hours and propose no left turns during peak hours. The second option being considered is an island prohibiting left turns out.

Mr. Dolce asked if the traffic counts trigger a signal at South Shore Trail?

Mr. Stoner replied, the numbers could warrant it, but the location is too close to Route 517. It is not more than 500 feet away and there is not enough time between.

Mr. Keene asked how will the left turns be controlled?

Mr. Stoner replied, signage and enforcement. He continued with the plan and described the exit from Upper Lake Plaza, which will be limited to right turns only. There is a sight distance problem with North Shore Trail, so they propose a signal at this intersection along with a reverse jughandle to go back in the other direction. They will close off Pine Terrace to become a cul-de-sac. They met with Lake Mohawk Country Club and their traffic engineer to look at the impacts and the feedback was good. There will be a dedicated left turn lane to North Shore Trail and Memory Lane, however there will be no left turns out of Memory Lane due to the lack of sight distance. A shared left turn west of Surrey Lane and the intersection at Surrey Lane will have dedicated left turns in, but not out. Several of the businesses along the area will have the existing parking spaces along the road relocated to back parking lots since we will need additional right of way acquisitions.

Chairman Hookway asked Mr. Collins how we can guarantee the parking lots are constructed once the owner is compensated for the acquisition?

Mr. Collins replied, once the spaces are removed, they will have to construct parking to keep the business use.

Mr. Spekhardt asked how they will absorb the cost of the road improvements in some of these areas where there is excessive rock to be removed?

Mr. Collins replied, they will have to decide between condemnation or negotiations with the owners. It will be complicated.

Mr. Stoner continued reviewing the plan stating that Wagon Wheel Road will still have a jughandle and signal since this intersection is very hard to get out. They will also enlarge the existing detention basin as shown on the plan. There will be a deceleration lane up to Carriage Lane that is similar to the current conditions, but 3 to 4 feet wider and the sidewalks will start here and continue to Knoll Road as well as from the Bed and Breakfast on the other side to Route 181. An additional signal is planned for Knoll Road with the words, "No Blocking" on the pavement. He finished addressing the changes to the plan.

Mr. Risko addressed the concerns about the speed limit and stated they have been conducting speed surveys along the road and there is great potential to reduce the speed from 50 to 40 miles per hour from Sussex Mills Road to North Shore Trail and then 35 through the business area. This must still get through the DOT approvals.



Mr. Dolce asked if the Township will have any say on the design of the barriers or lined areas?

Mr. Stoner replied, this is only the scoping phase, they are not designing yet , but they can come back to the Township with the details. It will not be a Jersey barrier.

Chairman Hookway asked if fire trucks can traverse the center median and why the bike path is not throughout the project?

Mr. Stoner replied, the median will be sloped curbing and will be easily traversed by emergency vehicles. The bike section is not a path, but a bicycle compatible shoulder of 8 feet on both sides most of the way through the design.

Mr. Keene asked what the time frame is for the project and if they will continue growth studies?

Mr. Stoner replied, the projected start date is 2016 with completion by 2020. They will continue with additional growth studies and if there are significant changes, they might need a four lane road later on.

Mr. Dolce stated the growth impacts are coming from farther up in the County, since Sparta is almost done growing. This plan is a tremendous improvement from the first plan, but he is concerned about the growth studies being done, which will increase or change the plan.

Mr. Stoner stated they will consider the traffic counts, but they also must address the environmental impacts.

Mr. Goldberg asked what are the projected negative impacts during construction?

Mr. Stoner replied, there will be some impacts including construction zones and staging areas. They will look at that further during the design phase. They have to maintain traffic lanes and access.

Mr. Spekhardt stated he is not in favor of the two jughandles and the construction through wetlands. He asked if this something that is likely to be approved by DEP? The map shown is flat and does not show the topography. The rocky areas will need blasting and then it drops off to a swamp. He asked if they are proposing to fill in the wetlands and build walls?

Mr. Stoner described the permit and mitigation process with DEP and the retaining walls that will be required.

Mr. Spekhardt also asked why there is a need for parking on Route 517 near Pope John, and what would be the affect on the bus parking?

Mr. Risko stated they looked at it for overflow parking. It has its advantages and disadvantages.

Chairman Hookway commended the engineers for the changes made to the plan and the hearing was opened to the public.



George Daggett, a resident of Fox Hollow, came forward and was sworn in to testify. He stated he owns an office building in the affected area and also lives in Fox Hollow. He told the Board that if they approve this project, it will forever dedicate this road to be the route for all other towns to come through to get to the highway. The State will never improve Route 15 if this is done. If the plan for two lanes is approved now, it will change to four lanes later on. The plan does not benefit this town, but all the towns upstream from here. No other alternatives have been investigated. The 20,000 cars are coming from other towns. The road should be improved to go through Houses Corner Road to Route 15. We should be looking at diverting the traffic away from Newton-Sparta Road, since this will radically change our driving patterns, and the speed limit should be lowered.

MaryAnn Ryan, of 122 Wagon Wheel Road, came forward and was sworn in. She has lived here 20 years and grew up on a busy road. She doesn't like the proposal for four traffic lights, and juggles. There are three schools along this route. They need to lower the speed limit and realign the intersections. The sight distance is not good, but this project is overwhelming.

Connie Gordon, a resident from Glen Road, came forward and was sworn in to testify. She stated she would not be directly affected, but does agree with Mr. Daggett that the State should be improving the highway. She also questioned why the proposal includes sidewalks and bike paths on a road where there are dangerous conditions. It is not a logical plan and she also believes the two lanes will become four lanes.

Paul Johnson, of 427 West Shore Trail, came forward and stated that he agrees there are better routes to direct the traffic. He commended the Planning Board and Township Council for their diligent efforts to preserve the Township. This plan does not fit in with the character of Sparta. He further stated, he is a member of the school board and the transportation office has never been consulted on this plan. There are over 100 bus trips per day in this area from the various schools. He also had concerns with the parking spaces near Pope John High School and high school students parallel parking. He asked the Board to look at whether this plan is wise or will trash our town.

George Molino of 20 Cottage Lane, came forward and was sworn in to testify. He stated his neighborhood has always been safe and he is worried about an increase in crime from all of the traffic coming through. He further stated that the intersection at Pinkneyville Road is terrifying and he would suggest a speed limit reduction and left hand turn lanes.

Martin Schweighardt came forward and was sworn in to testify. He questioned the safety issues and was also concerned with the lack of street lighting. He asked why the improvements do not continue past Route 181 to West Mountain Road?

Mr. Grove replied, they have discussed lighting with JCP&L and the Township. The project does not include that section of Route 517.

Lydia Dunn, of Saddleback Court, came forward and was sworn in to testify. She asked that the County engineers state their names, since she was unable to obtain them from the County office. She stated she has lived here for almost 50 years and agrees with some of the minor changes in the plan including the turning lanes, and some of the traffic lights. She is concerned with the lack of maintenance of the road and asked where the money for the project will come from?

Mr. Grove explained the maintenance is done within their available resources. He described the funding process that must be followed.

Chairman Hookway asked about alternatives to this project including Houses Corner Road?

Mr. Grove replied, Houses Corner Road does not have the number of accidents or traffic counts. They would not qualify for the funds because it is not as important as Newton-Sparta Road.

Mr. Stoner addressed the comments concerning the potential deviations from the plan to increase the road to four lanes later. He stated the documents submitted for the funding cannot be deviated from afterward. They must follow the approved plan.

Kathleen Daggett, of 35 Fox Hollow Road, came forward and was sworn in to testify. She asked the County representatives what they will do if Sparta Township does not approve this plan?

Mr. Grove replied, he doesn't know the answer to that.

Mrs. Sachs stated at the meeting last year, the Board had requested a study be done for the alternative of improving Limecrest Road. She asked if the study was done?

Mr. Risko replied, they did look at accident and traffic studies from 1999 and House Corner Road does not have the high numbers. The infrastructure is already on Newton-Sparta Road now. House Corner Road has the railroad crossing as well as many environmental issues. They would have to build a new bridge and also get federal funds. In addition, there is minimal right of way to purchase and there would be numerous takings of houses. There is also a greater distance to cover. Numerous plans have been submitted to the DOT to increase Route 15 to four lanes, but they also need to improve Newton-Sparta Road. Traffic will increase throughout the whole corridor.

Mrs. Clark of 4 Farmbrook Road came forward and was sworn in to testify. She stated the County needs to address the environmental concerns. They didn't look at "no action" alternative needs related to the purpose of the plan. They haven't shown the reason for two bike paths, which will provide room for future expansion later. There will be construction impacts in the wetlands connected to Fox Hollow Lake. They will need permits for endangered species and other issues including noise, air, and army corp. permits. She asked if they could provide a website on the plan and asked when they will apply for federal funds?

Mr. Risko stated they are looking at the wetlands and other impact. They don't need federal permits, but will go through the State DEP for permits. An alternative analysis will be reviewed. This plan is a good plan and we have tried to minimize the impacts on a rural community, but this road is a major thoroughfare. They can also look at the parking at Pope John again. He further explained the scoping phase and stated they are looking for an endorsement from Sparta and would like to proceed with applying for the funds.

Mr. Hofer recommended Mrs. Clark look at the Sussex County Website for the reports on this project.



Jennifer Delinger, of 144 West Shore Trail, came forward and stated she agrees with Mr. Daggett's statements. They are looking at a plan to get funding for a project that will ruin Sparta. She has been here since 1945 when the road was sand and gravel. Sparta does not need this kind of change to benefit the other towns. She asked the Council members to remember they are elected to serve the public.

Larry Clark of 4 Farmbrook Road, came forward and was sworn in to testify. He stated there are two key issues, one is the safety on Pinkneyville Road and the other intersections. The road is a nightmare and does not need a sidewalk or bike path. They only need a blinking light at North Shore Trail. No alternatives have been presented. The speed limit is the other issue and should be lowered and the traffic diverted down Limecrest Road. He asked the Council to do the right thing and save the taxpayers money.

Mr. Daggett came forward and stated the State website has a plan on it that is being considered for a bypass from Route 206 to Route 15 on this side of the railroad tracks. This would remove the main obstacle from Houses Corner Road.

Mr. Johnson came forward and reminded the Board members and the Council that they are here for Sparta. He also asked them to consider the phrase, "if you build it, they will come".

Keith Smith of 29 Timberline Drive, came forward and was sworn in to testify. He asked the mayor to think about what is right for the town from his heart.

Michael Lucio, of 236 Sparta Avenue, came forward and was sworn in to testify. He stated there will be problems with the traffic lights. He is a member of the volunteer Ambulance squad and this will increase the number of accidents and will slow down the traffic a lot, which could be a disaster. He asked them to explore the concept of Limecrest Road since it could be cheaper to buy out the houses than to move and relocate business parking. He also stated the ambulance squad does not have enough members to cover the area now and this will bring more traffic.

Mr. Stoner replied, they do have commercial businesses in mind and accident rates do go up with traffic signals, but safety will be improved along with capacity.

George Williamson, of 26 Surrey Lane, came forward and was sworn in to testify. He said the improvements are nicer than the original plan, but what are we really trying to do? Thirty percent of the accidents are from deer, how does this change that? He further asked why a bike lane is needed?

Chairman Hookway asked the engineer if this plan could be converted to four lanes later on?

Mr. Stoner replied, there is not enough width for four lanes, nor is there enough drainage. He described the changes that would be needed to the plan.

Chairman Hookway stated, the Board needs to look at all the issues, rural character, safety, and circulation. Sparta is different now and we all know what it was like before, but there are elements to this plan that can be supported. The issues are not from Newton to Route 517, but from that point past South Shore and North Shore Trail and on. I have to respect the engineer's opinion on whether it can be 2 or 4 lanes. Reducing the speed limit will help and the traffic lights



might calm the traffic, but from a safety issue, we need to consider how many lights can be tolerated.

The Board took a ten minute recess at this time and then reconvened.

Chairman Hookway polled the Board on their readiness to vote on this issue.

Mrs. Sachs stated there is a lot to look at and she would propose they lower the speed limit to 35 miles per hour and then take another look next year at the impacts.

Mr. Keene asked what is the acceptable threshold for the number of accidents. 1.5 accidents per month is not alarming, but safety is important. He would recommend intermediate steps to remediate some of the problems.

Mr. Hofer stated he had participated in the sub-committee discussions and feels that his affiliation with Lake Mohawk and other groups would require him to recuse.

Mr. Hogle asked why has there not been any safety improvements done before this? He also asked the engineers if they reduced the speed in the engineering modeling and looked at capacity levels? He is concerned with the comments concerning whether other alternatives were explored.

Mr. Battaglia stated he is satisfied that the engineers have made great efforts from last years' plan for both safety and traffic concerns. He also stated this plan is 10-15 years away and he would endorse it.

Mr. Dolce stated he is not 100% convinced and might abstain from a vote.

Mr. Gall stated this is a big improvement from last year and is needed. He would approve the plan.

Mr. Spekhardt stated he would commend the County on the changes to the plan from last year and he does stand behind the two lanes, the shared left turns, the no left turn hours, the speed reduction and the realignment of Pinkneyville Road, however he is not convinced the jughandles are necessary and would support removing them.

Mr. Goldberg stated a decision has to be made. The engineers have taken a great step in addressing the concerns of the community. It is wishful thinking to do nothing, things do change. He is concerned with the lights and the jughandles, he would recommend a look at lowering the speed limit, but one year may be too long to study it. This project is 10-15 years away, but before it goes to the Council, some of these issues should be addressed. A look at the alternatives could be done to address the concerns of the public.

Chairman Hookway stated there has been a tremendous amount of improvement from last year. Most of the road improvements are good and should be endorsed, but the traffic lights and jughandles are the big issues. The speed limit is a significant factor and must be enforced. He would endorse the project with conditions that the traffic lights be looked at further.

Mr. Grove stated the speed limit is independent from this project and they don't have a full time traffic engineer to look at all three towns and recommend to the DOT the changes. Then all three towns as well as the County would have to pass ordinances for it to be enforceable in court. We acknowledge it should be looked at, but it is a very long process and not part of this plan.

Mr. Risko agreed they would be in the design phase before the speed limit was lowered and he described the process involved.

The Board discussed this and Mr. Collins stated a Capital Improvement Plan must be reviewed and recommended to the Council. This step is unique and rare, so it is very important that it be exactly what you recommend. If this is not what you prefer or you do not agree with the proposal, the Board should take some time to think about it and see if there is a consensus, as well as think about what language you want to say. He suggested the Board carry the vote to another meeting and take time to deliberate among themselves. This decision will be carried to March 7, 2007 for deliberations. There will be no further presentation from the County.

ROBERT DENZER # 2302
LAFAYETTE ROAD

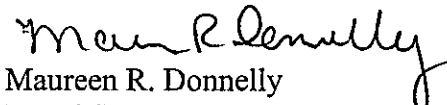
Mr. Collins stated there has been a request for an extension of a previously approved minor subdivision due to the delay from other governmental agencies. This subdivision is at the site of an old lime kiln and includes a dedication of the kiln and several acres of open space to the Township.

Mrs. Sachs made a motion to grant a ninety day extension to Robert Denzer in order to record the deeds of minor subdivision. Mr. Keene seconded the motion and the roll was as follows:

Mr. Gall	Yes	Mr. Spekhardt	Yes
Mr. Goldberg	Yes	Mr. Hofer	Yes
Mr. Keene	Yes	Mrs. Sachs	Yes
Mr. Battaglia	Yes	Mr. Dolce	Yes
Ch. Hookway	Yes		

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,


Maureen R. Donnelly
Board Secretary



**Planning Board
Sub-committee
Feb. 7, 2007**

Members Present - Mr. Keene and Mr. Hofer

1. C & C Realty – 46 Main Street – roof repair

Peter Stoebling, the owner of the office building, stated the roof is 35 years old and the roof had to be torn out since it was rotting out. It is a mansard type roof. Photos were submitted to the Board.

Mr. Hofer asked if the work has started? He also asked if will be duplicated exactly the same?

Mr. Stoebling replied, the work was completed. They received a verbal approval from the building department. It looks the same.

Mr. Keene made a motion to waive site plan for the roof repair that has already been completed as shown. The applicant can proceed with the permits. Mr. Hofer seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

2. White Oak Health Center – 50 Woodport Road – portable sign

Brian Trautz, the applicant is applying for a portable sign. He submitted a site plan with the location marked for the sign. It will be placed on the sidewalk in the front of the building. The sidewalk is 4 feet wide and the sign will be out of the public walking area.

Mr. Hofer asked if the sign complies with the approved one?

Mr. Trautz replied, yes.

Mr. Keene made a motion to approve the portable sign as shown. Mr. Hofer seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

3. Anna Beth's Aesthetics, LLC – 94 Main Street – new tenant

Anna Burgmeier, the applicant stated she currently has her business located on Woodport Road and is moving to this new location for a larger space. A sketch of the proposed sign was submitted. The sign will be on the building since there is limited area for a free standing sign.

Mr. Troast reviewed the location for the area next to the door.

Mr. Keene made a motion to approve the new tenant and sign as proposed. Mr. Hofer seconded the motion and all voted in favor.



