

MINUTES
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
THURSDAY – NOVEMBER 7, 2024 - 7:30 PM
315 WESTFIELD AVENUE

In compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (Chapter 231, P.L. 1975), adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by mailing the Annual Schedule of Meetings to the Star Ledger, Union County Local Source, Union County Hawk and TAP into Clark, by posting such Annual Meeting Schedule on the bulletin board in Town Hall reserved for such announcements and by the proper filing of said Notice with the Township Clerk. Formal action may be taken at this meeting.

This meeting is a judicial proceeding. Any questions or comments must be limited to issues that are relevant to what the Board may legally consider in reaching a decision and decorum appropriate to a judicial hearing must be maintained at all times.

1. Roll Call

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT		
Mayor Sal Bonaccorso	X			
James Ulrich	X			
Council Rep James Minniti		X		
Kevin Koch	X			
Michael Triola		X		
Michael Altmann		X		
Erik Jacobsen		X		
Lance Steinberg	X			
Carmen Brocato		X		
Joseph Arancio	X			
Albert Cruz Planning Board Attorney	X			
Rich O'Connor, Township Engineer	X			
Officer Joshua Weber, Police Dept. Rep		X		
Chief Frank Cerasa, Fire Dept. Rep.		X		
Donna Mazzucco, Secretary	X			

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of September 5, 2024, was made by Mr. Steinberg and seconded by Mr. Arancio. All Ayes.

4. Correspondence

A motion to dispense with the reading of the correspondence was made by Mr. Steinberg and seconded by Mr. Arancio. All Ayes.

5. Clark Reservoir Improvement Presentation

Union County appeared before the Clark Planning Board to present the proposed Clark Reservoir dredging and improvement plan.

Planning Board Attorney, Albert Cruz stated that Union County was here tonight to present a courtesy review of the plans for the Reservoir in Clark which is owned by the County. Mr. Cruz explained that according to the hierarchy of governments, the Federal Government is not responsible to any of the lower tiers of Government, hence the State is not responsible to the County and the County is not responsible to the Township. This is an informational meeting and there is no application before the Board. It is an opportunity for the Board to hear the plans for the Reservoir and state any concerns or recommendations they may have regarding the proposal.

Mr. Bruce Bergen, Union County Counsel came forward and thanked the Board for the opportunity to present their site plan as part of a statutory courtesy review. Mr. Bergen stated that the plan has been through several changes already and will be subject to a "change of use" public hearing as mandated by Green Acres regulations on Tuesday, November 26, 2024, where the public will be able to comment and ask questions.

Mr. Mike McClelland and Mr. Pete Bednarsky, from CME Associates, County Engineers made the presentation. Mr. Bednarsky, project manager came forward and described the four bodies of water encompassing the reservoir, head waters, west lake, central lake and east lake. Improvements include dredging, access to water improvements, a boat storage facility, trail improvements and storm water management. Approximately 155 cubic yards of sediment is to be removed. Fish will be collected and transported downstream, a low flow channel will be created and maintained, water levels will be lowered and heavy equipment will remove the sediment to a dewatering site to dry out. Dump trucks will then use access roads to transport and dispose of the sediment at an offsite facility. Once complete, the lakes will be refilled.

Mr. Bednarsky explained that the east lake will consist of a small boat ramp near Wendall Place with a floating dock, small boardwalk with a gangway and a very small parking lot. Central lake will consist of a second boat ramp with access to the water, a small boardwalk and aluminum gangway and floating loading dock. Directly east of that will be a fishing pier going about 200' into the water for fishing, bird watching, etc. There will be a standard boat launch and an ADA launch for small boats and kayaks. A two-story building of approximately 8600 sq. ft. will be built to store boats with the second story used to house bathrooms, a great room, office and recreation rooms. The first floor will be used to store the boats and other equipment, have public bathrooms and a bait shop. On the exterior, there will be a covered patio on the second floor and a stamped concrete patio on the first floor with picnic tables. Trail improvements will be around the central lake with a walkway trail around Raritan Road through the little league field, the high school and the Department of Public Works yard. There will be 8' wide aggregate walking trails with three small pedestrian bridges. Mr. Bednarsky then provided details on the retaining walls and storm retention basin and concluded his presentation and opened it up to questions from the Board.

Mr. Koch asked a question regarding the building by the headwaters which has been removed from the plans. Mr. Koch asked about the size of the boats anticipated and Mr. Bednarsky stated that the conservation easement with New Jersey Conservation Foundation prohibits any gas-powered boats, it is anticipated that it will be row boats, kayaks and paddle boards. Mr. Koch asked about boat rentals which are planned and the path through the little league field considering the busyness of that area during the season. Due to grading and Department of Environmental Protection issues, this route was chosen but will be asphalt, to stand out from the parking lot.

Mr. Cruz asked for a review of the items listed in the report by Paul Ricci, Township Planner dated November 7, 2024. Mr. McClelland went down the itemized list in the report and confirmed the park hours (dawn to dusk), 50 foot buffer will be maintained, access to the County's emergency boat facility will be grass pavers and heavy vegetation to allow the boats access if necessary but maintain the buffer. Long range plans are currently non-existent. The next question was dredging to maintain the water line and as the permits require dredging to the hard bottom, that is what will be done, and future dredging is not planned at this time. There are no trail connections with nearby facilities planned at this time. Lighting will be restricted to parking areas and lit only when necessary. No

security or call boxes are planned currently. There are no power boats permitted, just kayaks, row and paddle boats. The possibility of special events at this site is unknown. This property is currently listed on the County ROSI (Recreation and Open Space Inventory) and there are no encroachments proposed. NJDEP permits have been submitted and are pending. The black boxes on the plan represent the pedestrian bridges.

Mayor Bonaccorso asked about the season for boating and Mr. Oatman stated that there are no plans to open the boating or any recreational activities during the winter months. Mr. Koch asked about the timeline and Mr. McClelland replied that the bids are out, and they hope to have a contractor by the end of the year with work starting in the spring of 2025.

The meeting was opened to the public for comments and questions. Diane Gonzales, a Clark resident came forward and stated that several residents formed the Clark Reservoir Committee and have been attending meetings to express their concerns. She thanked the Mayor and Council for their support with some of the issues. The committee put together a counter proposal which eliminates the boat ramp near Wendell Place as the second boat ramp is only 500 ft. away. Because the New Jersey Turnpike Authority will not allow boats under the Parkway bridge and will hold the County entirely responsible for any accidents above and below the bridge, the Wendell Place ramp will remain. Residents are concerned with increased traffic, preservation of the tree line and possible issues with kids, drugs, crime, accidents in the darkened area.

Mayor Bonaccorso reiterated the intent of this meeting, which is a courtesy presentation by the County to the Planning Board to seek their comments and recommendations. The Township is very aware of the NJTA letter and is working with the County to resolve this issue.

Mr. Koch asked about the clearance under the pedestrian bridge parallel to the Parkway and Mr. McClelland stated that it will be 14' above the water and the proposed barrier will be a buoy system 20' to 30' from the dam.

Patrick Delaney of Wendall Place came forward and reiterated the concerns about the NJTA issue and the boat ramp and parking lot increasing traffic and safety risk for the families in the area. He also mentioned concerns about drowning. He stated that here is a petition signed by 73 homes in the area against the boat ramp and parking lot as well as a petition on change.org. He stated further concerns about losing the tree canopy and wildlife.

Mr. Koch asked how many water bodies are maintained by the County and Mr. McClelland stated that he didn't have an exact number but approximately five or six and there may have been drowning accidents. However, Mr. McClelland did not have that information but stated that he is not aware of any.

Mr. Nancy Twaskas of Colonial Drive came forward with like concerns about liability of boating accidents and traffic accidents.

Ms. Susan Berno previously of Wendell Place came forward and discussed the drowning that occurred 50 years ago on the reservoir and brought a picture of the children that live in the area. She also voiced concerns about the loss of wildlife.

Councilman Brian Toal asked the County to listen to the residents and make the changes requested and maybe consider the property of the Hungarian Club.

Clare Labrano, Post Road came forward and asked about the dimensions of the building and asked for the removal of the boating.

Mr. Russell Frank formerly of Wendall Place asked about the portion owned by the Water Company and was informed that the County does not own that property, and the Water Company does have plans for a new pump station in that area.

Another resident of Wendall Place came forward with the same concerns of safety, liability and drugs and drinking in the proposed parking lot.

A resident from Garside Place came forward and asked if the wetlands would be disturbed by this project. Mr. McClelland said there will be disturbance, but it is within the allowable limits, and they are waiting for approval from the NJDEP and fish and wildlife. He expressed his concerns about the environmental impact.

Mr. Bill Gryzb of Crescent Parkway came forward and said he liked the project apart from Wendell Place and asked about future maintenance after dredging. Mr. McClelland stated that the silt build up took many years and the County is looking to install a silt barrier at some point at the headwaters.

Another resident of Wendall Place came forward and asked about the Conservation Easement and NJDEP approvals which are pending and then asked if there were any boating facilities on St. Agness property which there is not. She also stated that there are other parks with boating facilities in Union County so there is no need for an additional one and expressed her environmental concerns.

Another resident of Wendall Place came forward with similar concerns and asked if the building would be a catering hall.

Ms. Diana Gonzales asked about aeration and future maintenance and there are no immediate plans but a concept for the future.

7. Public Session

A motion to open the meeting to the public was made by Mr. Steinberg and seconded by Mr. Arancio. All Ayes.

Seeing no one else come forward, a motion to close the Public Session was made by Mr. Steinberg and seconded by Mr. Arancio. All Ayes.

9. New Business

None

10. Next Meeting

December 5

11. Adjournment

Mr. Koch asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting which was made by Mr. Steinberg and seconded by Mr. Arancio. All Ayes. Meeting adjourned.