

The Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of Freehold was held on Wednesday, October 3, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building.

Mayor Higgins stated that the notice of the time, date and location of the meeting had been provided pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 231 of the Laws of 1975 (Open Public Meetings Act).

Councilwoman Shutzer opened the meeting with the Salute to the Flag, followed by a moment of silence.

#### ROLL CALL

PRESENT	MAYOR J. NOLAN HIGGINS
PRESENT	COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DIBENEDETTO
PRESENT	COUNCILMAN RONALD GRIFFITHS
PRESENT	COUNCILMAN KEVIN KANE
PRESENT	COUNCILMAN GEORGE SCHNURR
PRESENT	COUNCILWOMAN SHARON SHUTZER
ABSENT	COUNCILMAN JAYE SIMS

Mayor Higgins read Item No. 4 on the Agenda as follows:

**“NJTPA Study – Group Melvin Design Presentation.”**

Borough Administrator Joseph Bellina introduced Julie Cprek and Adam Tecza from Group Melvin Design who are presenting a vision plan for Downtown Freehold through the NJTPA.

Mr. Tecza, Director of Planning and Design introduced Ms. Julie Cprek and explained how intimately they worked on this project. Mr. Tecza reviewed the scope of the project and explained the funding for the project came from the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. He explained the Emerging Centers program which is designed to support local municipalities in their planning efforts that work to unify land use planning and transportation systems. Mr. Tecza explained Freehold Borough competed for this grant which was one of three that was awarded from 25 municipalities that applied.

Mr. Tecza explained the existing Freehold Center Core, the proposed Downtown Freehold boundary and redevelopment plan areas concentrated directly in and around the bus station as well as the county parking lots near the Hall of Records. He stated the 1980 Master Plan and several re-examinations were studied. He explained the 2016 Urban Land Institute’s TAP study and BRCC Vision Report were looked at also. Mr. Tecza explained these last studies were done because the current redevelopment plan was not working and not producing the results desired. Mr. Tecza explained their work began in 2016.

Ms. Cprek explained the existing conditions analysis included a public outreach component as well as a technical analysis. Ms. Cprek highlighted the key findings that shaped the recommendations in the report. She stated items like Historic Preservation restrictions hinder redevelopment and the area around the bus station is a great site for a large scale redevelopment. Ms. Cprek stated a market analysis was completed and found the increasing need for apartments close to downtown and detailed the current market demand. She added the retail market should be focusing on unique, experiential retail and gave examples.

Ms. Cprek explained there are a lot of parking lots downtown, but the rules governing those lots are confusing. She stated better parking management is needed.

Ms. Cprek explained the bus station is not of the same quality as the level of service. She explained there was a desire for a large public open space.

Mr. Tecza introduced Mr. Bob Melvin and stated he will answer any questions.

Ms. Cprek recapped the recommendations which included; transformation of the bus station into a high quality gateway, activation of the area around the bus station through transit supported development, redevelopment of the Court House Square area, creation of a downtown parking district and systematic management, and a connection to the Henry Hudson Trail.

Mr. Tecza stated there is much more detail provided in the Existing Conditions Report and how the findings were made. He gave further details on the recommended changes to the bus station including covered waiting areas, directional signage, parking for cars and bikes which will make the area a transit hub. Mr. Tecza recommended starting with short term improvements. Mr. Tecza then detailed the recommendations of the proposed park with a mix of office and residential buildings. He explained retail should be kept to Main Street. He explained the plan involves moving the Fire House Annex and constructing a new Borough Hall. He stated the plan is very flexible.

Ms. Cprek detailed recommendations to the Court House Square. She stated it is the largest site on Main Street and there would be opportunity to provide mixed use or residential uses. Ms. Cprek stated the covered walkway makes the parking safer and more attractive to use. She added this plan adds parking and makes parking more than adequate for the proposed uses.

Mr. Tecza spoke to the shared parking spaces with the county. He explained county workers leave at 4:30 which provides parking for residents and retail customers. Mr. Tecza suggested creating a parking management entity. He stated charging for the most valuable resource, Main Street parking, should be done, but stated it does not have to be a lot. Mr. Tecza reported there are companies that can manage this. He stated making parking times consistent is important and suggested making lots close to downtown short term parking and lots that are on the outskirts can have longer parking. Mr. Tecza suggested color coding the

lots to help guide visitors. Mr. Tecza made recommendations for extending the Henry Hudson Trail to encourage bikers and walkers to visit businesses.

Mr. Tecza described how the plan can move forward. He explained a re-examination of the Master Plan will codify the vision and allows for changes in zoning, redevelopment plans and satisfies a Transit Village requirement. Mr. Tecza explained becoming a Transit Village is competitive. He recommended amending the Historic Preservation Ordinance as the new Center Core Plan proposal has a lot of design standards in it that will protect the historic character. Mr. Tecza suggested designating two areas in need of redevelopment; the Court House Square area and the Transit Gateway area. He added the boundaries of the Center Core Redevelopment area should be adjusted as the rehabilitation standard is a lower standard than redevelopment and explained the benefits of doing so. Mr. Tecza explained the importance of starting with a project that shows tangible results, such as the short term projects for the bus station area and then working on a parking entity. He added continuous outreach to the Latino population will aid in reaching the goal of being designated as a Transit Village. He explained the process is difficult and applicants must meet all the requirements.

At the Mayor's request, Mr. Tecza explained the benefits of being a Transit Village. Mr. Tecza explained the designation is branded and goes out across the state. He explained developers and state agencies refer to that list. He added it also helps when seeking grants.

Councilman Griffiths asked for an explanation between rehabilitation and redevelopment.

Mr. Tecza briefly explained rehabilitation can be designated to areas that need improvements to the area. He stated the advantages are; an adoption of a rehabilitation plan which allows for additional standards to be placed on development and the use of five year tax abatements. Mr. Tecza rehabilitation does not give the municipality eminent domain powers. He explained property can not be gained but it can sold or disposed of.

Ms. Cprek explained redevelopment has much higher standards and requires properties to be in serious disrepair, no longer useable, have no other value or is a danger to public health and safety. She explained the powers that accompany redevelopment are higher than rehabilitation such as up to 30 year tax abatements. Ms. Cprek explained how the town could collect revenue over the course of the abatement through Payment in Lieu of Taxes.

Mr. Tecza further explained the Payment in Lieu of Taxes and how the money can be disbursed. He stated there are benefits and disadvantages but stated it is beneficial to the developer.

Councilman Griffiths questioned the disbursement of money to the schools through the PILOT program per NJ state law.

Mr. Tecza confirmed the municipality can decide where the money goes. He suggested determining the impact to the school by any redevelopment project. Mr. Tecza stated there have been changes and an evolution on how PILOT funds are distributed.

Mr. Cprek explained eminent domain can be exercised in a redevelopment area and stated that must be decided up front.

Mr. Tecza added the right for eminent domain can be claimed but never used and it is an important part of the negotiation process with property owners.

Borough Attorney Kerry Higgins confirmed the recommendation is to extend the area of rehabilitation and redevelop two areas previously identified within the rehabilitation area.

Mr. Tecza stated that is correct.

Councilwoman Shutzer asked if the apartments in the plan are going to "high end".

Mr. Tecza stated he did not believe the study identified the type of units, but they would be market rate units, not affordable housing. He stated the kind of development being suggested is new construction which will put the units into a certain level. Mr. Tecza stated the demand at the state and region level is housing for younger professionals who don't want to live in a single family home or people retiring or downsizing.

Councilman DiBenedetto asked if any traffic study has been done of the rush hour, especially at the Throckmorton Street intersection. He explained a traffic light could not be installed despite numerous attempts. Councilman DiBenedetto stated he had suggested making Throckmorton Street one way from Broad Street to South Street which would allow parking on both ends of Throckmorton Street. He added a traffic light could be added at Manalapan Avenue and Main Street.

Mr. Tecza stated that was interesting and this could be looked at when the improvements to the bus station area were being developed. He added this may increase the traffic through the bus station and recommended narrowing the drive and making it local traffic only.

Councilman DiBenedetto stated he agreed with access to the Henry Hudson Trail and stated there will be an increase in bike traffic if the county extension goes through. Councilman DiBenedetto suggested co-existing with the Conrail line and going up to the bus station instead of using Mechanic Street as it gets very congested.

Mr. Tecza encouraged investigating that option and explained the amount of available space will determine that possibility. He explained the county will have to conduct various engineering studies to expand the trail and that should be explored.

Councilman Schnurr asked if there have been any discussions between the property owners in the two rehabilitation areas, including Monmouth County.

Mr. Tecza stated they have not spoken to any private property owners yet as that was not part of the scope of the work they were contracted to do. Mr. Tecza stated there have been conversations with the county and he stated they seem open to a discussion. He added it

will be a process and the county stated they were not willing to give up parking. Mr. Tecza stated the designs reflected the county not losing any parking but added they seem excited and they understand the importance of the project.

Councilman Griffiths asked if there are any examples of Transit Villages in New Jersey that are centered on bus stations and not train stations.

Ms. Cprek stated she did not know which towns.

Mr. Tecza confirmed there are Transit Villages centered on a bus station and added Freehold's bus station is incredibly busy, which is what NJTPA cares about.

Councilman Griffiths asked if the bus station was more attractive and provided ample parking would it service more people.

Mr. Tecza stated yes.

Councilman Griffiths asked when autonomous vehicles are common, in possibly 20 years, what impact will that have this entire plan.

Ms. Cprek replied there are several current transportation options at the bus station; transit, taxi and ride share which are all trending towards autonomous vehicles. She stated bus and ride share will be the first to change over. Ms. Cprek stated there will not be a shift in the level of activity and there will be enough volume to support development around the station.

Councilman Griffiths asked if this would affect the plan for the entire town. For instance the walkway from Lafayette Street to Main Street would not be needed. He added autonomous vehicles are door to door.

Mr. Tecza agreed but added there would be peak and valley times. He explained the need for cars spike during rush hour and those cars are going to be constantly moving. Mr. Tecza stated from a planning perspective the advantage is the investment in the areas that have high long term values. He stated Main Street will continue to be a great place no matter what happens with autonomous vehicles. Mr. Tecza agreed the bus station area will be even more attractive because of higher volume due to the opportunity to run more buses. He stated speculation is autonomous vehicles will open up public transportation opportunities in places like Freehold Borough.

Councilman Kane asked what the realistic time frame is to complete the nine steps in the proposal.

Mr. Tecza stated adopting redevelopment plans usually takes the longest. He stated public meetings would be needed to be held and felt within a year the application process could start for the Transit Village Designation. He stated a great milestone to hit would be

unveiling something around the bus station next summer. Mr. Tecza said the public seeing something physical will boost the application.

Mayor Higgins read Item No. 5 on the Agenda as follows:

**“Public Comments.”**

Mr. Rob Kash, 8 East Main Street, asked who decides if an area meets the criteria for redevelopment or rehabilitation.

Mr. Tecza replied the Planning Board directs the need for a study and the consultant completes a preliminary investigation and the report is sent to the governing body who reviews it and adopts the designation or rejects it. Mr. Tecza explained the state also reviews all designations as well.

Mr. Kash asked if without the eminent domain component, is there less of the standard coming from the state.

Mr. Tecza stated there isn't and explained the advantage of stating the possibility of using eminent domain in the future and detailed how it is not just taking someone's land.

Ms. Kathy Mulholland, 83 Broad Street, asked if there is a possibility to sacrifice the westbound parking spaces on Main Street and make a designated bike plan into town. She stated Freehold has a great bicycle history and the community should look at using bicycles as purposeful transportation to the bus station, right down Main Street.

Mr. Tecza stated parking is always going to be a contentious issue and many studies will have to be done. He suggested looking into a trial period of letting bicyclists come down and see how things go. Mr. Tecza stated Freehold is at a great scale to try things out before money is spent to make changes.

Ms. Cprek added it was discussed early on and explained the concerns and hurdles of Main Street being a county and state road, and using local roads was suggested instead.

Ms. Mulholland suggested changing the name “Court House Square” as it is in the area of the Hall of Records, not the Court House.

Mr. Jeff Friedman, Downtown Freehold stated the Main Street entrance to the parking lot is actually called Court House Square.

Ms. Mulholland stated the library could use money for an expansion and asked the governing body to keep that in mind during any redevelopment plans. She stated the approach into town through Throckmorton Street is hideous and recommended some attention be paid to the gateway. Ms. Mulholland suggested redevelopment in that area.

Mr. Tecza explained the process in starting a visioning effort which would yield recommendations. He stated that could be done during a Master Plan process and obtaining grant money is a possibility.

Ms. Mulholland stated the parking is not currently used with a park and ride mentality and stated people come from other communities and park there because the bus station is so convenient, but they are not really a transit village. She asked if a parking authority would handle that.

Mr. Tecza replied an authority would manage the parking, issue passes and can be much stronger on enforcement as well as address any questions or issues.

Mr. Jeff Friedman, 3 Broad Street, asked if the three areas identified as redevelopment areas in the plan preclude a developer from purchasing property and presenting a plan.

Mr. Tecza clarified there are two areas recommended for redevelopment and one area for rehabilitation. He explained that does not preclude a property owner from going through the normal development process and added the property would not have access to any incentives that are available.

Councilwoman Shutzer made a motion to close Public Comments, seconded by Councilman DiBenedetto.

On roll call Council Members DiBenedetto, Griffiths, Kane, Schnurr and Shutzer voted its adoption; opposed none; abstain none; absent Sims. Mayor Higgins declared the motion adopted.

Mayor Higgins read Item No. 6 on the Agenda as follows:

**“Council Comments.”**

Councilman DiBenedetto thanked everyone for coming.

Councilman Schnurr stated he appreciated the hard work and is glad the next steps have been identified to get the Transit Village designation.

Councilman Kane thanked everyone for coming and thanked the presenters for a great job.

Councilman Griffiths thanked the presenters for the plan and explained he won't be here to see it as he is moving to Portland, Oregon.

Councilwoman Shutzer thanked everyone.

Mayor Higgins thanked the presenters for a very thorough report.

Borough Attorney, Kerry Higgins stated Freehold Borough is very fortunate to have this work done and thanked Mr. Bellina for getting the grant. She added she is very appreciative of their time.

Mr. Tecza stated they work across New Jersey as well as in other states and it was great to come into Freehold and thanked the administration for all of the ground work that was done which allowed them to do the work to their best ability. Mr. Tecza stated he is happy the municipality is happy with the results.

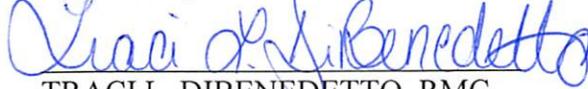
Mayor Higgins stated a great product was delivered and it was obvious there was a lot of passion put into the project.

Councilman DiBenedetto offered the motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Griffiths.

On roll call, Council Members DiBenedetto, Griffiths, Kane, Schnurr and Shutzer voted its adoption; opposed none; abstain none; absent Sims. Mayor Higgins declared the motion adopted.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



TRACI L. DIBENEDETTO, RMC  
BOROUGH CLERK

TLD:lc