

**HILLSBOROUGH TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD**  
**PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**  
**November 29, 2018**

Vice Chairman, Neil Julian called the Planning Board Public Business Meeting of November 29, 2018 to order at 7:34 p.m. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting took place in the Courtroom of the Hillsborough Township Municipal complex.

Acting Chairman Julian announced the meeting had been duly advertised according to Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975 ("Sunshine Law").

**ROLL CALL**

Committeeman Carl Suraci - Absent

Robert Wagner, Jr. - Absent

Committeeman Frank DelCore - Present

Robert Peason - Present

Seat #5 Vacant

**Neil Julian, Vice Chairman** - Present

Sally Becorena - Present

Seat #8 - Vacant

**Kenneth Hesthag, Secretary** - Present

Ron Skobo (Alt. #1) - Present

Sam Weinstein (Alt. #2) - Present

Also present: David K. Maski, PP, AICP, Planning Director; Philip George, Esq., Board Attorney (Eric M. Bernstein & Associates); Christina Restuccia, CCR, Covering Court Reporter; and Caz Bielen, Board Videographer (Premier Media, LLC).

**DISPOSITION OF MINUTES**

- November 08, 2018 - Executive Session Minutes

A motion to approve was made by Secretary Hesthag, seconded by Mr. Peason.

**Roll Call:** Mr. Peason - yes; Secretary Hesthag - yes; Mr. Skobo - yes; Acting Chairman Julian - yes. Motion carries.

**DISPOSITION OF RESOLUTIONS**

None

**PLANNING BOARD BUSINESS**

- *Draft 2018 Master Plan Reexamination Report, dated 10/26/18, for consideration and adoption, pursuant to NJSA 40:55D-89*

Acting Chairman Julian thanked his fellow Master Plan Subcommittee members, Committeeman DelCore, Mr. Peason and Committeeman Suraci for their time, effort and input, and further commended Mr. Maski for preparing a well done report.

Planning Director, David K. Maski, PP, AICP, provided the following overview of the report:

Mr. Maski said the goal for tonight is to consider and adopt a 2018 Reexamination Report. There is a statutory reason for doing so; in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), the Master Plan must be reexamined every 10 years; 2018 is the ten year anniversary. Beyond the statutory obligation, it provides an opportunity to reassess the township's land use policies and determine whether or not they are still relevant and reflect current conditions.

Although there have been numerous planning studies and plan amendments over the years, they appear to some degree to be incremental, reactive, and narrowly focused on a specific site or sites, or to justify a specific zone change. The last truly comprehensive update of the Master Plan was adopted 22 years ago in 1996 when the township's population was approximately 29,000 people, and has grown to over 39,000 people.

The chart on page 2 shows all of the master plan elements and amendments since 1975. There was a lot of activity between 1975 and 1996, with the last comprehensive report done in 1996. The report is designed to address the five topics outlined in the MLUL. The first section looks back at all of the recommendations and objectives from the last reexamination report done in 2008. That report amounted to a lengthy list of 96 good intentions, but little or no policy direction.

The second section provides a brief analysis of how many of the recommendations from the 2008 report have been carried out. This section also looks at the continued relevance of the '96 objectives, as outlined in 2008. Although many of the subject matter may still be relevant in 2018, natural resources for example; a clear and persuasive goal statement followed by a limited number of pointed objectives, would provide more meaningful direction for future master plan updates. Section II also provides a condensed version of each of the objectives, which is meant to serve as a starting point for the development of new goals.

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Section III provides a snapshot today from both a demographic and land use context. The township has grown over the years, and although the growth rate has slowed, it continues to grow (chart on page 21 referenced). Mr. Maski explained page 22 addresses the density of the township. The overall 2015 population density per square mile is 716 persons, which is typically suburban, and on par with Branchburg and Montgomery, as shown in the chart of the ten adjoining municipalities.

Mr. Maski said it is almost as if we have three townships: a rural area, a borough like area; and a more traditional suburban southeastern edge of the township. Calculating that core area, the density climbs to 3,000 people per square mile, which is on par with Raritan Borough. The core area allows for so much open space in other parts of the township. If you take the core area out, it drops to 474 people per square mile. Mr. Maski highlighted some key points on the work force and on median travel time.

The land use section of the reexamination report includes existing land use map, which represents what is existing, or on the ground today, based on the categories marked. The summary table on page 30 shows the largest single land use groups are residential, agriculture, and open space. Each accounts for almost a quarter of the township's acreage.

The existing zoning districts are summarized in the table on pages 32 and 33. Hillsborough has 40 distinct zoning districts, of which 13 are residential districts; 2 agricultural conservation; 4 Town Center / Gateway; 7 commercial / office; 2 mixed-use; 2 corporate; 6 industrial; 2 resource based; and 2 redevelopment zones. Not surprisingly, some of the zones are redundant, with minimal distinctions in terms of permitted use or bulk standards, which points to opportunities for consolidation.

Mr. Maski skipped to Section V, and noted that this section give a summary of the redevelopment areas and redevelopment plans existing in the township today.

Acting Chairman Julian marked the arrival of Board Member Ms. Becorena at 7:46 p.m.

Mr. Maski said the recommendations of the report are found in Section IV. These recommendations are for master plan changes and zoning changes. The first is to prepare a new goal statement, from which a clear vision allows you to craft the land use plan and all of the other elements that go with it. In order to create strategic planning, you have to establish where the township is now, or current conditions; where are we going in 10-20 years (trend); where do we want to go if trend is not what we want to follow; and how do we get there.

Mr. Maski said the Land Use Element is one of the several elements that comprise the Master Plan, but is its core element. The last truly comprehensive long range land use plan map for Hillsborough dates back to 1980. The township has changed dramatically since that time. The last Circulation Element was done 1992 /1996. There are numerous new roads and subdivisions in place since that time, in addition to the Bypass. The elements with an asterisk (pages 37-38) are recommendations that were also in the 2008 report but have not been done yet. The Historic Preservation Element needs to be updated. It has not been looked at since 2001. The Open Space and Recreation Plan was last updated in 1997. The township has added hundreds, if not thousands of acres since that time to its inventory. The Community Facilities Element was last adopted in 1992 / 1996. That plan identifies if the township is well serviced with Police, Fire, Post Office, EMS, and any kind of physical facilities. It looks at whether or not there are enough services for the township, and if they are located in the right places. The Green Buildings and Environmental Sustainability Plan Element formalizes the sustainability efforts in the township. At the end of the presentation, the Board will be asked to pass a resolution as to adopt the Reexamination Report, or not; or "as is" or with changes.

Mr. Maski continued with Zoning recommendations (page 39). He read the overview as follows: *The general impression of the zoning ordinance is that it has a number of redundancies, inconsistencies, and gaps that make the administration of the ordinance somewhat challenging at times. In addition, the zoning scheme can be described as "robust" with more than 40 separate zoning districts. In some cases the overlaps are obvious. For instance, there are five light industrial zones. Certain districts, such as Mining and CDZ, are reflective of outdated uses, plans and policies. Some zones cover only one or two parcels - possibly remnants of previous zones changes. Some zones are overly detailed with design specifications while others have none. A number of zones exhibit minimal distinctions in terms of permitted uses or bulk standards.*

This presents an opportunity to go through and clean up and reformat the ordinances, mainly to be certain there are no inconsistencies. Some specific but not exhaustive recommendations were provided.

Mr. Maski asked for any questions.

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Acting Chairman Julian commended Mr. Maski for his work in preparing a very comprehensive report for the Board's review. He asked Mr. Maski to explain how the public can provide input for the reexamination report and the Master Plan.

Mr. Maski said both are public documents which are available for public review. The reexamination report does not change anything. It is essentially a look back, and a look forward. There were recommendations made in the 2008 report that were not followed up on, and remain only as a recommendation. Zoning ordinances would all need to be adopted by the governing body after Planning Board review. Master Plan documents are the jurisdiction of the Planning Board alone. The whole process is open to the public.

Mr. Maski said it is important to remember that the reexamination report is a work list or a "to do" list. Should the Planning Board choose to adopt it, it means the Board agrees the recommendations are things that should be looked at. Master plan studies can be decided solely by the Board, while other recommendations will require approval by the Township Committee. The report is a starting point. The follow-through will require work and possibly money to accomplish. The Board dictates master plan related matters; the Township Committee ultimately adopts ordinances. The Board can prioritize where they want to see development going long range. For instance, there are paper streets scattered about town that perhaps could be vacated. Ordinances have to end with the Township Committee, but do not need to start there. The Planning Board can draft ordinances for consideration by the Township for consideration. The Township Committee is the ultimate authority on whether or not an ordinance gets adopted, but it can be generated by the Planning Board.

Committeeman DelCore said the role of the Master Plan Subcommittee should be to review the recommendations of the reexamination report and determine from a planning perspective, where the Planning Board wants to focus its efforts. The subcommittee should work with Mr. Maski and the Planning office to help prioritize where the Board should focus its efforts, and when.

Mr. Maski said the recommendations involve a three to five year program, if the Board wanted to do all of it. Sometimes the priority is opportunistic, where there may be an issue in town that needs to be addressed immediately.

Acting Chairman Julian spoke in favor of having the subcommittee meet regularly to work on priorities, dates, etc.

Mr. Maski said the subcommittee would be able to determine whether or not the task could be done in-house or would require outside professional services.

Committeeman DelCore said Mr. Maski has done the work to lay out where we were since the last time the report was done, and the things we either have not been able to get to or any new priorities due to changing demographics, density or other elements of the master plan that need to be focused on. You cannot do everything at once but priorities can be established for long range planning. This report is a roadmap and should be a working document for the subcommittee and then bringing those recommendations to the Board and wherever else it may need to go.

Mr. Peason thanked Mr. Maski for his tremendous efforts in providing the Board with the framework to work from.

Secretary Hesthag concurred and said understanding more about the report; it provides a great start. Prioritizing low, medium, and high items, and having a working schedule is key.

There was discussion about the size of the Master Plan.

Mr. Maski said the main focus is the land use element but there are six or seven other elements. All are available through the Township's website.

Committeeman DelCore asked about the agriculture and farmland preservation element.

Mr. Maski said the land use element involves all of the land use types, so it can be addressed to some extent, in the land use element itself. The Farmland Preservation Plan was last updated in 2009.

Committeeman DelCore suggested it would be a good idea to update the mapping and data from the farmland plan as well, aligned with the Master Plan Reexamination Report.

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Mr. Skobo also thanked Mr. Maski for his great work.

Committeeman DelCore said he appreciates how the report is designed to walk you through the process, in fairly simple terms, where we were; those things that were not on the priority list that need to be looked at; and now what the Board wants to look at going forward. It provides a full view of all of the elements in town that the Board should be focusing on. Committeeman DelCore praised Mr. Maski again for providing such a well done document that the public will find easy to understand where the focus is in town.

Acting Chairman Julian agreed.

Committeeman DelCore asked Mr. Maski to explain what happens next with the document.

Mr. Maski said if the Board was to adopt the document tonight, the word "Draft" would be removed and would become the final reexamination report. In doing so, the statutory requirement is then fulfilled. The report does not change anything in and of itself. It is up to the Board, starting through the subcommittee, as to how to do the work. The report is the start to the process. Passing the resolution is the final step for the purposes of the statutory requirement.

Board Attorney, Mr. George, advised Acting Chairman Julian that the motion would be to adopt the *Draft 2018 Master Plan Reexamination Report, dated October 26, 2018*.

A motion to approve was made by Mr. Skobo, seconded by Secretary Hesthag.

**Roll Call:** Ms. Becorena - yes; Mr. Peason - yes; Secretary Hesthag - yes; Mr. Skobo - yes; Mr. Weinstein also extended his thanks to Mr. Maski, and voted - yes; Committeeman DelCore - yes; Acting Chairman Julian - yes. Motion carries.

**BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Maski reminded the Board the next meetings are scheduled for December 6 and 13.

Board Attorney, Mr. George stated for the record no members of the public were present and therefore; no discussion was taken from the public.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Peason, seconded by Mr. Skobo. All were in favor; motion carries.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

*Submitted by:  
Debora Padgett  
Administrative Assistant / Planning Board Clerk*