

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

**JAMES GIANNELL**  
Planning Board Chairman



**Anthony Garaguso**  
Council Chairman

Minutes for the Meeting of the  
**Monmouth County Transportation Council**  
Tuesday, March 10, 2020  
Monmouth County Planning Board  
One East Main Street  
Hall of Records Annex Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Freehold, NJ 07728

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## **I. CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 PM**

## **II. ATTENDANCE – ROLL CALL**

### Members Present

Garaguso, Anthony  
Vernick, Jeff  
Nelson, Eric  
Nicholas Ponzio  
Grbelja, Nancy

### Staff Present

James Bonanno – Staff Advisor  
David Schmetterer  
Joe Ettore

### Members Excused

Van Nortwick, Peter  
Barrett, Betsy  
Ben Lucarelli  
Frost, Barry

## **III. REVIEW OF MINUTES**

The Council's approval of the February 11, 2020 minutes was sought by Mr. Garaguso. Ms. Grbelja motioned to accept the February 11<sup>th</sup> minutes which was seconded by Mr. Vernick and accepted unanimously by the Council with the exception of Mr. Nelson and Mr. Ponzio who abstained.

## **IV. PRESENTATION**

*- Fort Monmouth Economic Redevelopment Update, Kara Kopach Director of Real Estate for Fort Monmouth Revitalization Authority (FMERA)*

Mr. Garaguso introduced Ms. Kopach the Director of Real Estate for Fort Monmouth Revitalization Authority (FMERA) and thanked her for taking the time to meet with the Transportation Council. Ms. Kopach was grateful for the invitation and began her presentation by describing Fort Monmouth. She stated the Fort is 1,126 acres stretching between the Garden State Parkway and the North Jersey Coast Line in three municipalities; Eatontown,

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Tinton Falls, and Oceanport. FMERA was tasked with the redevelopment of the Fort and is not only focused on selling land but also bringing jobs back to the area. The redevelopment plan was developed in 2008 but is regularly amended to keep it up to date. Ms. Kopach informed the Council that it has already been amended 14 times and they are expecting around 25 total amendments before the redevelopment is completed.

Ms. Kopach outlined a few of FMERA's goals which they hope to achieve through the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth including helping towns meet their affordable housing numbers by requiring each residentially developed parcel develop 20% of its residences as affordable housing, and the creation of 100,000 jobs to replace the 85,000 jobs that were lost when the Fort was closed. Ms. Kopach continued by introducing the Council to the western portion of the Fort, which borders the Garden State Parkway using a parcel and land use map. She explained a number of currently redeveloped parcels that are now operating include businesses, schools, residences, and a hospital. Due to many of these developments are situated near or along already busy roadways, FMERA is working with developers to construct employee entrances along lesser traveled roads that will mitigate traffic generated by new businesses.

Mr. Vernick asked if there was any plan for mobility within the fort and if FMERA has considered the inclusion of micro-mobility such as bicycles and electric scooters. Ms. Kopach explained they are trying to encourage the construction of walking paths and sidewalks between different parcels to allow for connectivity but bicycle lanes would be the responsibility of the towns as the roadways have been split up between Monmouth County and the three municipalities. She elaborated that there is no transportation plan for the entire project due to parcels being developed as they are purchased. FMERA feels they are not able to predict how parcels will be developed and thus can't determine what type of transportation needs each parcel will require. Mr. Vernick stressed the importance of a transportation plan to Ms. Kopach and recommended FMERA plan for circulation throughout Fort Monmouth and especially between businesses and residences through the use of bicycle lanes, roadway shoulders and off-road pathways.

Ms. Kopach continued by introducing the Council to the eastern portion of Fort Monmouth adjacent to the North Jersey Coast Line. Similarly, to her description of the west side, she outlined what parcels have been purchased and what is currently planned to be constructed. The western portion is planned to include sports fields, a bowling alley, arts and event spaces, restaurants, and a college campus specializing in business, cyber security, and nursing courses. Ms. Kopach added that the Fort was already home to cyber security and defense firms as well as tech offices, and a Robert Wood Johnson facility making Fort Monmouth especially ideal for education, experience, and job placement in these fields. Ms. Kopach informed the Council that while Monmouth County has taken over maintenance of The Avenue of Memories, no one has taken responsibility for the other roadways within the Fort yet. The roadways have fallen into disrepair and there are differing views about whose responsibility it is to update and maintain them. Because of these poorly maintained roadways FMERA feels there are liability issues and is not encouraging bicycle use throughout the Fort at this time. In the future the Fort will be open to bicycle use once the roadways are deemed safe and up to date. She also stated that there is currently no plan for bicycle lanes and FMERA only recently acquired a full time Planner on staff however, FMERA would be interested in future talks to improve their transportation planning.

Ms. Kopach explained that FMERA is planning to utilize the Little Silver Train Station for rail access to the Fort. Mr. Vernick asked about the possibility of a new train station on the Fort instead as the rail line currently passes directly through the Fort. Ms. Kopach said discussions were held with NJ TRANSIT regarding this topic but NJ TRANSIT was not willing to construct a new station so close between Little Silver and Oceanport and instead suggested Fort Monmouth pay to move the Little Silver Station to Fort Monmouth which FMERA could not afford.

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

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Mr. Vernick followed with a question about access to the Little Silver rail station to which Ms. Kopach responded that FMERA is looking to implement a jitney service either operated by a Fort Monmouth businesses or developers or through infrastructure improvement grants FMERA is eligible for. She also said NJ TRANSIT is working on a pilot program to run autonomous busses throughout the fort. NJ TRANSIT is currently working to acquire all appropriate approvals and technology to implement the program.

Ms. Kopach finished her presentation by outlining one of the largest hurdles facing the Fort's redevelopment which is the much-needed replacement of utilities. Over 50 miles of utilities need to be replaced and FMERA is working diligently to update them. To date they have completed miles of water and sewage upgrades.

Mr. Vernick asked if FMERA was eligible for grants to do infrastructure and roadway improvements. Ms. Kopach responded that while FMERA is eligible they have not yet been awarded any grants due to the fact that FMERA has a limited operating time. In ten years FMERA will dissolve which makes lenders and grant providers unsure about their investments in the area. She encouraged the Council to inform them of any opportunities for funding that arise as they are always willing to apply. In addition to funding opportunities, FMERA is open to working with Monmouth County and the Transportation Council to improve the transportation planning of the Fort. Ms. Kopach encouraged the Council to review the redevelopment plan which is available on FMERA's webpage and contact them with comments and recommendations.

Ms. Garaguso then opened the floor for any public comments pertaining to Ms. Kopach's presentation of the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth. Ms. Nyna Mckittrick, a resident along Pinebrook Road located near the Fort raised concerns of roadway congestion. Ms. Mckittrick has experienced significant congestion along Wayside Road since the construction of a new Garden State Parkway Exit onto Wayside Road and fears that the situation will only be exacerbated by traffic generated by the Fort's completed redevelopment. Ms. Kopach acknowledged that traffic generated by the Fort will affect the surrounding area and that FMERA is working with developers to guide employees and visitors to Fort Monmouth down lesser traveled roadways to help mitigate the effects on surrounding roadways.

The Transportation Council thanked Ms. Kopach for her time and for an informed presentation on the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### *- NJ TRANSIT Positive Train Control Installation Costs*

Mr. Vernick reminded the Council that NJ TRANSIT is having trouble meeting their Positive Train Control (PTC) deadlines and expressed his concern that the commuting public will be negatively impacted by the consequences NJ TRANSIT potentially faces. He continued, if NJ TRANSIT does not meet the PTC deadline, they will be unable to use AMTRAK owned railways such as the Northeast Corridor, and would be fined thousands of dollars per day if they continue to run trains on their own NJ TRANSIT owned railways. To his knowledge, NJ TRANSIT has stated that they will meet the deadline but the federal government has also announced that NJ TRANSIT and a few other organizations are in danger of missing the deadline. Mr. Vernick suggested the Council continue to monitor the situation and keep the public informed.

### *- Planning Board Resolution recommending an amendment to the Transportation Council's Membership*

Mr. Nelson asked staff about the status of the Planning Board resolution recommending the Board of Chosen Freeholders lower the number of Transportation Council members as he was unable to attend the Council's February meeting. Staff informed Mr. Nelson that staff was directed by the Planning Board to draft the resolution

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

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to bring the Transportation Council membership in line with other Planning Board related councils. The current membership is a total of fifteen regular members and two alternates which is higher than the ten regular members and two alternates which currently serve on other councils. The change will also better serve the Council as it currently operates and will remove some of the stress to find additional members. Staff continued that they would inform the Transportation Council of any changes made to the Council's membership by the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

### *- NJ TRANSIT Customer Feedback*

Mr. Vernick shared a link to an NJTV news report regarding an incident on February 28, 2020 where NJ TRANSIT was forced to halt service within the Hudson Train Tunnels stranding riders in Penn Station New York for several hours including and beyond the evening rush hour. This incident followed a similar one just weeks before that also caused significant disruption. This NJTV report noted that while this incident was raised by commuters as an important topic of discussion at the NJ TRANSIT Customer Service Committee meeting, NJ TRANSIT's Chief Customer Experience Officer and Customer Advocate Stewart Mader did not mention this incident, focusing instead on general overall positive social media comments from riders. During this report, members of the NJ TRANSIT committee noted the need for a better way to more accurately report customer feedback.

As Mr. Mader is responsible for forming NJ TRANSIT's Customer Advisory Board, an outreach group expected to relay customer concerns to NJ TRANSIT Board, Mr. Vernick raised concerns that this committee has yet to be formed despite waiting almost a year since its announcement. The Council agreed to invite Mr. Mader to speak with them at the April or May meeting to clarify how NJ TRANSIT will be moving forward in addressing customer feedback.

## **VII. REPORTS OF STAFF**

### *- Tourism and Events Demand Management Update*

Staff updated the Council that the Request for Proposals for the Tourism and Events Travel Demand Management Study has been released and staff is awaiting consultant submissions. Staff also explained they would like to begin building the projects advisory board and would like to invite the Transportation Council to provide a representative to the board. Mr. Garaguso requested staff provide the Council with information about the study and the area it encompasses so all Council members can review and decide if they would like to volunteer to participate in the study advisory board. Staff said they would send out information as soon as they begin to assemble the advisory board.

### *- NJ JARC*

Staff outlined the NJ JARC grant and the service it provides to Monmouth County. The split grant between Monmouth County and NJ TRANSIT funds the weekday evening and weekend 836 bus route service. Staff explained that the funding costs have increased sharply and staff and NJ TRANSIT are working to find a solution to keep service running and reduce costs to the taxpayer. After an analyses of ridership data and strategic brainstorming Monmouth County and NJ TRANSIT have agreed to continue the service as provided for a small jump in funding on Monmouth County's part. NJ TRANSIT will cover the remaining required funding Monmouth County is not meeting as we continue to investigate ways to improve the efficiency of the service and manage rising costs in funding for future years.

### *- Active Shooter Guidance for Transit Customers Update*

# MONMOUTH COUNTY PLANNING BOARD TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

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Staff has been in contact with NJ TRANSIT's Interim Government Relations Officer and has requested a response to the Council's letter earlier in the year pertaining to active shooter guidance for transit customers. Staff made it clear to the NJ TRANSIT representative that the Council understands the organization is busy with COVID 19 concerns as well as Positive Train Control installation and other issues however, the Transportation Council has been waiting for a response since early January and would like a response in one month's time. Staff was assured a response was coming and NJ TRANSIT would be providing it soon.

## **VIII. TRANSPORTATION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER**

Staff presented the Council with a draft of the Transportation Council Quarterly Newsletter's Spring 2020 edition and outlined the articles to be included such as: information on fare hikes within New Jersey, Monmouth County Hiking Trails, Spring Driving Tips, and COVID 19 related service changes and public meetings for fare hikes. The newsletter is set to be distributed on April 1, 2020. The Council approved of the articles and thanked staff for their hard work on the newsletter.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

- *Nyna Mckittrick*

Ms. Mckittrick addressed Ms. Kopach and expressed her excitement for the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth however, she is disappointed that there is no plan for the inclusion of transit opportunities such as a train station or ferry terminal.

Ms. Mckittrick also reiterated her concerns about an increase in traffic along Wayside Road as a result of the construction of a new Garden State Parkway Exit to Wayside Road and future traffic to be generated once the Fort's redevelopment has been completed. She asked if it is possible to communicate with Google or Waze to help guide vehicles around Wayside road due to it becoming congested. The Council advised Ms. Mckittrick that they do not believe there is a way to inform Google to divert traffic but that their current GPS systems divert traffic once roadways are experiencing congestion. Google and Waze are aware when roadways become inundated with vehicles and divert traffic on their applications but the majority of drivers do not use GPS applications on their usual daily trips and do not receive that useful information. Ms. Mckittrick thanked the Council for the information and informed them that she will keep brainstorming ways to improve the situation along Wayside Road. The Transportation Council encouraged her to bring any new ideas she has to future Council meetings as they would like to assist her in any way possible.

## **X. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Next public Monmouth County Transportation Council meeting will be – 7:00PM Tuesday, April 14, 2020 at the Monmouth County Division of Planning Conference Room at 1 East Main Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Freehold, NJ 07728. Mr. Garaguso added that with the COVID19 outbreak spreading, the Council is unsure whether the April meeting will be held in person, online, or at all. He tasked staff with informing Council members and members of the public through the agenda notification system as to the status of the meeting as it approaches.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Following a motion to adjourn the meeting made by Ms. Grbelja and seconded by Mr. Vernick, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.