

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
November 23, 2015**

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Flynn at 7:37 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Law have been met and that the meeting was duly advertised.

Members present: Julia Allen, Jerry Cook, Elizabeth Duffy, Cheryl Filler, Marygrace Flynn, Betty Ann Fort, Christopher John, Ronald Monaco, Benjamin Smith

MINUTES:

A Motion was made by Mr. Cook, seconded by Ms. Filler, that the Minutes of November 9, 2015 be approved as circulated. Motion was carried with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Readington Township Board of Education
Capital Improvements

Ms. Filler recused herself.

Present for Readington Township: Steffi-Jo DeCasas, Business Administrator/Board Secretary
Scott E. Mihalick, AIA, LEED AP
Eric Zwerling, Board Member/Chair of Green Committee

The Readington Township Board of Education ("RTBOE") has submitted three (3) applications to the New Jersey Department of Education for potential implementation in the summer of 2016. The largest project is the paving and reconstruction of the main access drive to Holland Brook School ("HBS"), and two (2) parking lots. There will be no changes to the width or dimensions of the drive and parking lots. To the west as you approach HBS, a new parking lot will be constructed, consisting of perpendicular parking stalls, for better approach to the fields behind Readington Middle School ("RMS").

At RMS, there is a small parking lot and detention basin to the east of the building. The RTBOE seeks to widen the parking lot into the detention basin, in order to accommodate bus parking. One or two light poles will be moved and a retaining wall will be built to accommodate the grade differential between the detention basin and parking lot. Also at RMS, the stairs leading into the newest building addition will be reconstructed as well as the stairs leading to the aforementioned parking lot.

At Three Bridges School (“TBS”), there are two (2) staircases that will be reconstructed. The outdoor staircase leading to the Library, as well as the handrails, will be replaced. To the east of the front door, a two-step staircase near the nurse’s office, as well as the handrails, will be reconstructed.

All three (3) projects have been submitted separately because of the New Jersey Department of Education guidelines.

Chair Flynn inquired as to how far the addition to the RMS parking lot will encroach into the detention basin and the size of the current detention basin. Mr. Mihalick indicated that the new lot would encroach by approximately five (5) to six (6) feet. The basin, as it stands, is approximately seventy (70) feet across.

Mr. Monaco asked if the capacity of the detention basin would be reduced. Mr. Mihalick indicated that engineering drawings have not been completed, but the detention basin will have the same volumetric capacity.

Ms. Duffy inquired about a fence surrounding the detention basin. Mr. Mihalick advised that there will be a fence on top of the retaining wall, but not surrounding the basin.

Ms. DeCasas advised how the projects will be funded. The RTBOE has been saving money over the past few years through energy efficiencies and reductions in staff. Those savings have been placed in an account for capital reserves. The RTBOE will ask voters to approve a referendum on January 26, 2016 in order to access State aid. The referendum would grant approval to float a note for one year. Currently there is no other way to access State aid, as grants are no longer available. However, the RTBOE has sufficient funds saved to cover the costs of these projects. The reason for the vote is to obtain matching State aid which will amount to thirty-two percent (32%), or approximately \$450,000 to \$500,000 of the total cost of the project. This will allow the RTBOE to retain some funds, rather than spend all of the reserve, as there are additional upgrades that will need to be completed in future years.

OPEN TO PUBLIC

Mr. Klinich inquired about the cost of the improvements.

Ms. DeCasas advised that the TBS project is estimated at \$120,000; HBS is estimated at \$920,000; and RMS is estimated at \$670,000. The figures are high as they have a hard cost, soft cost and some contingency money in them because of the RTBOE’s request for debt service aid. Any money not spent, aid gets reduced by that portion.

Mr. Zwerling – Van Neste – inquired about the deteriorating stairs and suggested that a mix for winter snow/ice removal be specified that would prevent significant deterioration. Ms. DeCasas advised that the facilities manager would look into his concern.

A Motion was made by Ms. Duffy, seconded by Ms. Fort, to acknowledge that the RTBOE presented the projects before the Planning Board and there were no objections to the plans as submitted. Motion was carried with the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Ms. Allen, Mr. Cook, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Flynn, Ms. Fort, Mr. John, Mr. Monaco, Mr. Smith

Nays: None recorded.

Ms. DeCasas advised the Planning Board of another project the RTBOE is embarking on, involving a Power Purchase Agreement (“PPA”) to install solar panels at all four (4) schools. The PPA will provide the RTBOE with a reduction in power costs for the school district. The RTBOE is working with an engineer and attorney, but the project is still in its preliminary stage.

At HBS, the RTBOE is looking to place solar panels in ground mounts behind the school. The project will involve removing some trees that are mostly scrub pine. An area of forest will remain between the residences and school, shielding the panels from the neighbors. There is a cost saving measure in placing the panels at this particular location.

Chair Flynn inquired about the area of ground the solar panels would cover. Ms. DeCasas could not confirm the area. Chair Flynn also inquired about the current use of this parcel of land. Ms. DeCasas advised that the cross-country track team uses a track in front of this parcel. The solar field will have a fence surrounding it and the track will not be compromised.

Mr. Smith inquired about the percentage of energy needs that would be supplied by solar. Mr. Zwerling, advised that the solar panels would replace approximately 70% of the electric needs at HBS.

Time is of the essence for this project, as the federal government’s tax credit will close on December 31, 2016. The RTBOE looked at a number of locations at HBS, and determined that this area would grant the most bids and minimal cost. The RTBOE is looking to offset the loss of some of the woods with an enhanced habitat spearheaded by the National Wildlife Federation. The National Wildlife Federation has a program for K-12 school districts wherein they give guidance on how to develop habitat for wildlife. It is an entire curriculum encompassing everything from math to science to biology.

At RMS, the RTBOE would like to put solar on the roof, a canopy over what will be the new bus parking lot, a canopy over the parking lot to the west of the building, and panels where the buses currently park. There will be approximately one hundred (100) feet between the panels and the road for landscaping. Additionally, the RTBOE proposes a sign reading something to the effect of “Readington Schools – Saving You Money and Protecting the Earth.” The RTBOE’s

intention is to significantly reduce the carbon footprint of our schools. This project would replace approximately 70-80% of the electric needs at RMS.

Unfortunately, there is no alternative at Whitehouse School (“WHS”) other than canopies over the parking lot. Canopies cannot be shielded, and will be visible from the street. This project would replace approximately 20-30% of the electric needs at WHS. Mr. Zwerling pointed out that this project is an important teaching tool for the students, with a kiosk at every school for learning purposes.

Ms. DeCasas advised that each of the schools in Readington Township has been recognized as sustainable NJ schools. This project will provide points to keep those accreditations.

At TBS, the RTBOE is proposing roof mounts which cannot be seen from the street or residences. This will cover approximately 20-40% of electric needs at TBS.

The RTBOE presented this proposal to the Planning Board even though it is a work in progress as the RFP will have to be submitted before the next Planning Board meeting. The RTBOE wanted to provide you with a courtesy summary of what we are trying to achieve.

Mr. Klinich inquired about the maintenance on the solar panels. Mr. Zwerling advised that the system is owned by the company that puts it in. The cost of installation, maintenance and repairs are figured into the PPA. In fifteen (15) years the company may offer the panels to the school district at a significantly reduced value. The panels have a useful lifespan of at least twenty-five (25) years.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Chair Flynn read the following Resolution:

EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 *et. seq.*, the Open Public Meetings Act, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Board is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist and desires to authorize the exclusion of the public from the portion of the meeting in accordance with the Act;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of Readington, County of Hunterdon, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of the hereinafter specified subject matter as set forth below:

<u>Subject Matter</u>	<u>Basis of Public Exclusion</u>	<u>Date Anticipated When Discussion Will be Disclosed to Public</u>
Professionals	Personnel	Certain information at the discretion of the Planning Board tonight...other information will remain confidential
	2. It is anticipated at this time that the above stated subject matter will remain confidential because litigation remains pending.	
	3. This Resolution shall take effect immediately.	

A Motion was made by Ms. Fort, seconded by Mr. Smith, to adopt this resolution. Motion was carried with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

The meeting reconvened at 8:33 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

A Motion was made by Ms. Fort, seconded by Mr. Cook, to adjourn the meeting at 8:34 p.m. The motion was carried with a vote of ayes all, nays none recorded.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebekah Harms
Planning Board Secretary