

**SAYREVILLE ECONOMIC & REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY
“SERA”**

MINUTES OF October 10, 2024

The meeting of the Sayreville Economic & Redevelopment Agency was called to order by Chairman Zebrowski and opened with salute to the flag. Chairman Zebrowski announced that the meeting was being conducted in accordance with the Open Public Meeting Law P.L. 1975, c231, Public Law, 1975.

SERA Commissioners that were present were: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

Absent Commissioners: Mr. Davis

Also present were: Mr. Shah, Mr. Schlichte, Mr. Baker, Esq., Mr. Iacocca, Esq., Mr. Samuel, Mr. Cornell, Ms. Sawant (via zoom)

AT THIS TIME, THE MEETING WAS OPENED:

Chairman Zebrowski asked the Board Secretary if the board meeting was being conducted under the Sunshine Law and if all publications were notified, the secretary had stated, yes.

MINUTES:

Mr. Scott made a motion to approve the minutes from September 12, 2024; seconded by Councilperson Roberts.

ROLL CALL:

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO: n/a

ABSTAIN: n/a

ATTORNEY REPORT:

Mr. Baker, Esq advised he has one item to discuss, next meeting there may be a request involving an old easement with the Riverton property.

ENGINEER REPORT:

Mr. Cornell provided a brief update on the Riverton Site; a photo was uploaded to show latest construction that was completed this month. The photo shows the foundation has been completed for the Bass Pro Shoppe. The sign will be removed this month since they received their permits.

Mr. Cornell stated otherwise, progress.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT:

Mr. Shah refers to his letter dated October 10, 2024.

Item #1 SAMS Registration for ETA Grant has been completed and now progressing through the required checklist to finalize and submit the necessary documentation for the FTA grant application.

Item #2 – SERANJ.GOV – Approval has been granted for the domain. Development of the new website will commence shortly, alongside continued efforts to establish SERA’s presence across various social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok.

Item #3 – Sunshine Biscuit Property Redevelopment –Hanover Company has a preliminary plan to redevelop the existing building on the Sunshine Biscuit property into two (2) state-of-art, high-end warehouses. A presentation outlining the project will be delivered later in today’s meeting.

Item #4 – Downtown Study – Cesar from Claro Ventures has continued his analysis of the Downtown Area and will present his final recommendations during this meeting.

Item #5 – Riverton Project – Zak and Himanshu conducted an on-site inspection of the Bass Pro construction at the Riverton site. Construction has officially begun, with rebar in place and the foundation being poured. Activity on-site is robust, and barring any unforeseen delays. The building’s frame should be completed within the next six (6) to seven (7) months. A press release will be prepared as the project advances further, coinciding with the launch of the SERA website to help drive traffic to both the website and social media channels.

Item #6 – Shopping Center – Crossman Road Site – SERA recently met with the new owners of the shopping center on Crossman Road to discuss the possibility of designating

the site as an area in need of redevelopment. They have expressed interest redevelopment of the site.

Item #7 – SERA/Borough shared Service Agreement for Legal Counsel Financial Agreement - This agreement is to streamline the Redevelopment Agreement and PILOT process. SERA and the Borough will utilize a shared service agreement to retain the same legal counsel for both the Redevelopment Agreement negotiations and the Financial Agreement negotiations. The financial agreement will still require Borough Council action for approval.

Mr. Shah stated, no further comment.

AUTHORIZATION FOR PAYMENT BILLS:

Operating Expenses Total \$48,066.39 (Operating Exp. \$45,126.39 & Escrow \$2,940.00)

Mr. Scott made a motion to approve; seconded by Councilperson Roberts.

ROLL CALL:

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO:

ABSTAIN:

PRESENTATIONS:

Claro Ventures Survey Presentation – Mr. Claro provides the commissioner with Main Street Sayreville Existing Conditions & Economic Development Study. Mr. Claro’s key parts of the agreement included:

- **Taking an inventory of all uses along Main Street**
- **Speaking to key stakeholders**
- **Taking an inventory of the existing streetscape and proposing additions/changes**
- **Proposing Economic Development Recommendations**

The agenda would consider general observations, inventory/current uses, survey results, proposed events, recommendation, next steps and addendum.

General Observations are no gravitation to Main Street, need more destination options; Perception of Speeding – all merchants complained; Zoning Hodgepodge – no consistency in Retail & Commercial; Merchants Fear Crime – every merchant expressed their

concern; No foot traffic – everyone drives to their destination; 65% of the Properties are Residential – with an additional 14% Mix Use.

Only three (3) properties are “stand-alone” retail and six (6) “stand-alone” commercial. No uniformed signage or lighting on storefront and would be a major upgrade. Lack of Parking and limited on side streets. Many empty tree pits which are an easy fix. Sidewalks could use upgrading but not a priority now. Old infrastructure with wooden poles needs replacing. Dirty street particularly around cross streets. No benches or beautification, which have limited locations to install. Lack of merchant communication but they appreciated the outreach. No retail or commercial from Borough Hall to MacArthur, however strong residential community. Limited event space – only four (4) options.

The good news, there is so much potential:

- **Large swaths of vacant land for events**
- **Significant residential nearby**
- **Opportunities for development through creative thinking**
- **Easy, short-term quick fixes to get momentum going**
- **Less vacancy than you think**
- **Centerpiece is a religious institution**

Inventory and Current Uses:

1. **Four (4) types of Zoning**
2. **Only six (6) vacant locations**
3. **Thirty-four (34) occupied businesses to include:**
 - a. **Eight (8) hair salons**
 - b. **Four (4) food to go**
 - c. **Three (3) offices**
 - d. **Three (3) auto**
 - e. **Three (3) medical**
 - f. **Two (2) floral/gifts**
 - g. **Two (2) cafes**
 - h. **One (1) bakery, pharmacy, restaurant, bank, dry cleaners, private school, tattoo parlor, funeral home, grocery, bakery and design**

Survey results and interviews demonstrate that there is a consistent, strong commitment to improve Main Street. Everyone wants to see it work. Those who returned the survey are in lock step on the priorities. Excellent guidance was provided which helped with our outreach and observations. Merchants and residents all complained about security, speeding and lack of foot traffic.

- **Restaurants, coffee shops and retail shops were the three (3) most desired recommendations in the surveys.**
- **Breweries, Ice Cream Shops and Medical offices also received multiple mentions.**
- **Improve parking, better infrastructure and safety/security were listed as the top three priorities.**
- **When asked to rank most to least important issues – Transportation, beautification and safety/security received the most #1 rankings.**
- **Advocacy and marketing/branding were the least recommended priorities.**

Proposed events – there are four (4) existing location that can be used for outdoor event space for family friendly and merchant events, as well as outdoor dining:

Location – Flagstar Sidewalk space

Address – 77 Main Street

Audience – Under one hundred (100)

Potential Uses – outdoor dining, networking events and public art

Location – Flagstar parking lot

Address – 77 Main Street

Audience – several hundred

Potential Uses – networking events, music

Location – Church Parking lot

Address – 24 Main Street

Audience – several hundred

Potential Uses – Music, Fairs, Car show

Location – Church lot across from Church

Audience – Several hundred

Potential Uses – Music, Fairs, Car shows, Holiday events

Recommendations and Short-Term Improvements to include:

- **Empty Tree Pits – 24 – solution new tree plantings/flower pots**
- **Raised Utility Covers – 8 – solution to repair**
- **Welcome Signs – solution to install two (2) at Washington Rd & MacArthur Ave.**
- **Trash Receptacles – solution to install six (6) at Cross Streets**
- **Speed Limit Enforcement – solution to increase signage**

Recommendations and Long-Term Improvements:

- **Enhance crosswalks should be redesigned from Washington Rd. to Borough Hall. Repaint (consider optic yellow) flashing slow down/stop signs and reflection devises.**
- **Quarterly events/promotions in which all merchants participate should be activated.**
- **Additional set aside short-term customer parking spots should be designated near merchant locations. Consider hiring an Urban Planning firm that specializes in expanding parking on Main Street.**
- **Free, family friendly, inviting entertainment options should be offered at the aforementioned, large open spaces**
- **Replace wooden street poles with modern street light poles that you can hang promotional banners from.**
- **Install additional visual improvements to slow drivers down.**

A commercial zoning overlay should be initiated from both sides of Main Street (from Washington Rd. to Haag Street). Relocate the Post Office and utilize that strategic corner as a community center/gathering place. (Note – this will free up the nearby public parking lot with thirty (30) spaces). Offer cash incentives and other benefits to attract targeted businesses. Possibly purchase real estate along Main Street.

Additional items to be different, street furniture, different flower/plant boxes and public art always works.

Next steps, SERA should oversee and implement all short-term improvements, immediately to show momentum. SERA should create a Downtown Visioning Committee to implement the Long-Term Improvements and the “out of the box – be different” concepts. Share this report with Merchants. Hold regular meetings with developers and begin the marketing/branding campaign once the short-term tasks are completed.

He discusses an accomplishment Timeline that start between six (6) months up to a three (3) year marker for relocation and purchases.

Councilperson Roberts refers to the two (2) year plan, she would need to learn more about the commercial/zoning overlay what that means and how to accomplish this task. And

what kind of incentives have typically been offered to target businesses. She would need a lot more information on these two (2) topics.

Ms. Sawant's stated that this is the first step and after this study has been completed and a closer look will need to be made. There are various strategies that can be worked out. She also informs the members there are newer ordinances for Main Street that allow flexibility of term of uses and that also attracts more businesses into the Borough. The next step would be to draft a policy, feedback or ordinance might need to be discussed prior to sending this to the Mayor and Council.

Councilperson Roberts suggested they utilize the workshops to discuss this in further.

Ms. Duffy asked why in this report the sidewalks were not addressed. This was an issue of how narrow they are and there is no mention anywhere further.

Cesar addressed that was spoken of, not to do a significant sidewalk improvement at this time. Makes no sense until all of these other items are taken care of.

Ms. Sawant stated the widths of the sidewalks can be reviewed when there are newer redevelopment projects, but on the existing ones not much can be done.

Ms. Duffy also referred to the speed limit. Chairman Zebrowski informed all this is a county road and they are working to reduce the speed to 25.

Ms. Duffy asked, who would be responsible of all this short-term changes, financially, plans and receiving contracts. Is that the Borough Council would handle? Chairman Zebrowski mentioned this project is at its infancy of this discussion. The Mayor and Council ultimately have the first decision.

Mr. Samuel contacted the Middlesex County to determine whether they would be responsive to lower the speed limit. They indicated to us that it would require for us to have speed study and engineer's report to justify why of the reduction. The estimate cost to move forward with this would be approx. \$6,000 - \$10,000 for the work that is associated with it. Both the County Engineer and myself feel positive from MacArthur to Washington should be able to lower the speed limit.

Mr. Baker stated that SERA could finance this study if needed with a redevelopment study or could provide the Borough with a grant/contribution to cover the costs.

Mr. Scott asked Cesar what incentives has he heard of. Cesar stated in New York there are a lot of cash grants, capital grants and tax incentives.

Mr. Shah stated in order to offer these types of incentives, there would be a redevelopment project. First step, would be a study and declare the area and SERA can get involved. Mr. Baker, Esq. in order to have tax incentives, you need to be in a redevelopment area or an affordable housing project.

Mr. Grillo stated there are existing grants NJEDA, for instants. Not every project meets the criteria for the EDA. There are two (2) dozen different financing or grant mechanisms that the state offers. The challenge is that the property owner or business owner is not aware that they exist. That's the role Mr. Shah can play and provide the merchants better communication, as requested.

Mr. Sawant asked Mr. Grillo to have a chat about these funding options and help Mr. Shah. These can also be placed on the SERA website.

Chairman Zebrowski opens the public portion.

**Jim Robinson
Parlin, NJ**

He wanted to know how many merchants responded. Cesar responded seven (7). Mr. Robinson thought it was interesting that crime was noted. I would ask the Council what they think about that. He felt it was interesting that the Firehouse wasn't mentioned, along with the old theater.

**Bob Duffy
111 Merritt Avenue**

Mr. Duffy discusses the presentation and traffic issues within the Borough.

Dan Gordon from Hanover Company to discuss 4000 Bordentown Avenue. Hanover is a large developer based out of Houston, Texas. Mr. Gordon is responsible for the Northeast Industrial region. Within this region Hanover handles approx. five (5) million square feet of industrial space and currently has under construction approx. 500,000 SF. This site provides a wonderful redevelopment opportunity. So currently on the site, there is 850,000 SF of Class C or worst industrial, producing \$1.00 psf. It was built in 40s and renovated in the 60s. There is asbestos in the dirt, in the building and manufactured on site. Currently, there is an approval for an additional 235,000 SF of new industrial warehouse to be built on the front vacant lot. This site would have approximately 1.1M SF of warehouse space to include existing building and the current approval. Hanover would like to demolish the

existing building and construction two (2) new Class A buildings to produce a lot more in rent, taxes and benefits the municipality. With the plan, approx. 700,000 SF would meet the market and most likely 40' clear ceiling heights, etc.

Mr. Shah stated at this point, this is just to inform the commissioners of what they are proposing and what the existing building conditions.

Mr. Gordon expresses, low use in the current building with very low rents. Mr. Grillo asks if they have spoken to the existing tenants and hope they will try to retaining some percentage of those tenants. Mr. Gordon states that is a goal if they are in the need of a Class A building.

Councilperson Roberts wants to be very clear that this is the very beginning of this process and what you are proposing. This is just an introduction presentation. She thanks them for their introduction.

Ms. Duffy has a question about the vision, warehouses were mentioned? Chairman Zebrowski states, warehouses. Class A warehousing. Mr. Gordon explains what Class A warehousing would consist of higher ceiling height, longer depth of building, energy efficient lighting are just a few examples. Ms. Duffy stresses about traffic within the Borough.

Mr. Scott asked about e-commerce and jobs. Mr. Gordon stated that like most standard warehousing and distribution functions, a building like this can become manufacturing e-commerce, food & beverage (F&B). If it was e-commerce specifically, it would be goods racked all the way to the ceiling clear height. Jobs would be driving, delivery, working fulfillment within the warehouse. Storing good, driving forklifts. Office jobs – planner, buyers etc.

Chairman Zebrowski informs that there will not be a public portion at this point. After the application is received, a public hearing would be held and available for questions or comments.

Councilperson Roberts asked for some of the photos that are on the board from Hanover. They agree.

MEMORIALIZATION OF RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution 2024.10.32 – Resolution of the SERA requesting the Borough Council refer to the Planning Board various properties within the Borough for the study as areas in need of redevelopment.

Mr. Scott made a motion to accept; seconded by Mr. Grillo:

ROLL CALL

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO:

ABSTAIN:

Resolution 2024.10.33 – Resolution for Shared Services with the Borough of Sayreville for redevelopment and pilot programs.

Mr. Scott made a motion to accept; seconded by Councilperson Roberts:

ROLL CALL

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO:

ABSTAIN:

Resolution 2024.10.34 – Resolution of the Sayreville Economic and Redevelopment Agency amending the By-Laws of the Sayreville Economic and Redevelopment Agency to establish new article XL reimbursement policy

Mr. Scott made a motion to accept; seconded by Councilperson Roberts:

ROLL CALL

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO:

ABSTAIN:

2024.10.35 – Resolution approving assignment of Redevelopment Agreement from InSite Development Partners, LLC to 1970 NJ RT 35 Urban Renewal LLC and clarifying and confirming certain provisions of Section 7 of the redevelopment agreement.

Mr. Grillo made a motion to accept; seconded by Councilperson Roberts:

ROLL CALL

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO:

ABSTAIN:

DISCUSSION:

2025 Meeting Schedule was reviewed by the Commissioners and the board secretary will publish this notice in two (2) NJ Newspapers in December.

Councilperson Roberts made a motion to accept; seconded by Mr. Scott

ROLL CALL

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO:

ABSTAIN:

Public portion was opened.

Jim Robinson

Parlin, NJ

Mr. Robinson wanted to discuss the Hanover project with the Commissioner. He stated that the existing Sunshine building pays approx. \$730K in taxes and of that \$400,000 goes to Board of Ed (BOE). If they receive a PILOT, that is \$400,000 at least minus the land that the BOE will be losing in revenue. He refers to the law suit with the BOE over a bus depot. Mr. Robinson suggests that possible this could be a site for the bus depot, 6,000 SF. This would make a problem for the town go away and a PILOT is basically a favor to the developer. This would be very possible for this to be completed during their negotiations.

Mr. Robinson stated it would be a lot easier when the agenda is posted, to post exhibits.

Lastly, Former JCP&L site along the Raritan River is valuable property. Is SERA considering this area in need of redevelopment? Mr. Shah stated evaluating the entire Borough and they are considering this property too.

Bob Duffy

111 Merritt Avenue

Mr. Duffy mentions that there are only two (2) roads out of Sayreville going West. That's Bordentown Avenue and Washington Road. Going East and North, there are three (3) roads – Main Street, Bordentown Ave. and Ernston Rd. Please take this into consideration

when agreeing these warehouses and the traffic and truck traffic it will create. Mr. Duffy is fighting them on Ernston Road today, and not receiving any movement with them. He asked Traffic commission to assist but he is not receiving any response.

**Thomas Gadosco
Owner of 881 Main Street**

Last week, he met with some of the commissioners to speak about his property and he is very interested in hearing different ideas and respects SERA. He looks forward to hearing more from them in the future.

Mr. Scott made a motion to close public portion; seconded by Councilperson Roberts.

CLOSED SESSION:

Mr. Baker, Esq read the required closed session resolution into record.

ROLL CALL

YES: Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Grillo, Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

NO:

ABSTAIN:

Regular meeting was re-opened.

Councilperson Roberts made a motion to adjourned; seconded by Mr. Scott.

Respectfully submitted,

**Beth Magnani
SERA Recording Secretary**