

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

**MINUTES OF September 12, 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. Davis, Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, Mr. Grillo (via zoom), Mr. Parikh, Councilperson Roberts, Mr. Scott and Chairman Zebrowski

Absent Commissioners: **Ms. Fischer**

Also present were: Mr. Shah, Mr. Schlichte, Mr. Baker, Esq., Mr. Iacocca, Esq., Mr. Samuel, Mr. Cornell, Ms. Sawant and Mr. Kronowski

**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:**

**Councilwomen Roberts made a motion to approve the minutes from July 18, 2024; seconded by Mr. Scott.**

**ROLL CALL:**

**YES: Mr. Davis, Mr. DeWise, Ms. Duffy, 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 a few items to be discussed in Executive Session. No further comment.**

## **ENGINEER REPORT:**

**Mr. Cornell provided a brief update on Riverton. Gateway Services District, the construction is now complete for the gravity sanitary sewer, storm sewer and underground systems. The construction has begun with the sanitary sewer pump station on the foundations. Rebar steel has been delivered to site for the Bass Pro Shoppe. The work is expected to begin in Fall of 2024. Mr. Cornell advised the commissioners that the Landfill 3 project was approved by the Planning Board.**

**Mr. Cornell stated, no further comment.**

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT:**

**Mr. Shah refers to his letter dated September 12, 2024.**

**Item #1 SAMS Registration for ETA Grant has been completed and working through the checklist to submit the necessary documentation for the grant application.**

**Item #2 – SERANJ.GOV – the domain is in the process of being registered and as of this evening, the approval from Home Land Security was received. This website will allow the creation of an independent website for SERA. This website, along with a strong social media presence is essential for public relations and marketing efforts to increase visibility.**

**Item #3 – Sunshine Biscuit Property Redevelopment – the existing building on the property is currently 870,000 SF and has prior planning board approval for an additional 200,000 SF expansion, which would bring the current total to 1.12M SF. Developer Hanover Company has proposed the demolition of the current outdated building and the construction of two (2) new modern high use warehouses resulting in a total of 700,000 SF. Hanover Company will be submitting an application for redevelopment.**

**Item #4 – Trammel Crow Phase II – Phase II of the Trammel Crow project involves the development of a connection road between Cheesequake Rd. and Jernee Mill Rd. Mr. Shah and engineer met with Trammel Crow to discuss the development of the new connection roadway and additional development plans.**

**Item #5 – Downtown Study – a needs assessment survey been distributed to the Commissioners, Council, Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustments to gather insights for the downtown area. Later in the meeting the results and recommendation will be present by Cesar Claro. Final presentation will be October.**

**Item #6 – Brownfield Development Area “BDA” Quarterly Meeting – Parcel A is fully remediated and capped. A management agreement is still needed between Middlesex County and NJDEP/Green acres to release the parcel from SERA/SSA ownership. Parcel B has received a GP4 permit, and testing will begin after gaining access from the cinema site. Parcel C has undergone 95% of radiological cleanup, with capping near finished and Phase I fully approved. Next quarterly meeting will be in December.**

**Item #7 – Riverton Updates – Riverton team provided a site tour for Parcel C to commissioners Mr. Grillo, Ms. Fischer, Mr. Parikh, Mr. Scott and Councilwomen Roberts. Bass Pro is preparing for construction with site prep underway and construction expected to begin soon, as mentioned by Mr. Cornell, the rebar steel has been delivered to site. Gateway Services area, including Chick-Fil-A and Quick Chek, will begin construction next year, spring time. Billboard demo will be scheduled soon. As per the agreement SSA will continue paying SERA for the remaining term of Lease.**

**Item #8 – Riverton Bond Issues – SERA, at the request of SSA, will issue bonds backed by the PILOT revenue from Riverton. Sera will need local finance board “LFB” approval to issue bonds. Riverton/SSA has assured SERA it will meet annual amortization payments. Mr. Baker, Esq. will discuss further.**

**Item #9 – Riverton NJDEP Discharge to Ground Water Permit – a permit has been signed by Mr. Shah on the recommendation of SERA’s attorney and engineer for Riverton to conduct groundwater injections to attempt to contract acidity levels.**

**Mr. Baker, Esq informed the commissioners regarding the bonds under the local housing redevelopment law and local finance law, there is a mechanism to raising finances for redevelopment area. They are used when traditional financing might not be available because of size of project or finances of project. Its when a redevelopment agency issues bonds. The redevelopment agency and the Borough are not obligated on the bonds. The redevelopment project is the collateral. The revenue of the redevelopment project will be collected under the secondary PILOT that was issued by the Borough, as a special assessment. There is a base PILOT, 95% of it goes to the Borough, 5% to the County. Then there is an add-on PILOT, special assessment, and those funds will pay the bonds. Sayreville tax payers will not be obligated. This is common on large development projects. This is called non-recourse financing.**

**Mr. Shah stated, no further comment.**

**Mr. Davis made a motion to approve Executive Director's report; seconded by Mr. Scott.**

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**NO:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**AUTHORIZATION FOR PAYMENT BILLS:**

**Operating Expenses Total \$62,361.20 (Operating Exp. \$47,118.70 & Escrow \$15,242.50)**

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

**ROLL CALL:**

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

**NO:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**PRESENTATIONS:**

**Ms. Sawant, PP presented several properties for consideration as areas of need of redevelopment to the commissioners to be approved by Resolution. This resolution is recommending to the Council that they direct the Planning Board to study three (3) areas.**

- Both sides of Crossman Avenue (north & south). The area contains sixteen (16) parcels. Quick Chek is moving which is the main anchor store, strip mall already has high vacancy frequently. Across on Crossman, there is a parcel between industrial and residential that would be a good consideration.**
- Both side of Mini Mall Road (north of Ernston Rd.). The area contains fifteen (15) properties. The owner owns the adjacent property as well, that is currently vacant and the property is currently used as parking. They have expressed they would be interested in a mixed-use property, Commercial/Retail, Commercial/Residential. They are open for discussion with the County and walking distance to the Old Bridge Bus Terminal.**
- Former Sunshine Biscuit building & front parcel of site. Mr. Sawant feels that an expansion of the Hercules Redevelopment plan should include these five (5) properties.**

**This was initiated by the property owners reaching out to the agency, expressing their desire for redevelopment of their sites. Chairman Zebrowski mentioned that they are not recommending going forward with the first two (2) properties on the resolution A/B, but**

would like to move forward with a recommendation on C. We will amend the resolution and only recommend non-condemnation properties.

Next, Claro Ventures Survey Presentation – Mr. Claro provided the commissioners with a presentation on Main Street Sayreville Existing Conditions & Economic Development Study. Mr. Claro’s key parts of his study process 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
- Interviewing all stakeholders, including merchants and residents
- Proposing Economic Development Recommendations

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

General Observation is there is 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.**

**Within the survey, eighteen (18) government/SERA officials responded. While some merchants completed the survey, most provided unsigned feedback and several residents provided feedback as well.**

**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.**

**In the Be Different section, 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.**

**Next steps, SERA should oversee and implement all the 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 and hold regular meetings with developers to discuss redevelopment options, incentives etc. Only begin the marketing/branding campaign once the short-term tasks are completed and the long-term projects have been initiated.**

#### **DISCUSSION:**

**Mr. Schlichte provides a brief history of the Trammel Crow Phase II. They met with the developer and four (4) options were presented for the connector road from Cheesequake to Jernee Mill Road. Three (3) of them were not feasible due to Conrail, wetlands or contamination other issues. The fourth road seems to be the best option right now and they will move forward with engineering. Mr. Samuel advised that CME recommended that the road connect to Hartle but there is no guarantee that this will be possible. There are a few curves that are tight that would need to be checked for wet lands lines and contamination lines.**

**Mr. Scott remembers the road would take you to Jernee Mill closer to Washington Rd. Mr. Samuel stated this is the road way they cannot build. This proposed route will cost the developer a lot more money since the proposed road is five (5) or six (6) times longer.**



**MEMORIALIZATION OF RESOLUTIONS:**

**Resolution 2024.09.1 – A resolution of SERA requesting the Borough Council refer to the Planning Board various properties within the Borough for study areas in need of redevelopment.**

**Mr. Scott made a motion to accept with revision to drop properties A & B and keep Property C; seconded by Councilperson Roberts:**

**ROLL CALL**

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

**NO:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**Resolution 2024.09.2 – A resolution of SERA approving a certain recognition agreement by and amount Sayreville Seaport Associates Urban Renewal, LP Bass Pro Outdoor World, LLC and SERA.**

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

**ROLL CALL**

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

**NO:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**Resolution 2024.09.3 – A resolution of SERA relating to a certain billboard lease agreement between Sayreville Seaport Associates Urban Renewal, LP (SSA) and SERA and authorizing execution of documentation required by SSA's title company in order to clear file.**

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

**ROLL CALL**

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

**NO:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Mr. Shah asked the commissioners if they would like to have a meeting in August. So, one (1) meeting on the second Thursday of each month. The secretary will provide a draft**

**meeting schedule for the October meeting. The meeting schedule will be noticed in December.**

**Councilperson Roberts made a motion to approve the 2025 schedule to have one (1) meeting a month, 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday to include August. Seconded by Mr. Davis.**

**ROLL CALL**

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

**NO:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:**

**Public portion was opened and closed; no public attended.**

**CLOSED SESSION:**

**Ms. Magnani, recording secretary read the required closed session resolution into record.**

**ROLL CALL**

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

**NO:**

**ABSTAIN:**

**Regular meeting was re-opened.**

**Councilperson Roberts made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Davis.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Beth Magnani  
SERA Recording Secretary**