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A Special Meeting of the Mayor and Council of the Borough of South River, in the County of Middlesex and the State of New Jersey was held September 10, 2008 and was called to order by Mayor Raymond T. Eppinger at 7:00 PM in the Council Chamber of the Criminal Justice Building at 61 Main Street in South River, New Jersey with the following Councilmembers in attendance:

Councilmembers Buffalino, Hutchison, Krenzel, Razzano, Trenga and Trzeciak.

Also attending this meeting were Gary M. Schwartz, Borough Attorney, Anthony Iovino, Architect and Andrew J. Salerno, Borough Administrator.

#### Discussion of Needs Assessment Study

Mayor Eppinger stated that Anthony Iovino, Architect of Arcari & Iovino Architects was present to give a presentation on the needs assessment study he prepared for the Borough, copy of which is attached. The purpose of this meeting is to start the process of the Borough's needs assessment from a builder's prospective. The cost of the study was \$15,000. This is an opportunity to get public input. There is no secret plan. No decisions have been made by the Borough Council. Mayor Eppinger assured the residents that nothing critical will be done regarding buildings without input from the various Borough organizations.

Anthony Iovino, Architect gave a presentation on the needs assessment study. The purpose of the study is to identify the most effective configuration of the public service structures within the Borough. The study takes a broad view of those facilities, including additions and improvements to them, and considers where they might be ideally located in the future. Mr. Iovino outlined the existing conditions of the buildings, program schedule, design strategy, project timeline and construction cost analysis.

Mayor Eppinger opened the meeting up to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Alex Gabler, 2 Colin Drive

- Asked why the 51 acres on Ivan Way were not mentioned in the report. Mayor Eppinger stated the 51 acres is not out of the question. The thought was to centralize the municipal location. Mr. Iovino said that he did look at the 51 acres, but is trying to centralize in town. Ivan Way is too far away from town. Emergency Services could not be that far away from central location.
- Asked how we came up with 23,000 sq. ft. for the library and questioned need for large size. Mayor Eppinger stated that the library was too small when it was built. Mr. Iovino said that the original blueprint of library showed future space and space was never added. Library must be at least 15,000 sq. ft.
- Commented that we will still have parking problem at the end of the day. Mayor Eppinger said this is why we are starting discussion now.
- Cannot see putting all municipal buildings in place of businesses. Mr. Iovino said that ratables will come from a healthy downtown and will help businesses.
- Concerned with limited downtown area and frustrated that buildings were done and now we have to redo them.
- Suggested putting parking decks in to ease parking.

Joe Manzo, Willett Ave.

- Asked if the library addition was 11,000 sq. ft. Mr. Iovino said we were adding 15,000 sq. ft. The old building was being completely renovated.
- Commented that if the Eckerd building was purchased, it would have been for the library. Mayor Eppinger stated that the market rate to buy that building would be \$1.7 million.
- Asked if eminent domain was being considered. Mayor Eppinger said no.
- Asked about securing rights for Fire and Rescue, was not happy with words, "secure property". Mr. Iovino said he could change wording in report.

Rui Almeida, 187 Main St.

- Asked if the Eckerd building cannot be purchased, will nothing happen? Mr. Iovino stated there has to be cost savings.
- Asked when it is not feasible to buy the property. Mayor Eppinger stated that the Borough Council will determine when it is cost prohibitive.

Bill England, 3 High St.

- Wants a downtown to attract people to want to live in South River.
- Downtown is not in good shape, depresses property values, area must be improved.
- In favor of centralizing municipal buildings.
- Feels it would increase business in downtown area.
- Suggested placing library as anchor at Ferry St. and Main St.

- Erect ecologically friendly buildings.
- Thanked Borough Council for opportunity for public to express views.

Leslie Roselli

- Asked what Mr. Iovino used to put needs assessment study in place. Did he use the Ad Hoc Committee study from ten years ago? Mr. Iovino stated that he reviewed all of the material including the library study in 2005. He used all of the history and used it as a guide.
- Commented that the reason for not going ahead with the library addition was the cost. The estimate for a new library is now \$7.8 million, questioned why we can't spend \$6.7 million on Appleby. Mayor Eppinger stated that before we spend \$6.7 million, let's find out if we can solve multiple problems. There are many things to look at. We may wind up going back to Appleby.
- Asked if there was a time line in making a decision. Mayor Eppinger stated that the governing body has not decided on an exact time frame at this point.
- Stated it was discouraging that the Library Board of Trustees had a plan in place for the library addition five years ago.
- Commented that the Court Room should not be in the same building as library. Mr. Iovino said Court Room would not be in library.

Ed Trygar

- Asked Mr. Iovino if he saw the redevelopment study that was done in 1987. There was no mention of municipal facilities in downtown area. Mr. Iovino said he did not see the report.
- Does not see the logic that having the library or municipal offices downtown will increase people coming to his business. Mr. Iovino said that the more people you can bring downtown, the more spontaneous shoppers.
- Disagrees that municipal facilities downtown will revitalize town.

Tom Roselli

- Commented that the Lincoln School site is in the flood zone. Mr. Iovino stated that the parking lot is in the flood zone.
- Questioned where the emergency vehicles would park if area is in the flood zone and suggested that this issue be resolved before the Borough Council goes forward with building on the Lincoln School site.

Dave Sliker

- Commented that there is a proposal to build a new emergency services building. Mayor Eppinger said that was incorrect. There is no proposal at this time.
- From the study, option is to bring emergency services building to Lincoln School site. We would demolish existing emergency services building and build new building. We would need additional fifty parking spaces somewhere. Everything would have to be tied together to share parking. Mr. Iovino said that the study is a fluid document. It is a plan in progress and variables change.

There were no further comments. Councilman Trenga moved that the public hearing be closed. Councilman Trzeciak seconded the motion. So carried.

### COUNCIL COMMENTS

#### Councilman Razzano

- Thanked Mr. Iovino for the presentation.
- Asked who commissioned the study. It was not approved by the Borough Council. Mr. Salerno stated that he signed off on the study. There were no engineering or legal fees.
- Property acquisition is not practical at \$1.7million. Looking to lease property, smaller properties are more reasonable to lease.
- Asked if there was an agreement with the County for storage. Mr. Salerno said yes.
- Court Room was designed by another architect and it is not inadequate. Asked if another court date could be added. Mr. Salerno said that would incur additional cost.
- OEM is moving to 55 Reid St. Asked Mr. Salerno about satellite. Mr. Salerno said he was meeting with Charlie Benn on this matter.
- Should sell Lincoln School.
- Moving Office on Aging to Library will not solve problem.
- 48 Washington St. is in a centralized location – near Post Office.
- 55 Reid St. is two blocks away.
- New Master Plan next year – is it reasonable to go ahead on this study before a new Master Plan takes effect. Mayor Eppinger stated this is why we started the discussion on this study so it would be in conjunction with the Master Plan.
- Asked if Borough Council would be willing to put this matter on a ballot so the people can decide.
- May be a problem if all emergency services are centralized downtown to get to other areas of town.

#### Councilwoman Buffalino

- Valid points were brought up by the public.
- Would like to further review architect's comments and public comments before making any judgments.
- Are we putting all our eggs in one basket with the Eckerd building? There are other options to look at.
- Emergency Services is top priority.
- Need to discuss a time frame before we start firming up a plan
- Knows there has been a need for a larger library since day one.
- Cannot make any opinion on anything now, have too many questions.

Councilman Hutchison

- Thanked Mr. Iovino for giving presentation and the residents for coming out to the meeting.
- Wants to hear what people want.
- Not a supporter of eminent domain.
- Would support a prudent investment.
- Study makes sense with having an anchor location.
- Grew up in Easton, Pennsylvania and having an anchor location there improved the downtown area.
- Not saying South River is dying, but it could be better.
- Have opportunity to better the downtown area. Should be prepared to go forward and make downtown South River the place to be.
- Encouraged residents to continue giving input.

Councilman Trenga

- Thanked Mr. Iovino for giving presentation.
- No secret plan.
- Not an option to do nothing.
- Need new emergency services building.
- Looking at one thing at a time is not always the way to get things accomplished.
- Need to look at multiple issues and not repeat mistakes in the past.
- Would like a gateway into South River.
- Want people to want to live in South River, let's make it better.

Councilman Trzeciak

- This discussion is long overdue.
- Had opportunity to hear the opinions of everyone.
- This is a process.
- Know we need to renovate the library.
- Rescue Squad and Fire House buildings are oldest buildings in town, improving these buildings will bring in more volunteers.
- Possibly get Ad Hoc Committee with Tony Razzano, Buildings and Grounds Liaison, to discuss issues.

Councilman Krenzel

- Study is to begin discussion.
- Trying to think outside the box, get new ideas.
- Nothing will be done before we review everything.

Mayor's Comments

- Thanked Mr. Iovino for presentation.
- Thanked residents for voicing concerns.
- Do not have lots of land, trying to solve problems as a community.

- Thanked Mr. Razzano, Buildings and Grounds Liaison and Mr. Trzeciak, Public Safety Liaison for stepping up and forming an Ad Hoc Committee
- Have to look at all of the options.
- Before we spend money, want to make sure we come up with a good plan.
- There is no set plan.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Razzano moved that this meeting be adjourned. Councilman Hutchison seconded the motion. So carried.

Respectfully submitted on  
October 9, 2008.

Patricia O'Connor, RMC  
Borough Clerk

Approved at the Regular Meeting  
held on October 14, 2008.