

More Letters to the Editor

Open Letter to the Mayor and Town Council of Mountainside

An ordinance that the Mountainside Town Council is considering adopting October 20 would permit denser development in Mountainside by increasing the floor area ratio in the zoning ordinance. This proposal fails to take into consideration existing let along new runoff that will eventually drain into the Rahway River and impact communities along the river.

Communities in the watershed suffered over \$100 million of damages from Irene significantly from the over-development upstream and due to poor storm water management practices. The proposed ordinance is an example of the problem.

The Mountainside Town Council has been requested several times to amend its storm water management ordinance to incorporate best practice mitigation strategies, yet there has been no action. The Rahway River Watershed Storm Water Advisory Board sent the model ordinance to town officials several times. [It was also attached to this e-mail.]

The Mayor and Town Council has also been asked since Irene on several occasions to support the Mayors Council Rahway River Watershed Flood Control to fight for flooding mitigation and no representatives have attended any meetings. The problem is that I am sure the Mountainside Council is fair-minded, but it has not recognized that the flooding problems experienced during Irene and sure to be experienced in the future are partly their responsibility to help alleviate.

Rainwater drains down hill into the homes and businesses of Springfield, Kenilworth, Cranford and Rahway. This ordinance does not address this problem and ignores the hardships faced.

I am not a member of a governing board today so I can be direct. I urge you to reconsider the ordinance — That you consider adopting stronger storm water management standards. That would be what is fair.

Dan Aschenbach
Former Mayor of Cranford

Candidate Piarulli Says GW Cannot Afford 'Wait-And-See' Attitude

and clearly during the budget process. We will not sit there mute while our Council passes up such a golden opportunity to relieve our taxpayers.

When asked about issues such as redevelopment, parking or sustainability of services, our opponents do not offer viable solutions. While on the campaign trail, residents have said that they are receiving answers from the Democrat team such as: "We're going to have to wait to see what happens."

That type of attitude is unac-

ceptable and, when put into practice, has yielded our still-as-yet-uncompleted Athletic Field Complex. That project is 18 months overdue and now the contractor is even refusing to give a deadline for its completion. And if that were not bad enough, the establishment, that has made decisions for the borough for so many years, is willing to accept this type of non-response over and over again.

We cannot afford to take this type of "wait-and-see" attitude with the redevelopment that will

The townhomes proposal still needs site plan approval from the board before it could proceed, and both attorneys agreed a court ruling almost certainly was unlikely before early next year.

With the mayor having the authority to appoint members to the board and a new mayor set to be elected in November, the composition of the board could change. Mayor Pat Quattrocchi was defeated by Sal Piarulli in the Republican Primary in June; Mr. Piarulli will face off against Democratic candidate Charles Lombardo in the November General Election.

Mayor Quattrocchi also sits on the planning board but was prohibited from voting on the issue in May, along with Councilman Bill Nierstedt, because council members are not permitted to decide use variances.

When asked to comment on the appeal, Horace Corbin referred to a letter he wrote that was published in *The Leader* on June 5:

"On Wednesday, June 5, 2014, at the Garwood Planning Board

Probitas Verus Honos

occur on North and South Avenues, with parking, and with our ever-growing budgetary burdens. We cannot afford the same decision makers who led us into believing the Athletic Field Complex would have been completed a year-and-a-half ago making decisions for the future of Garwood.

We need new, creative and bold leaders who are willing to be held accountable.

Sal Piarulli, Garwood
Republican candidate for Mayor
Tina Simitz, candidate for Council

GW Board Faces Challenge Over Vote on Townhouses

meeting, I was disturbed to see that the meeting was run by the board attorney and not by the board chair. The attorney sat on the dais and directed all actions including re-framing testimony of speakers, cross-examining witnesses, dominating discussion, collaborating directly with applicant's attorney and drawing conclusions to his own choosing. He steered the outcome. He even suspended the rules of the board that calls for adjournment at 11 p.m. — whereby matters then are ordinarily continued at future meetings.

"I appreciate that planning and zoning boards require detailed legal review of applications, thus considerable attorney involvement may be required. However, for the attorney to actually run the meeting is inappropriate in my view. As with council meetings and as to how business is conducted in other towns, attorneys are hired as advisers to provide advice when requested by the officials. They do not run the meetings."

In other matters, the board voted unanimously to have H2M Associates of Parsippany conduct an "In Need of Redevelopment" Study for the largely abandoned Casale Sheet Metal and Petro Plastics properties on South Avenue.

H2M submitted the lowest bid of four, \$8,550, significantly less than Clarke, Caton, Hintz of Trenton (\$14,000); Heyer, Gruel and Associates of Red Bank (\$13,000); and Phillips, Preiss, Grygiel of Hoboken (\$11,000 to \$12,500).

Mr. Nierstedt informed the board that he had asked consultant Jill Hartman to appear at its next meeting on Wednesday, October 8, to offer advice regarding the borough's responsibility to update the "fair share housing" portion of its master plan per the mandate by the state's Council

On Affordable Housing (COAH). "The (Garwood) council has to submit it to the Council on Affordable Housing, but the planning board has to develop the meat of the plan," Mr. Nierstedt said.

Also, Sandra Sep, who owned a two-family home at 304 Center Street that was destroyed by fire in November 2012, withdrew her application for an interpretation of a land ordinance she sought to rebuild the structure as a two-family house.

The home sits in an area zoned for single-family homes, and Zoning Code Officer Victor Vinegra in May 2013 refused to issue a building permit, telling the board that his interpretation of the ordinance required Ms. Sep to have her two-family "lawfully existing" when it was destroyed.

Ms. Sep, who inherited the property in 2000, admitted she did not have a certificate of non-conforming use or a certificate of occupancy for a two-family home, but she submitted documentation that showed the property had been used, inspected and taxed by the borough as a two-family home as far back as the 1970s.

At the suggestion of Mr. Fraser, she withdrew the application in order to resubmit it, seeking a non-conforming use certificate, which seemed to have the support of several members of the board. There did not seem to be any barrier for Ms. Sep to rebuild as a single-family home.

But since the certificate of non-conforming use would not predate the fire, it was not clear if that alone would satisfy the board to supersede Mr. Vinegra's interpretation and permit her to rebuild as a two-family structure.

Mr. Fraser suggested the earliest Ms. Sep could resubmit the application that met all the legal requirements and be heard was at the board's Wednesday, November 12 meeting.