

**Meeting Minutes
Hightstown Borough Council
Special Meeting
July 10, 2014
7:00 pm**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Kirson at 7:00pm and he read the Open Public Meetings Act statement which stated, "Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, pursuant to Public Law 1975, Chapter 231. Said notice was sent to the *Trenton Times* and the *Windsor-Hights Herald*, and is posted in the Borough Clerk's office."

The flag salute followed Roll Call.

Borough Council:

	PRESENT	ABSENT
Councilmember Bluth	✓	
Councilmember Hansen	✓	
Councilmember Kurs	✓	
Councilmember Misiura	✓	
Councilmember Quattrone	✓	
Councilmember Thibault	✓	
Mayor Kirson	✓	

Also in attendance: Debra Sopronyi, Borough Clerk.

Planning Board:

	PRESENT	ABSENT
Mr. Lane	✓	
Mr. Montferrat	✓	
Mr. Stults	✓	
Mr. Pratt	✓	
Mr. Mulleavey	✓	
Mr. Searing	✓	
Mayor Kirson	✓	
Mr. Musing	✓	
Mr. Misiura	✓	
Mr. Balcewicz, Alt. #1		✓
Ms. Colavecchio, Alt. #2	✓	

Mayor Kirson called for approval of the agenda from the Borough Council.

Council President Bluth moved the agenda for approval, Councilmember Quattrone seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Council members Bluth, Hansen, Kurs, Misiura, Quattrone and Thibault voted yes.

Agenda approved by Borough Council.

Chairperson Monteferrat called for approval of the agenda from the Planning Board.

Mr. Stults moved the agenda for approval, Mr. Pratt seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Lane; Mr. Musing; Mr. Stults; Mr. Searing; Mr. Montferrat; Mr. Pratt; Mayor Kirson and-- Mr. Misiura; Ms. Colavecchio and Mr. Mulleavey voted yes.

Agenda approved by Planning Board.

Mayor Kirson explained the purpose of this meeting is to discuss development of the rug mill property. He noted that over the last year and a half he has met with several developers and now has three very successful developers that are interested in developing the rug mill property. The Council and Planning Board have some important decisions to make, as this is a Borough project. No action will be taken during this meeting; it is hopeful that there will be good positive discussion.

Mayor Kirson then gave a briefing on the developers:

1. Willing to start tomorrow; Wants to knock down the current building and start from scratch; Will build one and two bedroom rental units; Is willing to work with the Borough on the project
2. Would like to refurbish existing building; Will build one and two bedroom rental units; has developed a similar project in Trenton, which was very successful and impressive.
3. Would like to refurbish the brick portion of the existing buildings and take down the concrete building; Wants to build artist lofts for living and working; Would add a building in the lot behind the Historical Society building with one and two bedroom rental units; has performed this work before.

Mayor Kirson continued that developers are not interested in building condos; rental units are what is viable now. Commercial development probably is not an option for this property, and these are quality developers who like Hightstown Borough.

Mayor Kirson opened the public comment period and the following individuals spoke:

Doug Mair, 536 S. Main Street – gave an overview of the Mount Rainier Artist Lofts in New York and noted that this is a great vision for Hightstown; the Police Department and Borough Hall must be brought into these discussions and decisions; additional restaurants and shops should be considered; thank you for this meeting and the opportunity to speak.

Jim Douglas, 25 Barton Dr. – commented that he likes the idea of artist lofts, but would like Borough Hall to be gone; we need the best fiscally sound project.

Frank Rivera, 110 Broad Street – noted that he is artist/painter and chose his property because it gave him easy access to the bus to New York, there is similar access to Hightstown from New York and Philadelphia; commented that first class developers did the Lofts at Beacon and he gave an overview of the success due to the artist lofts; rateables will increase with artist housing; there are fifteen studios on Broad Street with no variances.

Lynne Woods, 315 Park Avenue – commented that she is glad that two developers are interested in refurbishing the current building and she likes the idea of artist housing; this will make Hightstown a destination and revitalize downtown.

Dan Buriak, 194 Stockton Street – referred to a fiscal report issued in the past regarding the fact that residential development would only increase the tax base by \$120,000; this will not reduce taxes, but will have a positive qualitative impact and bolster the quality of life in Hightstown Borough.

Walter Sikorski, 326 N. Main Street – commented that these proposals lack specificity, but there are several things that need to be taken into account: is there a pilot program being considered; affordable housing requirements; does it include age restricted housing; and while this project will not be a tax savior, it could increase the rateable base and taxes.

Doug Mair, 536 S. Main Street – commentee that we should not tie ourselves to the tax issue, move forward and get rid of the eye sore.

Basem Hassan, Owner of the Roasting Post on Main Street – commented that this is not a tax issue, but the qualitative value is substantial; artists may also be interested in other properties in Hightstown.

There being no further comments, Mayor Kirson closed the public comment period.

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Mayor Kirson advised that the Council and Planning Board will be talking about the vision on Hightstown, not taxes. The Mayor referred to a report called "A Redevelopment Action Strategy for the Central Business District of the Borough of Hightstown".

Discussion ensued regarding the rug mill development. Discussion included, but was not limited to:

- Potential of the existing building
- Long term results for the Borough
- Making Hightstown a destination
- Developer knowledge of existing facility environmental issues
- Historic preservation value of the existing facility and the desire to refurbish
- Art as a catalyst to revitalize towns
- Types of art: paintings, sculptures, theater
- Availability of transportation to major cities
- The generation of jobs and revenue brought by art in a community
- Impact on taxes
- Revitalization of downtown
- Character of the existing facility
- Using a pilot as a tool
- Rental impact on schools
- Possible density of apartments
- The Planning Board as the Planner for the Borough and the Council as the Governing Body
- Including the Municipal Building in the project
- Master plan and how the project fits the concept/vision
- Property values

There was then discussion regarding the next steps. It was decided that while the developer will make a presentation, a sub-committee from members of both the Council and Planning Board will meet with the developer first and address issues brought up. It was decided that Mayor Kirson, Councilmember Denny Hansen, Councilmember Steve Misiura, and Planning Board members Rick Pratt and Lee Stultz will comprise the sub-committee.

There was discussion regarding what the developers liked about Hightstown and members of Council and the Planning Board thanked the Mayor for all his hard work in bringing developers forward for the development of the rug mill.

Doug Mair, resident, requested that a resident be included in the sub-committee; Mayor Kirson stated that it would be discussed and considered.

Councilmember Misiura motioned to adjourn at 8:19pm, Planning Board member Harold Mulleavey seconded. All Ayes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra L. Sopronyi, RMC
Borough Clerk