

February 15, 2021

Important notice for Stockton Borough residents and businesses regarding the Stockton Inn and Avon Road Partners, L.P.:

This notice is an attempt to clarify information you recently received in the mail from Avon Road Partners, their vision for the Stockton Inn, and the Borough's role in the time ahead. At the public December Borough Council meeting, the attorney for the partners presented a vision for the property not dissimilar to the information you received in the mail. It was a public listening session, with no action requested or available to take, and none was taken. Subsequent to that meeting, the developer posted an escrow account to engage in dialogue with Borough professionals so that process ideas pertaining to a possible application could commence, at their expense. This is a common, non-binding step that developers often take as they explore options for their projects.

The developer has asked that the Borough Council consider redevelopment as a planning tool for the site. Redevelopment is an oft-used planning tool that when done in the spirit of community partnership, can be beneficial to the town, its residents, stakeholders - and the developer - when considering a major improvement such as the one that is the subject of the letter. There is no predetermined outcome or expression of support or opposition for any proposal that may be the catalyst for a redevelopment discussion. The consideration of utilizing redevelopment as a planning tool is just that - considering whether that tool is appropriate for a particular site and a determination if the site qualifies under the criteria set forth in law. The mechanism for that determination is the preparation of a Preliminary Investigation Report to Determine an Area in Need of Redevelopment, commonly known as a "PIR."

At the February 8, 2021 Borough Council meeting, the attorney for the developer formally requested that Council consider this path, and that initial determining step. In a 5-1 vote, Council decided to undertake that investigation by way of tasking the Planning Board to prepare the report. The results of that investigation will be returned to Council upon completion and referral. If the site(s) are determined to qualify, Council may then request that a Redevelopment Plan be prepared. Or it may not. Or it may one day in the future if the Council at that time so decides. The report only confirms whether or not the site meets the criteria under the law, not whether or not it should proceed. **No decisions have been made and all the steps relating to redevelopment - the PIR, a plan, and a corresponding ordinance, a site plan for a property - all require public comment sessions** and opportunities for the public to express their views. In fact, there are more numerous public comment sessions required under a redevelopment project than a typical variance application before the Planning Board requires. The "partnership" aspect of a redevelopment plan is enabled through those steps, and again, the public is provided numerous opportunities to engage.

This is a long-winded way of saying that the Borough is only beginning to explore its options, too. The letter you received from the developer was from them, not the Borough. The letter welcomes your input and comment and advises that they will host opportunities for engagement. We urge that participation, just as we will urge your participation and comment at our public meetings at the appropriate times. **Right now, there is no application to the Board, there is no plan for the Board or the Council to review or consider.** If or when that time comes, the Borough will provide a forum for that discussion and your voices will be welcomed, and heard.

The future and vision of the Stockton Inn is part of the future and the vision of the entire Borough. Together, through continued dialogue and commitment to the greater good, we can work together at every turn to ensure that our town retains its character, its history and the quality of life we all cherish so deeply.

Stockton Borough Mayor and Council