

Setting the Record Straight on Borough Settlement Discussions

The Friends of Historic Flemington would like set the record straight on numerous material misrepresentations and omissions in Mayor Driver's May 2nd letter posted on Flemington Borough's website.

In July 2018, at the request of then-Mayor Greiner and the designated redeveloper, the Friends sent a detailed settlement letter to the Mayor and Council outlining an appropriately scaled project for Flemington which provides for development beyond Flemington's 2015 Master Plan.

That letter outlined our goals for adaptive reuse of historic buildings as the cornerstone for Flemington's revitalization and offered numerous significant concessions providing for development beyond the scope of Flemington's 2015 Master Plan. To date, the Friends have never received a written response to the settlement offer from either the previous mayor or Mayor Driver, who has now been in office over four months.

On April 23, 2019, Mayor Driver, two members of the redevelopment committee and their attorney met with the Friends and our attorney - *at our request*. We offered significant additional concessions; this was conveniently omitted from Mayor Driver's May 2nd letter. Mayor Driver and the committee members offered absolutely nothing in return: no concessions and no indication of where they stand. And they said they "must" adhere to the existing redevelopment and PILOT agreements. Our attorney, who has 30+ of experience years in redevelopment law, absolutely disagrees.

The ONLY reason Mayor Driver has the opportunity to reduce the size of this project and renegotiate the associated agreements in which Mayor Greiner gave away the store is because our lawsuits have given her that opportunity. Mayor Driver has failed to acknowledge this.

Why, Mayor Driver, would the developer negotiate anything if he knows you won't take the opportunity to renegotiate the existing agreements?

During the April 23rd meeting, the attorney for the Friends of Historic Flemington explained because the *court-mandated* settlement discussions had not been productive - and because the developer indicated he wanted to move ahead with litigation - we would seek to end to these discussions, but would continue direct discussions as necessary. Mayor Driver and the two committee members had no comment and seemed to accept this without question. A copy of our court correspondence will be posted on our website, friendsofhistoricflemington.org.

Why, Mayor Driver, are you misrepresenting to the public that you are surprised by our request to the court?

Why, Mayor Driver, are you telling the public we terminated negotiations when on May 3rd we received an email from Redevelopment Committee member Caitlin Giles-McCormick saying you are meeting with the developer during the week of May 4th in preparation for continued discussions with us?

The five story “solution” Mayor Driver is touting purposely leaves out numerous critical details. Five stories on Main Street turn into six stories on Spring Street, next to and across the street from a neighborhood of modest two story homes. The developer’s “restoration” of the Potting Shed keeps only the front third of an architecturally significant building; that’s not a restoration.

The developer proposes as part of this deal to further expand the redevelopment area across Bloomfield Ave to accommodate an additional five story, 50 unit apartment building. Also proposed is further expansion of the redevelopment area across Main Street on the County owned parking lot, creating an expanded three story parking structure for nearly 300 vehicles. This will not be free public parking, but private parking for his development. These two changes remove over eighty spaces of badly needed public parking that existing businesses depend on for their customers and additional parcels of land from the tax rolls.

The overall building volume and project size are not reduced as Mayor Driver has led the public to believe. In fact, the size remains unchanged or may even slightly increase. It is still wildly inappropriate for the historic district of our small town. All the traffic and circulation issues remain.

We call on Mayor Driver to publicly share the latest plans and elevations so the public can judge for themselves. You represent the public, Mayor, and you ran on transparency, maintaining residents’ quality of life and defending the interests of taxpayers. It’s time to follow through on your campaign promises and stop blaming others for your lack of results.