



BOROUGH OF LEONIA
Leonía Planning Board
MINUTES

NOVEMBER 22, 2022

7:30 PM

LEONIA SENIOR CENTER

The Borough of Leonia Planning Board held a regular meeting on NOVEMBER 22, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. located at 305 Beechwood Place, Leonia NJ.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Ira Gold, Timothy Ford, Ron Wolf, Patrick Botten, Sean Thompson, Damee Choi.

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Chairman Michael DeGidio, Mayor Judah Zeigler, Councilman Pasquale Fusco, William Russell, Haeseok Ko.

ALSO PRESENT: Planning Board Attorney - Daniel Steinhagen, Zoning Officer – Adam Myszka. Board Engineer, Board Planner.

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM

OPENING MEETING STATEMENT, ROLL CALL

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion to approve the minutes of the October 26, 2022, regular meeting, made by: Mr. Botten

Seconded: Mr. Ford

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows

Vice Chair Gold:	yes	Mr. Botten:	yes	Ms. Choi:	yes
Mr. Ford:	yes	Mr. Thompson:	yes		

APPROVAL OF RESOLUTIONS:

Area in need of Redevelopment

Motion to approve resolution for the area in need of redevelopment was made by: Mr. Botten

Seconded: Mr. Ford

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows:

Vice Chair Gold:	yes	Mr. Botten:	yes	Ms. Choi	yes
Mr. Ford	yes	Mr. Thompson:	yes		

NEW/CONTINUING APPLICATIONS:

PB21-15 – 131 Fort Lee Road LLC/Sima Development LLC, 131 Fort Lee Road, Block: 802/ Lot: 16 - Preliminary & Final Site Plan Approval, Residential Use in D-Zone, Building Height, Rear Yard Setback, Side Yard Setback, Parking Spaces, Parking Aisles and Parking Requirements Variances - continued

The applicant's attorney, Carmine Alampi, addressed the Board on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Alampi outlined a reminder of what portions of the case were heard at the prior meeting. He focused on the changes made on this most recent reiteration of plans, the main one being lowering the height of the building by 1 story.

Mr. Zaccone remained sworn in from the previous meeting and provided testimony as a licensed professional architect, he was deemed qualified by the board.

New Zaccone plans (A-1 through A-4) dated 10-19-2022 were introduced and marked as exhibit A-15.

Mr. Zaccone reviewed the new plan revision.

The meeting was opened to the board for questioning of Mr. Zaccone.

Mr. Ford inquired about what materials would be used in construction of the building. Mr. Zaccone stated that he didn't have that information.

Mr. Botten asked about the number of affordable units. Mr. Alampi stated it's 3 units, and will comply with affordable housing regulations as per Mr. Sternhagen's inquiry.

Hearing no questions from the board, the questioning portion was closed

The meeting was opened to the public for questioning of Mr. Zaccone.

No members of the public provided questions.

Hearing no questions from the public, the public questioning portion was closed

Mr. Hubschman was asked to provide engineering testimony, he remained sworn in from the previous hearing regarding this case and he was deemed qualified by the board.

New Hubschman plans (Revision 4) dated 10-26-2022 were introduced and marked as exhibit A-16.

Mr. Hubschman reviewed and detailed the new plan revisions. Mr. Hubschman also went over the Borough Engineers letter.

New Stonefield engineering report dated 11-16-2022 was introduced and marked as exhibit B-5.

New H2M report dated 11-14-2022 was introduced and marked as exhibit B-6.

Mr. Hubschman agreed with the review letters and clarified his parking calculations rounding down as per RSIS requirements.

The meeting was opened to the board for questioning of Mr. Hubschman.

No members of the board provided questions.

Hearing no questions from the board, the board questioning portion was closed.

The meeting was opened to the public for questioning of Mr. Hubschman.

Ruth Lasser of 131 Palisade Ave inquired about the building height.

Lydia Maurice of 392 Grand Ave asked about the address of the project.

Hearing no other questions from the public, the public questioning portion was closed.

The applicant's planner, Michael Pessolano, remained sworn in from the previous meeting.

Mr. Pessolano continued his planning testimony. He focused on the reduction in the building height is a further benefit to the project.

The meeting was opened to the board for questioning of Mr. Pessolano.

Vice Chair Gold asked about the positivity of this project to the area's redevelopment considering the redevelopment plan is not in effect yet. Mr. Pessolano stated the redevelopment provides greater utilization of the site which is generally applicable to most redevelopment areas.

Mr. Wolf inquired about the negative criteria of this project. Mr. Pessolano outlined the setbacks and change in visual nature of the area.

Vice Chair gold asked if the parking requirements were met. Mr. Wolf added a question about parking credit. Mr. Pessolano stated that the requirements were met.

Hearing no questions from the board, the board questioning portion was closed

The meeting was opened to the public for questioning of Mr. Pessolano.

Ruth Lasser of 131 Palisade Ave inquired about the building height.

Hearing no questions from the public, the public questioning portion was closed

The meeting was opened to public comment.

Ruth Lasser of 131 Palisade Ave voiced her concerns about the development and the height of the building.

Lydia Maurice of 392 Grand Ave voiced her concerns about traffic issues.

Hearing no comments from the public, the public comment portion was closed

Mr. Alampi summed up his testimony, and requested to be carried to the 12-14-2022 meeting for a vote on that date.

Mr. Ford requested an update for the 12-14-2022 meeting in regards to the construction material and fire rating.

Mr. Wolf inquired about limiting the traffic impact during the construction period.

PB21-15 – Carried to the 12-14-2022 meeting with no further notice

PB21-17 – Carried to the 12-14-2022 meeting with no further notice

PB22-11 – Noblie, 180 Fort Lee Road, Block: 1205/ Lot: 4 – Variances related to construction of a new four 4 unit multifamily dwelling.

The applicant's attorney, Kevin Conway was sworn in.

Mr. Conway addressed the Board on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Conway presented an overview of the application. He reiterated that this is a previously approved project whose approvals have lapsed and is returning for approval with no proposed changes.

Mr. Martins was sworn in as a licensed professional engineer and surveyor, he was deemed qualified by the board.

New Martins colorized site plan sheet 3 dated 09-20-2022 were introduced and marked as exhibit A-1.

Mr. Martins presented his plans dated 09-10-2015 revised through 09-20-2022. He clarified the similarities of the previously approved plan and went over the proposed variances. He proceeded to outline the proposed drained and runoff system. Mr. Martins detailed the utilities which intends the addition of a new fire hydrant. He also went over the landscaping details and lighting.

The meeting was opened to the board for questioning of Mr. Martins.

Mr. Ford asked about the trash pickup and storage. Mr. Martins stated that the refuse would be stored in the garage and brought to the curb. Mr. Ford requested clarification if this is a single structure. Mr. Martins stated that it was.

Mr. Wolf inquired about the use of the Terrace area. Mr. Martins clarified that it's for recreational use of the 2 attached units.

Hearing no questions from the board, the board questioning portion was closed.

The meeting was opened to the public for questioning of Mr. Martins.

Ruth Lasser of 131 Palisade Ave inquired about the project in generalities

Vice Chair Gold asked Mr. Steinhagen about the situation pertaining to the previous approval expiring and the applicant proposing and unchanged project. Mr. Steinhagen explained the nuance of the expiring timelines in relation to the approved variances and resolutions. Vice Chair Gold explained to the public that the previous approval is not binding, and this application has to stand on its own merit.

Yoonchin Kang of 129 Palisade Ave inquired about the distance between their house and the proposed building. Mr. Martins reiterated that the building would be 18.54 feet from their property line, which is the rear property line.

Hearing no questions from the public, the public questioning portion was closed.

Mr. Pulice was sworn in as a licensed professional architect, he was deemed qualified by the board.

Mr. Pulice presented his plans dated 11-22-2022 to the board. He detailed the architectural and planning design choices found on the plan.

New Pulice colorized rendering (undated) was introduced and marked as exhibit A-2.

The meeting was opened to the board for questioning of Mr. Pulice.

Vice Chair Gold inquired about which building façade would be visible from the road. Mr. Pulice pointed out the elevation drawing showing the visible façade, and continued to outline the benefits of the new development.

Ms. Choi asked if a redesign was considered to lower the number of requested variances. Mr. Pulice discussed the requested variances and their standard as per the Borough regulations. He reiterated the benefits of the design and outlined the density issues present.

Hearing no other questions from the board, the board questioning portion was closed.

The meeting was opened to the public for questioning of Mr. Pulice.

Ruth Lasser of 131 Palisade Ave inquired if all the variances were necessary. Mr. Pulice explained that the applicant has the right to the variance process. She also inquired about increasing the proposed rear yard setback. Mr. Pulice replied that such a redesign would negatively impact the proposed parking and possibly require eliminating the deck.

A short discussion took place regarding parking layout and rear setback as pertaining to the public question.

Yoonchin Kang of 129 Palisade Ave inquired about the rear yard setback of the existing apartment building next door to the proposed property. Mr. Pulice did not have that number available, but it seemed to be further away than the building being proposed.

Hearing no questions from the public, the public questioning portion was closed.

Mr. Spatz was sworn in as a licensed professional planner, he was deemed qualified by the board.

Photos taken by Mr. Spatz were introduced and marked as exhibit A-3.

Mr. Spatz went through exhibit A-3 detailing each photograph. He then detailed the positive and negative criteria in regards to the project.

Mr. Steinhagen asked Mr. Spatz if this is a permitted or conditional use in the zone it is located. Mr. Spatz replied that it is a permitted use but the phrasing of the code refers to conditions. Mr. Steinhagen clarified for the board members that this is a permitted use in the zone it is proposing to be built.

The meeting was opened to the board for questioning of Mr. Spatz.

Vice Chair Gold voiced his concern about the design in regards to the middle terrace, and how it's addition causes variances which might outweigh its positive attributes. Mr. Spatz stated that the design is key and has aesthetic benefits along with adding a location for more parking.

Hearing no questions from the board, the board questioning portion was closed.

The meeting was opened to the public for questioning of Mr. Spatz.

No members of the public provided questions.

Hearing no questions from the public, the public questioning portion was closed.

Mr. Steinhagen asked Mr. Spatz about the purpose of density restrictions and why the granting of this variance would not offend the purpose of the restrictions. Mr. Spatz clarified that due to the property being the size as it is, changing the density wouldn't make a significant change. Mr. Steinhagen then asked if on-street parking was available on Fort Lee

Road in that area. Mr. Spatz explained that it was not. Mr. Steinhagen then reiterated that if there is no on-street parking the on-site parking doesn't remove cars off the street since they cannot be there in the first place. Mr. Spatz replied that on site spaces limit the visitors parking on nearby streets.

Mr. Wolf asked how long the property had been vacant. It was stated since 1994.

Mr. Botten asked about the height and growth speed on the arborvitae. Mr. Spatz specified their height and growth speed. Mr. Botten suggested a landscape buffer in the rear yard. Mr. Conway agreed.

Mr. Thompson wanted details in regards to building height and handicapped space location. Mr. Spatz detailed that the building height is 35 feet and the distance to the foundation where the handicapped space is located is even further than the listed rear yard setbacks due to the fact the rear yard setback is calculated to the furthest point of the building which in this case is the cantilever and not the foundation.

Mr. Cancilla inquired about conditions from the prior approval and wanted to be clear if the plans have been updated to show their compliance. Mr. Conway stated that the applicant will meet all conditions required of them upon approval.

Mr. Steinhagen read the conditions stipulated in the past approval into the record. Mr. Conway reiterate that the applicant agrees to these conditions.

Mr. Conway summed up his testimony.

Vice Chair Gold inquired about what makes the design of this project unique. Mr. Conway replied that the design lends to its unique character.

The meeting was opened to public comment.

Ruth Lasser of 131 Palisade Ave voiced her concerns about the rear yard setback requiring a variance.

Lydia Maurice of 392 Grand Ave voiced her concerns about the visibility of the exhibits during the meeting.

Yoonchin Kang of 129 Palisade Ave voiced her concerns about the rear yard setback requiring a variance.

Hearing no more comments from the public, the public comment portion was closed

Mr. Conway requested to be carried to the 01-25-2022 meeting for a vote on that date.

PB21-15 – Carried to the 01-25-2022 meeting with no further notice

DISCUSSION ON BOARD MATTERS – NEW/OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Botten requested to start the reorganization meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Steinhagen announced on the record that the reorganization meeting would be held at 7:00 pm on 01-25-2023.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT:

None

BOARD ATTORNEY REPORT:

None

BOARD PLANNER REPORT:

None

ZONING OFFICER REPORT:

Mr. Myszka stated that 135 Howard submitted a set of plans and a permit to bring their site into zoning compliance.

Mr. Steinhagen notified to board secretary to have the council for 135 Howard draft a letter requesting a withdrawal.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – CORRESPONDENCE:

Lydia Maurice of 392 Grand Ave inquired about the area in need of redevelopment process and affordable housing.

With no further business presented, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by: Mr. Thompson

Seconded: Mr. Botten

All in Favor – Motion Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Adam Myszka

Planning Board Secretary
