



**BOROUGH OF LEONIA**  
**Leonia Planning Board**  
**MINUTES**

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**MAY 24, 2023** **7:30 PM** **LEONIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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The Borough of Leonia Planning Board held its regular meeting on MAY 24, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. in the Anna C. Scott Elementary School Cafeteria located at 100 Highland St, Leonia, NJ 07605.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Judah Zeigler, Chairman Michael DeGidio, Vice Chair Ira Gold, Councilman Pasquale Fusco, Patrick Botten, Timothy Ford, William Russell, Sean Thompson, Ron Wolf, Haeseok Ko, Damee Choi.

**MEMBER(S) ABSENT:** -

**ALSO PRESENT:** Attorney – Dan Steinhagen, Engineer – Drew DiSessa, Planner – Sanyogita Chavan

Meeting called to order at 7:30 PM

**FLAG SALUTE**

**ROLL CALL**

Mr. Steinhagen, Attorney, stated that the meeting was not noticed in time for the change of location, and confirmed this with the planning board secretary that the notice was published today. He explained the need for the meeting location change, and proposed that instead of cancelling the meeting due to the large attendance, it was decided to change the location and confirmed that notices were physically placed on various locations in town. He recommended that a motion be made to proceed with the meeting for emergency purposes based on the size of the crowd.

Motion to hold an emergency meeting in the Anna C. Scott Elementary School in lieu of proper notice to the newspaper made by: Mayor Zeigler and seconded by Vice Chair Gold:

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows

Mayor Zeigler:	Yes	Chair DeGidio:	Yes	Councilman Fusco:	Yes
Vice Chair Gold:	Yes	Mr. Russell:	Yes	Mr. Ford:	Yes
Mr. Botten:	Yes	Mr. Thompson:	Yes	Mr. Wolf:	Yes
Mr. Ko:	Yes	Ms. Choi:	Yes		

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion to approve the minutes of the APRIL 26, 2022 Regular meeting as presented made by: Councilman Fusco and seconded by Mr. Botten:

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows

Mayor Zeigler:	-	Chair DeGidio:	Yes	Councilman Fusco:	Yes
Vice Chair Gold:	Yes	Mr. Russell:	Yes	Mr. Ford:	Yes

Mr. Botten:	Yes	Mr. Thompson:	Yes	Mr. Wolf:	Yes
Mr. Ko:	Yes	Ms. Choi:	Yes		

**SPECIAL MEETING**

Motion to hold a special meeting on Tuesday June 13, 2023 at 7:30 pm at the Leonía Library Ground Floor made by: Mayor Zeigler and seconded by Mr. Botten:

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows

Mayor Zeigler:	Yes	Chair DeGidio:	Yes	Councilman Fusco:	Yes
Vice Chair Gold:	Yes	Mr. Russell:	Yes	Mr. Ford:	Yes
Mr. Botten:	Yes	Mr. Thompson:	Yes	Mr. Wolf:	Yes
Mr. Ko:	Yes	Ms. Choi:	Yes		

**NEW/CONTINUING APPLICATIONS**

Chair DeGidio stated that a few applications on the agenda would be carried to future meetings and that Mr. Steinhagen would speak more on them.

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

Mr. Steinhagen explained that the board has been waiting for several months for revised plans, and that the applicant is required to re-notice and has failed to do so. Therefore, there is nothing to carry.

**PB23-01** – Weimin Zhang, 11 Brook Terrace, Block:206 / Lot: 9 – Variances related to constructing a porch outside the existing house entrance.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that this project was not properly noticed and would need to properly notice for a future meeting.

**PB23-03** – NJ Calvary Church, 135 Fort Lee Road, Block:802 / Lot: 14 – Seeking variances for use and parking for a Church.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that this project was properly noticed and that the applicant sent in a letter asking to be carried to the special meeting should it get approved. He stated that the application would be carried without further notice to the special meeting, which would be held on June 13, 2023 in the Leonía Public Library.

**PRESENTATION: GRAND AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Chair DeGidio gave a brief summary of the plan for the night and the process the plan would take in the future and stated that no formal action would be taken tonight.

Chair DeGidio recused himself from the matter as he lives in the redevelopment area, and turned the meeting over to Vice Chair Gold.

Vice Chair Gold spoke briefly on the importance of this meeting and encouraged the public to engage in productive conversation.

Sanyogita Chavan, Borough Planner, gave a presentation on the Draft of the Grand Avenue Redevelopment Plan.

Vice Chair Gold opened the floor up to questions from the Board for Ms. Chavan.

Vice Chair Gold asked about the effect of the plan on traffic.

Ms. Chavan responded that the traffic would be discussed at the time of site plan review. She confirmed that all proposed buildings would be required to have parking off street.

Ms. Choi asked which area has the highest elevation.

Ms. Chavan answered that there are four stories at the highest. She explained the areas that have these elevations.

Ms. Choi and Ms. Chavan discussed the recommendations for Grand Avenue.

Councilman Fusco asked about use recommendations, and Ms. Chavan explained why she chose flexibility.

Mayor Zeigler asked about the bulk standards and stated that the discussions by the governing body were less than proposed.

Ms. Chavan explained that the design was based on the area and not the governing body discussions, stating that it could be adjusted.

Vice Chair Gold asked about the plan in reference to the aspiration of the light rail, but Ms. Chavan explained that this plan is not based on the light rail, but instead bus routes and other town plans.

Vice Chair Gold also asked about the impact on Leonia in regards to an increase in school children. Ms. Chavan explained that the impact studies have been done by outside parties that typically these buildings do not attract a lot of children.

Ms. Choi asked about the age restricted area and made some suggestions about locations for these buildings. Ms. Chavan explained her reasoning behind the locations chosen.

Mr. Steinhagen explained the rules behind senior living facilities.

Vice Chair Gold opened the meeting up to questions from the public.

Frank Livelli, 311 Oakdene Ave, asked some questions about the neighborhoods on Grand Avenue and asked about the goals and objectives of the Master Plan and if this redevelopment matches those goals.

Ms. Chavan explained that the redevelopment plan absolutely matches the goals and objectives of the Master Plan.

Vice Chair Gold reminded the public that this was the question-and-answer portion and encouraged everyone to ask questions and not make public comment, so that everyone has a chance.

Lydia Maurice, 392 Grand Ave, asked the difference between redevelopment and rehabilitation and Ms. Chavan explained the difference.

Diane Scarangella, 217 Harrison St, asked a question about traffic patterns and the effect redevelopment would have on this and more specifically around the high school.

Ms. Chavan explained that there are no current studies on this, and that the studies would be performed and paid for by the developers when they come to the board with proposals.

Ms. Scarangella asked if there was a look into the existing patterns of children in developments to see if it matches the estimated.

Ms. Chavan and Mr. Steinhagen explained that the studies used for redevelopment plans are standard studies given by outside parties.

Vice Chair Gold stated that the worry over traffic is being heard, and that when someone comes in with an application these things will be asked for.

Gordon Coleman, 328 Allaire Ave, asked if any sewer infrastructure studies have been performed.

Mr. Steinhagen responded that this would also be the kind of study done after a plan has been submitted and the developer would be responsible for. He explained that they would have to comply with all state standards.

Ms. Chavan continued to explain that any plan submitted would have to do storm water management plans and provide all studies to comply with state regulations at the board level.

Deirdre Mitchell, 156 Spring St, asked about a building being proposed, and Vice Chair Gold explained that there is no building being proposed, then he explained the process that this is taking. Ms. Mitchell asked about the parking situation on these roads.

Ms. Chavan explained that parking would have to be off street parking provided by the developments that could be proposed. She then went on to clarify that the images in the development plan are not definitive plans, but just a possibility of what could be proposed.

Vice Chair Gold explained the process of the redevelopment plan again for the public.

Claudia Baroni, 102 Crescent Ave, asked if it is possible to add to the plan exceptions to rules, and Vice Chair Gold explained that yes this is possible.

Ms. Baroni asked if it is still possible for developers to get variances and can they not allow them to get these variances.

Ms. Chavan explained that during the redevelopment plan there are no D Variances allowed, but that they can get waivers for C Variances. If someone would like a D Variance, you would have to amend the redevelopment.

Ms. Baroni asked if there can be a demand from the plan that the new proposals respect the existing style of the community.

Ms. Chavan explained that the regulations and recommendations do encourage this.

Ms. Baroni asked if the borough could add a board of architects.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that New Jersey does not implement a board of architects.

Steven Sokol, 455 Park Ave, asked if the ball park and grass area will remain.

Ms. Chavan answered that they will not be touching any park lands.

Mr. Sokol asked if environmental rules in regards to wetlands being taken into consideration.

Ms. Chavan answered that all Department of Environmental Protection regulations must be followed with any redevelopment plan.

Darryl Whitter, 132 Spring St, asked why there is an area in need of redevelopment and an area in need of rehabilitation.

Mr. Steinhagen answered that the state regulations allow for this.

Mr. Whitter asked about a specific area and Mr. Steinhagen answered his question.

Mr. Whitter was called to order and asked to leave the podium after he refused to follow the rules of the board.

Karl Norgaard, 144 Prospect St, asked if the planning and zoning board were combined, and Mr. Steinhagen explained the rules of the joint board. Mr. Norgaard asked about the density of current properties.

Ms. Chavan explained that there are plenty of properties in Leonia with density matching the developments the redevelopment plan is encouraging.

Mr. Norgaard asked if the planner is laying a framework for the densest project that Leonora has had.

Ms. Chavan answered that she is not.

Mr. Norgaard asked if the character of the community was taken into consideration and Ms. Chavan confirmed that it was.

Mr. Norgaard asked if it is possible to control what gets built once the plan is in effect, and Ms. Chavan confirmed that the board and the governing body still can set requirements for the developers and can control the developments that get built.

Vice Chair Gold moved on to the next question. He explained to the resident that there is no current development and that the framework is just a suggestion. He explained that there are a lot of steps to be taken before anything is developed and that the board is working with the public to keep Leonora the way it is.

Vito Mazza IV, 430 Grandview Terr, asked how long the planner has been working on this plan and she answered him. Mr. Mazza asked if this plan is separate from the Master Plan, and if the two are related, and she confirmed they are unrelated. Mr. Mazza confirmed that there have been no studies performed regarding traffic and sewer. Ms. Chavan explained that he is correct and that those studies would be performed at the site plan level.

Mr. Mazza asked a question about the process and Ms. Chavan explained the process to him.

Mr. Mazza asked if the approval process does not include impact studies and Ms. Chavan confirmed this. Mr. Mazza continued to ask if there was a particular reason why certain sites were chosen for certain size and scopes. Ms. Chavan explained that there is not specific reason but all areas were looked into for all different types before making decision.

Mr. Mazza asked if the planner was aware of a specific plan, and she told him she was not, as they would not come to her until they have been submitted to the planning board.

Jeff Sammis, 117 Glenwood Ave, asked if the plan was fully realized what would the impact be on population.

Ms. Chavan answered that this question can not be answered as there are too many variables until a developer comes forward and proposes something.

Mr. Sammis asked the board what the criteria they would use to make their recommendation without impact studies.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that studies could be performed but the studies cost money and would need to be authorized by the governing body. Mayor Zeigler responded that the governing body did not receive any requests to perform studies. Mr. Steinhagen and Mayor Zeigler discussed briefly the possible need for impact studies to be performed in regards to the redevelopment area.

Dan Lee, 227 Van Orden Ave, asked about a specific use section and Ms. Chavan explained it to him. Mr. Lee expressed concern of how to limit density in the area, and Ms. Chavan explained the number of ways to limit developers other than density.

Mr. Lee asked if flood area was considered when setting up this plan, and Ms. Chavan explained that this will be considered when a developer comes forward with a plan.

Bahram Sayari, 125 Crescent Ave, asked if someone could come in and change the uses.

Vice Chair Gold answered that they can not change the use of a zone.

Mr. Sayari asked if they could get a variance and Ms. Chavan answered that they could not as that is a D variance. Mr. Sayari asked if the board is aware of any plans or applications for a specific property.

Mr. Steinhagen answered that the borough was approached with a conceptual design for a project quite a while ago and that there was no planning or zoning board application. They did file a wet lands application with the DEP. This is an application to determine where wet lands are and does not give them any rights to build on land. He stated there is no application for this project the public is mentioning.

Mr. Wolf and Mr. Steinhagen clarified that there was a presentation to the board. This was a concept presentation, which was dropped after one presentation and no application was ever submitted following this presentation.

Councilman Fusco stated that a letter of comments was drafted and sent to the presenter about the presentation but they have not come back since.

Vice Chair Gold explained that some times there are people who come before the board and present an idea. Vice Chair Gold went on to clarify that there is no connection between this presentation and the redevelopment plan.

Sherry Saccoliti, 163 Prospect St, asked why the frame work allows for looser zoning regulations than the current ones in the town.

Ms. Chavan explained the reasoning behind her decisions, and that redevelopment plans open up possibilities instead of keeping strict zoning laws. She also suggested that she could alter the draft to meet these more stringent rules.

Ms. Saccoliti asked if the board could consider this and make those changes.

Vice Chair Gold stated that he heard her comment, and suggested that the public stay with questions and not comments at this portion.

Ms. Chavan explained that a lot of other areas in Leonia have similar standards as the ones being presented.

Leonel Morales, 189 Grand Ave, asked if there is a way to target specific developers that will not compete with existing commercial spaces.

Ms. Chavan explained that they are targeting specific types with the plan as presented.

Vito Mazza IV, 430 Grandview Terr, asked the board if they recall the name of the presenter to the board. The board responded with what they believed the name was.

Mr. Ford briefly explained what he remembered from this presentation.

Mr. Mazza asked some questions about the wet lands application and the presentation.

Vice Chair Gold asked Mr. Mazza to be respectful to the board and not make implications.

Mr. Mazza asked if the Master Plan called for redevelopment of this particular site, and Ms. Chavan stated that this is not true.

Mayor Zeigler asked Ms. Chavan if any member of the Governing Body or the Planning Board gave her any directive as to how to design the redevelopment plan. Ms. Chavan confirmed that they did not.

Randy Duran, 121 Van Orden Ave, asked what other towns the Planner has performed these types of jobs for, and Ms. Chavan answered his question.

Louis Cintrone, 2 Hawthorne Terr, asked why the redevelopment was coming up now.

Vice Chair Gold and Mr. Steinhagen answered that it has been happening since 2014 and explained the process it went through up to this point.

Mr. Wolf asked if the attorney could explain to the public what would happen if there was no Master Plan put forward.

Mr. Steinhagen explained the need for a Borough to adopt a Master Plan. He then explained what is allowed in reference to a Redevelopment Area. Then he explained the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.

Vice Chair Gold spoke on the intention of the board.

Mr. Cintrone asked how the overlay works in regards to zoning.

Ms. Chavan explained how the zoning works in an area in need of redevelopment.

Mr. Cintrone asked if developers could build large structures next to small houses.

Ms. Chavan and Councilman Fusco explained that there are requirements with the area that will prevent these sorts of structures and encourage that they first create an area that fits a larger structure.

George Giaquinto, 56 Paulin Blvd, asked how to submit comments for the plan, and MR. Steinhagen answered.

The Board briefly discussed the plan for the June 13, 2023 Special meeting and what would be discussed.

Mr. Giaquinto asked about a developer paying to avoid parking requirements.

Ms. Chavan and Mr. Steinhagen answered that if a developer tries to avoid parking due to a lack of need, they would be required to pay a set amount per space and the borough would hold that money to help with parking issues in the town.

Mr. Giaquinto expressed that he believes the amount should be higher.

#### **NEW/CONTINUING APPLICATIONS**

**PB23-02** – Reuten Senior Ventures LLC, 2 Christie Heights Street, Block:503 / Lot: 2 – Seeking variances for use and parking for an Adult Daycare.

Mr. Steinhagen stated that this project would not be heard tonight and requested to be put on the agenda for the June 28, 2023 Regular Meeting at 7:30 pm and would be carried without further notice.

#### **DISCUSSION ON BOARD MATTERS – NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

#### **PLANNING BOARD ATTORNEY REPORT**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – CORRESPONDENCE**

Vice Chair Gold commented to the public that time is running short on the meeting and asked that the public keep comments short and to the point.

Diane Scarangella, 217 Harrison St, expressed concern that the plan is not taking into account the key issues of traffic and social demographics, especially the schools. She requested that these studies be funded and completed before moving forward. She also stated that she believes the plan should be translated to multiple languages and to be sent out by mail to the public.

Leonel Morales, 189 Grand Ave, stated his concerns about rental units and their lack of affordability for residents and potential residents, and that especially for senior citizens this will be difficult.

Frank Livelli, 311 Oakdene Ave, stated that he believes the kinds of developers we will attract are not the kind that Leonia would want. He then stated that a specific company in Leonia, Kulite, is not pleased with the decisions expressed in the redevelopment plan.

Vito Mazza IV, 430 Grand View Terr, made some comments about the Planning Board and Governing Body.

Bob Pawlick, 111 Highwood Ave, commented that he believed this plan should go out to a town referendum before continuing.

Vice Chair Gold explained that the planning board does not make decisions to hold town referendums.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that a referendum in regards to zoning is against the law.

Mr. Pawlick stated that he believes there should be more leniency on single family homes in regards to variances and Vice Chair Gold explained that this has to be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Frank Livelli, 311 Oakdene Ave, commented that he feels the plan is being rushed.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that there is no rush, the board is just trying to create opportunities for the public to comment.

Mr. Livelli requested that more time be given for people to discuss.

Chairman DeGidio explained that the Special Meeting will remain because applicants have noticed it already.

The Planning Board deliberated with Mr. Steinhagen on the plan moving forward and when the next meetings and what discussions should be had on what dates.

The Planning Board and Mr. Steinhagen also discussed the cost and time for performing the studies the public requested.

Deana Coleman, 96-98 Maple St, reiterated that the traffic studies would cost the town money, but if we wait, we can put that burden of cost onto the developers, and Mr. Steinhagen confirmed this.

Ms. Choi and Ms. Chavan spoke on the translation of documents and stated that a lot of nuances will be lost in translation with certain languages and that the cost of this would be difficult for a plan like this.

The board decided to come back on June 13, 2023 special meeting and discuss with the planner any changes she will have made to the plan with the board. Then on a future date they will hold another discussion for the public with a new draft.

Chair DeGidio made a statement that comments made about the board's forethought in regards to safety were incorrect as the board had proper aisles and safety precautions that were changed when the public moved chairs around and was quickly remedied when it was brought to the attention that such safety hazards were created.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business presented, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by: Vice Chair Gold and seconded by Mayor Zeigler.

All in Favor – Motion Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 11:12 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Greco  
Planning Board Secretary