



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

**JUNE 13, 2023**

**7:30 PM**

**LEONIA PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Borough of Leonia Planning Board held its regular meeting on JUNE 13, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. located at 227 Fort Lee Road, Leonia NJ.

**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**

Chair DeGidio gave a brief overview of the topics of the night’s meeting and the order of events.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**Discussion on Affordable Housing Requirements**

Dan Steinhagen, Planning Board Attorney, explained a brief history of affordable housing requirements and then continued to explain the requirements for municipalities. He spoke on what could happen if a municipality did not meet these requirements. He ended by detailing how the borough has previously acted in regards to affordable housing.

Chair DeGidio asked about builder’s remedy suits and if they can be filed at any time. Mr. Steinhagen confirmed that these suits can be filed at any time and are not triggered by a Redevelopment Plan.

**Discussion Between the Board and the Planner on the Redevelopment Plan**

Chair DeGidio recused himself and stated that Vice Chair Gold would lead this discussion.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that a preliminary traffic study cost was obtained from the borough traffic engineer.

Vice Chair Gold spoke to Sanyogita Chavan, Borough Planner, about the public’s response to the redevelopment plan and stated how he believed the discussion should start.

Ms. Chavan explained that she made some changes since the last meeting and then walked the board through those changes.

Mr. Russell asked a question about the DEP regulations. Ms. Chavan and Mr. Steinhagen had a discussion with Mr. Russell and the board about the new regulations and explained that they are not currently in effect. They continued to explain that the borough is up to date on all current requirements.

Vice Chair Gold asked some questions about the redevelopment plan area. Ms. Chavan answered his questions.

Vice Chair Gold, Ms. Chavan and Mr. Steinhagen discussed the level to which the Borough is allowed to control the buildings that go up and stated that with a redevelopment plan the Borough can make requests lot by lot with no limit on control. Vice Chair Gold spoke expressed his beliefs on what the Borough should be concerned about in regards to the plan.

Ms. Chavan spoke on the goal of the current draft of the redevelopment plan.

Vice Chair Gold expressed concern over the plan, and asked how the plan can be limiting while still bringing in potential developers. Mr. Botten responded about storm water management and that any redevelopment will improve the structure when it comes to this. Ms. Chavan confirmed this.

Ms. Choi asked a question about flood plans and a statement Ms. Chavan made. Ms. Chavan explained what she was saying and spoke a little on the plan in regard to flood elevation. Ms. Choi asked a question about the map and the zones.

Councilman Fusco made some comments about the areas in regards to storm water management.

Ms. Chavan requested that the board send her any comments and suggestions to be added to the new draft.

Vice Chair Gold asked about the proposal for a traffic study and asked the planner her opinion on its necessity. Ms. Chavan answered that it is not necessary at this point. The developers will be required to perform a traffic study at the time of submission.

Mr. Russell asked a question about the involvement of the Light Rail station in the redevelopment plan. Ms. Chavan and Mr. Steinhagen discussed with the board the possible plans regarding the Light Rail.

Vice Chair Gold closed out the redevelopment plan discussion and invited Chair DeGidio to rejoin the board.

**NEW/CONTINUING APPLICATIONS**

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

Chair DeGidio explained that the project has been gone for some time and suggested dismissing the project.

Mr. Steinhagen recommended dismissal without prejudice and explained what this meant to the board.

Motion to dismiss application PB 22-11, MSN Services LLC, 180 Fort Lee Road, without prejudice was made by Mr. Botten and Seconded by Mr. Russell.

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows

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

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

Chair DeGidio stated that this was carried to the regular meeting on June 28, 2023 and Mr. Steinhagen confirmed this.

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

Matthew Capizzi, attorney for PB 23-03, presented to the board the use being requested and the nature of the operation.

Ho Joon Chung, 21 Grand Ave #604B, Palisades Park, NJ 07605, was sworn in by Mr. Steinhagen.

Mr. Capizzi and Mr. Chung explained his qualifications to the board and reminded the board that he previously testified to the board on 284 Glenwood Avenue.

Mr. Chung explained his plan to have a small church in a space in an office building, showing floor plans and sign plans.

Mr. Capizzi made some clarifications on the plan.

Chair DeGidio asked a question about the location of the pastor's office, and Mr. Chung explained that his space would be in the church space. Chair DeGidio asked a question about the number of parking spaces and other offices using the spaces. Mr. Capizzi answered his question and explained that the project has no issue with conditions on approval. Chair DeGidio asked a question about the size of the sign, and Mr. Chung stated that he would lessen the sign as a condition.

Mr. Wolf asked about the other businesses in the building. Then asked about the suite and its size in relation to the building.

Mr. Steinhagen asked a question about the floor plan and if it is in compliance with the required areas between seats. Mr. Chung confirmed that it is. Mr. Steinhagen asked if there is a likelihood that they would add more seats. Mr. Capizzi stated that they would be ok with coming back to the board if the congregation increases and more seats need to be added.

Vice Chair Gold asked if there could be a condition to limit use to Sundays. Mr. Steinhagen stated concerns about limiting operation on a church.

Chair DeGidio and Mr. Steinhagen discussed the limitations allowed if the church decided to open on a week day. Mr. Steinhagen stated that the board should focus on a numerical limitation and not on operating days.

Mr. Ford asked a question about occupancy load and discussed it with the board.

Mr. Capizzi stated that they recognize the limits of the space and do not have intention to hold larger church events. He went on to say that the church has relationships with other larger churches they would use in those events.

Mr. Wolf asked a question about liability with crossing a busy road. Mr. Steinhagen explained the liability any government body has to worry about, and that the board is not liable for the decisions of a property owner.

Vice Chair Gold asked a question about limiting week day hours. Mr. Steinhagen explained that there is no easy way to do this.

Mr. Capizzi explained that they do not have services on weekday but even if they did it would be early in the morning before people would typically go to work.

Vice Chair Gold expressed concern over their hope to expand. Mr. Capizzi explained that this is typical for any new business.

Mr. Steinhagen reminded the board that this is not a Use Variance, and that it is mainly a parking variance for an existing structure for a permitted use. He explained that there is not much flexibility.

Robert Pawlick, 111 Highwood Ave, asked if the use in question would be on the ground floor and had this confirmed. He then stated that the parking lot is used by a deli. The board confirmed that there is no permitted use for the deli to be using this parking lot.

Vito Mazza IV, 430 Grandview Terr, asked if the application was put forth by the owner and asked for clarification on the process. Chair DeGidio clarified the process.

Mr. Capizzi asked if the board would like to hear from Pastor Kim. The board confirmed that they do not believe his testimony necessary.

There were no comments from the public.

Motion to approve project PB 23-03 with conditions was made by Mr. Ford and Seconded by Mayor Zeigler.

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:	-	Ms. Choi:	-		

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

**PLANNING BOARD ATTORNEY REPORT**

**PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – CORRESPONDENCE**

Robert Pawlick, 111 Highwood Ave, asked about the DPW lot and the possibility of Teaneck’s involvement. Chair DeGidio and Mr. Steinhagen stated that this is not a matter for the planning board and it would go before the governing body.

Dierdre Mitchell, 156 Spring St, made a comment about Spring Street and expressed that it would be negative if Spring Street lost its parking.

Vito Mazza IV, 430 Grandview Terrace, commented on the set backs proposed and asked about a four-story building as an example. He expressed concern over the loss of square footage decreasing ratables. He commented on problems he has encountered due to variance granted and questioned the involvement of the board and mayor and council.

Chair DeGidio and Mr. Steinhagen explained that while the Planning Board and the Mayor and Council did not give direct orders to the planner as to specifics of the plan there was a steering committee appointed to help guide her with their input as volunteers and members of the community.

Maria Duran, 121 Van Orden Ave, asked about specifics of what will be built and the board explained to her that there is no proposal yet, but just an overlaying redevelopment area. Ms. Duran asked about the process and Chair DeGidio and Mr. Steinhagen ran her through the process.

Lydia Maurice, 392 Grand Ave, asked a question about the Bergen County Planning website, and Mr. Steinhagen answered her question.

Arthur Zayat, 125 Reldyes Ave, made a comment about the redevelopment plan.

**CLOSED SESSION**

A motion to enter Closed Session was made by: Mr. Botten and seconded by Mr. Russell.

All in Favor – Motion Passed

The Board entered Closed Session at 9:22 PM.

A motion to leave Closed Session was made by: Vice Chair Gold and seconded by Mayor Zeigler.

All in Favor – Motion Passed

The Board left Closed Session at 9:44 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business presented, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by: Mayor Zeiger and seconded by Mr. Botten.

All in Favor – Motion Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Greco  
Planning Board Secretary