



BOROUGH OF LEONIA
Leonia Planning Board
MINUTES

June 26, 2024

7:30 PM

**LEONIA NEW
MUNICIPAL CENTER**

The Borough of Leonia Planning Board held its regular meeting on JUNE 26, 2024, at 7:30 p.m. located at 229 Fort Lee Road, Leonia, NJ.

Meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM.

FLAG SALUTE

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Michael DeGidio, Vice Chair Ira Gold, Mayor Bill Ziegler, Councilman Christoph Hesterbrink, Patrick Botten, Timothy Ford, William Russell, Sean Thompson

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Ron Wolf, Haeseok Ko, Damee Choi

ALSO PRESENT: Attorney – Dan Steinhagen, Planner – Sanyogita Chavan, Engineer – Drew DiSessa, Zoning Officer – Adam Myszka

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2024, meeting made by: Mr. Russell and Seconded by Vice Chair Gold:

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows

Mayor Ziegler:	Yes	Chair DeGidio:	-	Councilman Hesterbrink:	Yes
Vice Chair Gold:	Yes	Mr. Russell:	Yes	Mr. Ford:	-
Mr. Botten:	-	Mr. Thompson:	Yes	Mr. Wolf:	Absent
Mr. Ko:	Absent	Ms. Choi:	Absent		

Motion Passes.

RESOLUTIONS

Motion to approve the resolution for application PB 24-06, Grand Lee LLC, for the address 363 Grand Avenue made by: Mayor Ziegler and Seconded by Vice Chair Gold:

On roll call, the vote was recorded as follows

Mayor Ziegler:	Yes	Chair DeGidio:	-	Councilman Hesterbrink:	Yes
Vice Chair Gold:	Yes	Mr. Russell:	-	Mr. Ford:	-
Mr. Botten:	-	Mr. Thompson:	Yes	Mr. Wolf:	Absent
Mr. Ko:	Absent	Ms. Choi:	Absent		

Motion Passes.

NEW/CONTINUING APPLICATIONS

Chair DeGidio explained the order of the applications for the evening as there would be a shift in the order.

PB24-04 – Peter Costanzo, 163 Christie Street, Block: 1214 / Lot: 35 – Variances related to a variation in an as-built plan and the original approved plan.

Mr. Steinhagen confirmed that Mr. Ford was not present and did not review the prior meeting and he would be ineligible to vote on this application.

Carmine Alampi, the applicant's attorney, presented the application to the board.

Steve Kestner, Engineer and Land Surveyor, was called up and sworn in by Mr. Steinhagen. He stated his qualifications and was accepted by the board.

Mr. Kestner proceeded to describe the application and outlined the plans for the board.

Chair DeGidio asked a question about the garage and whether a vehicle could reach the garage. Mr. Kestner explained that it is possible and suggested that they could add tracks to make it better. Chair DeGidio asked if the fence is a gate, and Mr. Kestner confirmed that the fence is a large gate for a vehicle.

Vice Chair Gold asked about the fireplace on the map, and Mr. Kestner stated that this fireplace is on the neighboring property.

Mr. Steinhagen asked a question about the overall impervious coverage limit. Mr. Kestner spoke on the current state of the impervious coverage.

Mayor Ziegler asked if the pavers on the plans are pervious or impervious pavers. Mr. Kestner stated that they are impervious, but the applicant would be willing to replace them with pervious pavers if this helps.

Chair DeGidio stated that there is not current credit for using pervious pavers, meaning a variance would still be needed.

Chair DeGidio stated that the two-car garage only has access to one bay, and Mr. Alampi stated that the second bay would be used for storage.

Chair DeGidio opened the meeting to the public and confirmed that no public in attendance had any questions.

Mr. Alampi called Peter Costanzo, the home owner and applicant, up and Mr. Steinhagen confirmed that he is still under oath from the prior meeting.

Mr. Costanzo spoke to the use of the garage, and that he agrees to the concrete ribbons for cars to reach the garage. In addition, he agrees that he will replace the current pavers with pervious pavers.

Chair DeGidio confirmed with Mr. Costanzo that the gate was indeed large enough for cars.

Chair DeGidio asked about the timeline of the application and why things have taken so long.

Mr. Costanzo explained the timeline of when his father-in-law owned the home, when they moved in to care for him and when the improvements on the property began.

Mr. Botten asked a question about the garage. Mr. Costanzo answered his questions about stormwater management. Mr. Botten also asked if there is a need for the shed considering the garage is being used for storage as well. Mr. Costanzo stated that he would be amenable to removing the shed. Mr. Botten also asked about the set back on the kitchen and if it could be moved, he also asked if permits were ever pulled for this structure. Mr. Costanzo answered that it could be moved if needed but he would prefer not to and that he is working to get the proper permits and inspections on all structures now.

Mr. Steinhagen confirmed the date that the property was acquired and asked some questions about the timeline of events. Mr. Alampi confirmed the date of transfer for the deed as 2011.

Chair DeGidio confirmed that no public in attendance wished to ask questions.

Mr. Alampi gave a summary of the application.

Chair DeGidio confirmed that no public wished to make a comment.

Mr. Steinhagen asked Mr. DiSessa a question about the pervious pavers. Mr. DiSessa explained the types of pavers the mayor requested. Mr. Steinhagen explained to the board that he wants the applicant and the board to understand what is being asked. The applicant confirmed that they do.

Mr. Botten asked if permits would be required, and Mr. Steinhagen confirmed that necessary permits are always required.

Chair DeGidio spoke on the application and stated that he does not see any reason the kitchen and the shed should be approved and suggested some conditions of approval. He expressed concerns over what would happen if the house was sold and what the new owner would have to deal with.

Vice Chair Gold stated concern that the owner of the property let this slide for so long. He stated that he is troubled by the approval of something that is coming after the fact.

Mayor Ziegler stated that if the kitchen is not a viable structure it should be removed. He stated that Mr. Alampi agreed to this and it has eased this concern.

Chair DeGidio summed up the conditions of the application.

Motion to Approve application PB 24-04, Peter Costanzo, 163 Christie Street, with conditions made by Mr. Russell and Seconded by Councilman Hesterbrink.

Mayor Ziegler:	Yes	Chair DeGidio:	Yes	Councilman Hesterbrink:	Yes
Vice Chair Gold:	No	Mr. Russell:	Yes	Mr. Ford:	-
Mr. Botten:	Yes	Mr. Thompson:	Yes	Mr. Wolf:	Absent
Mr. Ko:	Absent	Ms. Choi:	Absent		

Motion Passes.

PB24-08 – Jessica Sim, 169 Broad Ave, Block: 1608 / Lot: 1 – Variances related to an addition and the expansion of a non-conforming use.

Chair DeGidio explained to Mr. Pulice the representation for this application that the Board does not have 7 voting members present which he is entitled to as a Use variance.

Mr. Pulice decided to hold the application for the next meeting.

Mr. Steinhagen stated that this application would be moved to the next meeting, July 24, 2024, without further notice.

PB24-09 – Mel Conti, 138 Broad Ave, Block: 1505 / Lot: 24 – Variances related to a home addition

Peter Pulice, the applicant’s representative, called Mr. Conti to speak.

Mel Conti, the homeowner of 138 Broad Avenue was sworn in by Mr. Steinhagen.

Mr. Conti explained the intention behind the application and the improvements.

Chair DeGidio asked a question about a prior application and if this was a new application or a change on an old application. Mr. Steinhagen answered that this application is different than the past one.

Chair DeGidio opened to questions from the public.

Joe Reilly, 201 Moore Ave, asked about notice, and Mr. Steinhagen explained the requirements on the noticing, and confirmed that the notice requirements of this application were met.

Peter Pulice, Engineer, was sworn in by Mr. Steinhagen and had his qualifications confirmed by the Chair.

Mr. Steinhagen confirmed the exhibits with Mr. Pulice.

Mr. Pulice explained the application to the board.

Mr. Steinhagen and Mr. Myszka discussed the required variances to the board.

Chair DeGidio asked a question about the height of the second floor. Mr. Pulice answered his question. Chair DeGidio also asked a question about the prior approval and whether or not they would accept the same conditions. Mr. Steinhagen answered the question.

The board discussed the prior application and resolution.

Mayor Ziegler asked a question about skylights in the proposed building. He continued to ask questions about optimizing lighting.

Mayor Ziegler also asked if the driveway was a pervious paver or impervious, and if the applicant would be willing to use pervious. Mr. Pulice answered that the applicant would be willing.

Mr. Steinhagen asked what the coverage would be at without the pervious area.

Mayor Ziegler asked a question about the grass areas on the plan.

Mr. Botten asked Mr. Steinhagen a question about requirements. Mr. Steinhagen answered his question and confirmed the answer with Mr. Pulice.

Vice Chair Gold asked a question about compliance and what happens if the variance is given and what effect that has on the future. Mr. Steinhagen answered him.

Chair DeGidio opened the meeting to the public for questions.

Joe Reilly, 201 Moore Ave, asked a series of questions about the application to the board.

Mr. Steinhagen explained the ADA requirements on the application.

Debby Marty, 195 Moore Ave, asked for some clarification on the size of the house and the number of stories. She also asked about the flat roof and if it would be used for recreation. Mr. Pulice stated that the roof would not be used for anything.

Chair DeGidio closed the public question portion and opened the meeting to the public for comment.

Joe Reilly, 201 Moore Ave, was sworn in by Mr. Steinhagen, and expressed concern over the size and look of the new building.

Debby Marty, 195 Moore Ave, was sworn in by Mr. Steinhagen, and stated that the design is beautiful but expressed concern over the change in the look of the town.

Chair DeGidio, seeing no other public present wishing to make comments, closed the meeting to the public.

Vice Chair Gold asked a question about rules regarding differing look of structures. Mr. Steinhagen read a town code to him explaining that buildings should not be substantially similar to other houses in the neighborhood. Vice Chair Gold expressed concern over the look of the building.

Mr. Steinhagen explained that the board should not discuss the look of the building, the board exists to discuss the variances in relation to zoning.

Councilman Hesterbrink stated that Leonia has a lot of different styles, and despite that Leonia has a character, the town should not be stuck in time. He stated that he believes the character and design of the houses should be allowed.

Mr. Ford asked a question about the ADA compliance. Mr. Steinhagen recommended that the applicant be required to make an accessible ADA spot as required.

Chair DeGidio discussed ADA compliance with Mr. Steinhagen and the merit of the prior approvals.

Mr. DiSessa explained the typical ADA spot requirements and stated that the plan as designed could work for the requirements.

Vice Chair Gold spoke about the height and the design of the building and expressed concerns. Mr. Steinhagen explained to Vice Chair Gold that the building is compliant with height and size of the building.

Mr. Ford asked Mr. Pulice a question about other properties on the block and whether there were other professional practices. Mr. Pulice confirmed that there are.

Vice Chair Gold made a Motion to deny the variance, seconded by Chair DeGidio.

Mayor Ziegler asked if it is possible for the architect to change the slope of the ceiling.

Chair DeGidio called to put the meeting on break at 9:49pm so that Mr. Pulice could speak with his client regarding the question.

The meeting resumed at 9:55pm.

Mr. Pulice asked for the application to adjourn and take a chance to revise the application.

Mayor Ziegler motion to table the discussion and the prior motion until the next meeting. Seconded by Councilman Hesterbrink.

Mayor Ziegler:	Yes	Chair DeGidio:	Yes	Councilman Hesterbrink:	Yes
Vice Chair Gold:	Yes	Mr. Russell:	Yes	Mr. Ford:	Yes
Mr. Botten:	Yes	Mr. Thompson:	Yes	Mr. Wolf:	Absent
Mr. Ko:	Absent	Ms. Choi:	Absent		

Motion Passes.

Mr. Steinhagen stated that the application would be carried to the next meeting without further notice and confirmed that the applicant would grant the board additional time to act.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORT

Councilman Hesterbrink spoke about the prior Mayor and Council meeting where they discussed speed bumps to be added in the town, the revisions of the Shade Tree Ordinance and the Repaving of Fort Lee Road. Finally he mentioned an upcoming Town Hall meeting.

DISCUSSION ON BOARD MATTERS – NEW/OLD BUSINESS

PLANNING BOARD ATTORNEY REPORT

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD – CORRESPONDENCE

No Public wished to make comment

CLOSED SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

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

All in Favor – Motion Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Greco
Planning Board Secretary