

**BOROUGH OF WESTWOOD
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
January 26, 2023**

APPROVED 2/9/23

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The meeting was called to order at approximately 8:00 p.m.

Open Public Meetings Law Statement:

This meeting, which conforms with the Open Public Meetings Law, Chapter 231, Public Laws of 1975, is a **Regular** Public Meeting of the Planning Board.

Notices have been filed with our local official newspapers and posted on the municipal bulletin board.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Jaymee Hodges, Chairman
Mayor Raymond Arroyo
Christopher Montana, Councilmember
Ann Costello
William Martin
Keith Doell
Anthony Zorovich
Beth Staples, Alt. #1
Kristy Dougherty, Alt. #2

ALSO PRESENT:

Steven Paul, Esq., appeared on behalf of
Thomas Randall, Esq., Board Attorney
Ed Snieckus, Burgis Associates, Board Planner
Brandon Goldfine, Boswell Engineering
Board Engineer
Ed Senkevich, Boswell Engineering

ABSENT: Dan Olivier, Vice-Chairman (excused absence)
Yash Risbud (excused absence)

4. OPEN TO PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

A motion to open to public was made by Beth Staples, seconded by Mayor Arroyo, and carried. There were no questions or comments, and the matter was closed to the public on motion by Yash Risbud, seconded by William Martin and carried.

5. MINUTES: The Minutes of the **1/12/23** meeting were approved on motion made by Mayor Arroyo, seconded by Anthony Zorovich, and carried unanimously on roll call vote.

6. CORRESPONDENCE:

1. Draft of Amended Land Use Plan of the Master Plan-Proposed dated 1/19/23 by Ed Snieckus, Burgis Associates - See discussion below,

7. RESOLUTIONS: None

8. PENDING NEW BUSINESS:

1. Grace Episcopal Church, 9 Harrington Avenue - Site Plan with Bulk Variances for construction of an ADA ramp - Need Site Plan - Still incomplete - Mr. Snieckus reported he called applicant's attorney regarding the last document submitted, as the Board Engineer noted there were no contours. The cover page was incorrect, and the attorney advised he would send a new plan and application form. Carried to next meeting.

9. VARIANCES, SUBDIVISIONS AND/OR SITE PLANS:

SWEARING IN OF BOARD PROFESSIONALS FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

10. DISCUSSION:

1. Draft of Amended Land Use Plan of the Master Plan-Proposed dated 1/19/23 by Ed Snieckus, Burgis Associates - Ed Snieckus gave an update - The MLUL requires every municipality with a zoning ordinance to adopt a Master Plan containing at least a Land Use Plan and a Housing Element. This is the updated document that the Board has been working on at various meetings. He would review any additional changes and updates since the last meeting. Since those last updates, he went back and merged all the changes and updates into this single document. Currently, there is a Land Use Plan, and this is the update, Mr. Snieckus noted. The next step after the Board's approval and recommendation, would be to set a public hearing date, publish the notice and send a notice to the public. Mr. Snieckus reviewed the last changes and additions as reflected here. The full document was distributed to Board Members and is on file at the Borough Hall.

Amended Land Use Plan of the Master Plan

Introduction:

The Land Use Plan is intended to guide future development in Westwood for minimally the next ten-year period, in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL), in a manner which protects the public health and safety and promotes the general welfare. This Plan as required designed to serve as the foundation for the Borough's land use regulations.

This amended Westwood Land Use Plan provides the location, extent and intensity of land development for various types of residential, commercial, industrial, office, and public purposes. This document is an interim document to update the Borough's policies regarding these land uses and their development and will be further updated with the HVA study that is under simultaneous review. Upon the completion of the HVA study, this document will be further updated with the HVA study and findings. The land use descriptions and recommendations set forth in the Plan essentially acknowledges and reaffirms the established and stable development pattern which characterizes the Borough. The Plan also includes some modifications to the various objectives, goals and policies from past documents to refine them or to address current issues as identified herein.

The amended Land Use Plan following this introduction, consists of six sections. The first section reviews the emerging issues and changes impacting land use in the Borough. The second section sets forth the Master Plan Objectives, Goals Policies. These objectives, goals and policy statements form the basis for the third section of this land use plan which comprise the related land use categories and descriptions. The fourth section reviews the Land Use Plan in relation to the plans of the state, county and surrounding municipalities as required by the MLUL. The fifth section evaluates the demographic background of the community with data available to offer a review of trends and a current snap shot of conditions in the borough. In accordance with recent legislation, the plan is required to offer recommendations regarding appropriate locations for the development of public electric vehicle infrastructure, this is provided in the sixth and final section.

The MLUL requires every municipality with a zoning ordinance to adopt a master plan containing at least a land use plan element and housing plan element (N.J.S.A. 40:55D-62a),

Overview of Prior Master Plan Studies:

The Borough of Westwood Master Plan studies are a continuing comprehensive planning tradition by the Borough, initiated in 1975 when the Borough adopted its first master plan. Since then, the Borough has adopted several master plan reports and documents, the most recent being a comprehensive 1993 master plan and then in 2005, 2011, 2019 and most recently on June 25, 2020. All of these master plan documents were designed to update and guide the future development of the community and several of their recommendations have been incorporated herein.

Section I: Introduction - Page 5

- Land Use Plan Overview
- Overview of Prior Master Plan Studies

Section 2: Emerging Issues and Changes Impacting Land Use in the Borough - Page 8

- Regional Issues and Changes Impacting Land Use
- Local Issues and Changes Impacting Land Use

Section 3: Master Plan Objectives, Goals and Policies - Page 16

- General Objectives of Land Use Plan
- Land Use Plan Goals and Objectives Sustainability in Development Regulations

Section 4: Land Use Categories - Page 26

Section 5: Relationships to Other Plans - Page 35

- State Strategic Plan
- Bergen County Planning
- Relationship to Master Plans of Adjacent Municipalities

Section 6: Background Analysis - Page 40

- Local Demographic Changes
- Local Housing Changes
- Local Economic Profile Changes

Section 7 : Public Electric Vehicle Infrastructure - Page 55

Appendix Documents

Mr. Snieckus thoroughly summarized the changes/additions, including:

In Section 2 - Emerging Impacting Land Use, under E-commerce and the COVID Pandemic, language was added as discussed at the last meeting: The pandemic health event highlighted the need and

preference by existing and new homeowners for sufficient space to shelter in place, contributing to the health, safety and welfare of the community. This is promoted by the light air and open space of the Borough's residential neighborhoods, particularly the range of single-family areas in the borough. The modest open space provided by the zone's associated bulk requirements maintain desired human densities that promote a safe and healthy community. A homes outdoor space or front porch provided an even more important space for the protection and well-being of the public. Furthermore, these changes in lifestyle and workplace locations have driven home alterations for space to accommodate the needs of the home office.

The work from home, evolving demographic of residents and regional growth has had a similar effect on the need to plan for improved pedestrian safety with safer connections and accessibility at street intersections. Additionally, the use of alternative modes of transportation has and will increase because of availability of alternatives such as electric bikes and related mobility devices. This will advance the need for street elements such as storage racks for bicycles in key locations or bike routes, where practical.

Under Local Issues and Changes Impacting Land Use - Protection of Local Housing Conditions - The Borough subsequently adjusted building and impervious coverage limits in some residential zones to permit some alterations although there are other ordinance factors that could use further modification to further refine potential property build out limits.

Also, promoting the utilization of renewable energy resources where practical was added and discussed.

Language added to Goal 7: To preserve and enhance the borough's commercial areas by: defining their functional role in the community, enhancing the quality of life within the commercial center through an appropriate mixture of activities; protect ongoing economic vitality of the CBD /SPE and CBD zones via continuing low rise development to maintain scale, modest density and moderate use intensity that will preserve the unique established context and maintain a pedestrian friendly streetscape that is the source of the zone's continued viability; encouraging the use of the design elements identified in the Land Use Plan; and, considering alternative means to address parking needs through the potential joint sharing of parking resources between adjacent properties where feasible and the expansion of off-street parking to provide greater accommodations for patrons.

Some changes and additions were made to policy statements, particularly: Goal 14: A Borough policy is to promote appropriate development that is consistent with the established architectural and development form of the community by maintaining adequate open space through features such as setbacks, height and coverage limits of buildings and maximum building size criteria and ~~adjacent properties~~ as prescribed by the zone plan as supported herein. This defined space provides the health and wellness benefits of light, air and open space for the residents and general population consistent with the purposes of the Municipal Land Use Law act (NJSA 40:55D-2) on a lot or tract.

Policy Statement: The Borough of Westwood is a suburban community in scale with building height limits, coverage and setback requirements to maintain light, air and open space that defines the existing and prescribed architectural and development context of the community. Such requirements establish and sustain the health and welfare benefits of the occupants of a parcel of land and the surrounding public by maintaining access to light, air or open space and the planned expanse visibility the natural sky dome. ~~The benefits are important to both the residents of individual homes and those in multifamily vertical living.~~ These regulatory requirements should be retained on balance with proposed improvement plans.

Added In the Central Business District: The noted intent to enhance pedestrian connectivity and accessibility of the business district needs to be dominant to the needs of vehicular circulation in the district. The noted growth of the region coupled with the existing constrained vehicular circulation of the limited width of Westwood Avenue and the increased regional traffic evident on Broadway and Kinderkamack Road will be an ongoing factor that must be factored into future development applications. Deviations from the zone plan will need to be balanced with the critical need to maintain safe and efficient circulation for pedestrians, emergency services and patrons of the business district.

Amended 2. Limited Business District. (LB-1 and LB-2) This land use designation extends along the east side of Broadway between Irvington Street and the Hillsdale municipal border. This is an area which has historically developed with an incompatible mix of commercial, business, wholesale/warehouse and automotive-related activities. It is devoid of any unifying character. It is the intent of this land use category in this area to establish a more uniform, complementary and compatible land use arrangement in this portion of the Borough. ~~It is recommended that the current light manufacturing zoning be replaced with a new land use~~

~~classification which would permit wholesale uses, a limited number of retail uses where the retail activity is specifically associated with distribution activity, and specified business and office uses. Health clubs and similar recreation uses would also be permitted here, with restaurants including drive-up service permitted in the area north of Lake Street. It is also suggested that the Borough encourage merger of properties through the use of such zoning elements as floor area ratio techniques.~~

~~Amended 7. Retail/Wholesale (RW). This development designation is designed to acknowledge and encourage improvement to the unique land use pattern which has evolved in the vicinity of Carver Avenue north of Old Hood Road. This area contains a number of outlet stores and wholesale facilities. Unfortunately, the area's context has evolved in a haphazard manner due to unrestricted development without regard to regulatory/design controls. It is recommended, in an effort to improve the physical character and land use arrangement, that a distinctive retail/wholesale category permitting these particular types of uses be permitted here. Appropriate area and building requirements need to be imposed which reflect the prevailing lot arrangement. A definitive plan to improve the physical character of this area also needs to be implemented. It is recommended that the utilization of the State's Local Redevelopment Act may serve as a mechanism to accomplish this goal.~~

Mr. Snieckus completed the summary. Board discussion followed with minor additions and amendments. Mayor Arroyo commented on one of schedules regarding affordable housing. There were no further questions, comments or discussions. Mr. Snieckus would input the Board's comments from this evening's meeting into a final document.

The Public Meeting would be at the next Planning Board meeting, 2/9/23 with publication and notice to the public.

2. Adoption of Procedural Rules & By-Laws - Carried to the next meeting.

11. ADJOURNMENT - On motions, made seconded and carried, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**MARY R. VERDUCCI, Paralegal
Planning Board Secretary**