

**BOROUGH OF WESTWOOD  
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES  
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING  
February 9, 2023**

**APPROVED 2/23/23A**

**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  
Dan Olivier, Vice-Chairman  
Mayor Raymond Arroyo  
Christopher Montana, Councilmember  
William Martin  
Keith Doell  
Yash Risbud  
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

**ABSENT:** Ann Costello (excused absence)

**4. OPEN TO PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS:**

A motion to open to public was made by Keith Doell, 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 **1/26/23** meeting were approved on motion made by Keith Doell, 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 - Still incomplete - Carried to next meeting;**

**9. VARIANCES, SUBDIVISIONS AND/OR SITE PLANS:**

**SWEARING IN OF BOARD PROFESSIONALS FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**10. DISCUSSION:**

**1. Amended Land Use Plan of the Master Plan by Ed Snieckus, Burgis Associates-Public Hearing - Carried to the 2/23/23;**

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

**3. Discussion & Presentation on Parking in the Borough - A motion to open to public was made by Keith Doell, seconded by Mayor Arroyo, and carried. Bruce Meisel, 263 Center Avenue, Westwood, NJ, came forward, as property owner and principal of First Westwood Realty, the largest holder of real estate in the Borough, with 300 parking spaces in the downtown. Mr. Meisel gave history per his personal knowledge of the parking history in Westwood, also having served as the Attorney for the Westwood Parking Authority. When the Kmart Shopping Center first opened up forty years ago, it was said that the downtown and commercial properties were on the decline, and parking was sorely needed in the Borough. The Mayor and Council addressed it on an emergency basis. The Westwood Parking Authority came about. They put together a plan that increased parking in the Borough three-fold, for patrons, employees, commuters, with parking that was centrally located, so that they could park only once for their trip into town. He continued with a detailed discussion on the number of spaces in**

the Borough, noting there is an intensity of uses in the Borough. Parking is the lifeblood of a suburban downtown. You never have enough unless you have too much. The two lots of 247 spaces are always full on a Saturdays, even at night. There is much more foot traffic and many people are working remotely. We need to look at the entire downtown and preserve it as a comfortable place to shop and protect property values for tax ratables. We need to always be ahead of the curve on parking. Commuter lots were discussed. Generally, real estate seekers look for properties that have parking options, so this should be given flexibility in the future.

A discussion followed. Mr. Martin commented we have to be careful not to overbuild the parking, since we have Uber that is being utilized when people come to the downtown. Councilmember Montana pointed out that the Borough does have options should the auto use and parking needs decline. The Mayor commented on the lot on Irvington and discussed businesses in the Borough and matters before the Boards requiring parking, according to ITE standards. What that does not do is identify the regional growth for commercial use. Ms. Dougherty thanked him for bringing this to their attention and commented she is always concerned about safety; adding these elements would alleviate congestion and issues with drivers downtown seeking spaces. Ms. Staples commented per her observations in the Borough and is emailing her findings and proposed suggestions. Mr. Risbud commented about the traffic and public improvement. Mr. Olivier commented on the extreme growth he has seen here in his lifetime, and that it will keep growing. He wants to keep what the town has and not overdevelop it, and he appreciates the concern for parking. Ed Snieckus commented it is an important feature that Mr. Meisel is touching on to promote businesses and advance the downtown. Mr. Snieckus added he does work for many towns, and it does come down to the property owners and people cooperating. Mr. Meisel added if you build parking lots, the ratables will increase. Chairman Hodges commented on the development in Ridgewood and the congestion it brings. The parking lot they built there is four-stories. There is a justifiable need of surface parking for the taxpayers. He thanked Mr. Meisel for his time, history and input.

Cheryl Hodges, 40 Second Avenue, as Council Liaison for the Westwood Parking Utility, and as a resident, came forward and stated they are very much aware of the parking issues and have had discussions in depth about their options to expand and preserved the downtown, as their top priority, along with safety for the residents. Since Covid, we have exploded. People were home and learned about everything offered in their community. We have such

an appreciate for where we are. She has confidence in the Board, noting we have our work cut out for us. Carol Knubel, her colleague at the Parking Utility, was also present and is very hands on with the merchants and employees, educating them as to what is available there for them. We need more parking, and they are addressing this. She is available for any questions and thanked the Board.

Chairman Hodges asked the Mayor how they can put a group together to work on this, and the Mayor indicated he would think about putting a task force to work on this. The Parking Utility would assist us. Carol Knubel came forward for questions and spoke about parking issues in the Borough, Park Mobile and the needs for public education and parking in the Borough. The Chairman thanked Ms. Knubel.

Justin Melo, 494 Kinderkamack Road, came forward and discussed parking, and also the importance of biking and public modes of transportation in the Borough. There were no further interested parties from the public wishing to comment. A motion to close to the public was made by Yash Risbud, seconded by William Martin, and carried.

Mr. Snieckus stated in two weeks, on 2/23/23, the Board will conduct the public hearing on the Master Plan Amendment.

**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**