

**BERGENFIELD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
October 27, 2025**

Vice Chairman Bergman called the meeting to order at 8:00 P.M.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

In compliances with the Open Public Meetings Act, the notice requirements have been satisfied. Meeting dates are confirmed at the Annual Meeting. Notice of this meeting was provided to the Record, Star Ledger, and Cablevision, posted on a municipal public notice bulletin board and published on the borough website.

Any board member having a conflict of interest involving any matter to come before the board this evening is reminded they must recuse himself/herself from participating in any discussion on this matter.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by Councilman Lodato.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Amatorio, Councilman Lodato, Romeo Abenoja, Ernesto Acosta, Jason Bergman, and Praveen Joseph

Absent: Robert Rivas (excused) and Edgar Dimaren

Also Present: Gloria Oh, Planning Board Attorney, Antonios Panagopoulos, Board Engineer, and Hilda Tavitian, Planning Board Clerk

APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – August 18, 2025

Motion By: Board member Joseph

Second By: Board member Acosta

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

CORRESPONDENCE

Two letters received from Bergen County Conservation District. There are just advisory notifying the Board applications were submitted and approved for the following properties: 93 John Place and 16 Hallberg Avenue.

Resignation letter received from Board member Joel Nunez.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Comments by members of audience on matters not on evening's agenda

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Site Plan – Mayor Amatorio stated at the last meeting the Woolworth building was discussed. Recommendations from the Site Plan Committee were submitted to the proposed developer. The proposals need to be brought back to this Board.
2. Parking Legal – There is an ongoing proposal with the Mayor and Council regarding changes of parking regulations around Johnson Avenue and N. First Street within the vicinity of the mosque.
3. Capital Improvements

4. Master Plan
5. Liaison to Board of Adjustment

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Application: Revised Redevelopment Plan – 150 S. Washington Avenue

Lyndsay Knight, Economic Development Planner from Neglia Group, stated she was here back in August 18, 2025 where she presented to the Board the 150 S. Washington Avenue redevelopment plan. The purpose of the plan was solely to determine if the plan was consistent with the town master plan. At the time, the Board had voted no and had expressed a number of concerns. The biggest concern was the height. The height at the time was 55 feet, 4 stories. Ms. Knight stated she spoke with the Mayor and Council and the potential developer of the site and worked on developing a lower height of 46 feet, 4 stories. The height would be brought down by 9 feet. There were concerns about emergency services and accessibility of emergency vehicles. The architect will design the building to the standards that is required of them per the code. The Site Plan Committee would also review with the emergency services within the borough. She explained they thought it was valuable feedback and applied it to the changes. Ms. Knight stated in the 2024 reexamination report of the master plan there were a number of areas related to this plan. In land use, objective number 1, “support the upgrading of substandard properties through the Borough through code enforcement efforts, zoning ordinance amendments, and other initiatives”. She stated part of the redevelopment process is declaring property areas in need of redevelopment based on criteria and this redevelopment meets this criteria. Land use – objective 3 was met, which is “continue efforts to enhance the downtown business district by encouraging business and appropriate non-residential, mixed-use development along Washington Avenue and throughout the downtown business district”. This is a mixed-use building. Next is, land use – Objective 4, which is to “develop a program to identify the development potential of remaining underdeveloped and/or vacant parcels and provide through the zoning ordinance for development and redevelopment options at a scale consistent with the Borough’s pattern of development”. The property is underdeveloped and has been vacant on the first floor. It’s the entrance to downtown and is hurting town development. Circulation – Objective 3, is “provide for adequate parking and on-site loading facilities for future development and redevelopment”. Ms. Knight stated what is being proposed in the redevelopment plan is a fully parked project. There are enough parking spaces for the units and the unit count of bedrooms within the site. Parking is a major concern in the downtown with Washington Avenue being a narrow road. Ms. Knight stated being able to have those parking spaces available are essential. The building will be set back a little bit to allow for parking in front of the street, also. In her opinion, the S. Washington Avenue redevelopment plan is consistent with the Borough of Bergenfield’s master plan and subsequent reexamination report. The modifications and changes will help make the project better.

Mayor Amatorio stated he knows the Board rejected the plan at the last meeting due to the height. He inquired if it was consistent with the master plan at that time.

Ms. Knight stated what was presented that evening was consistent with the master plan and other redevelopment plans in the area. The way the height was being measured was changed.

Mayor Amatorio stated, regardless of the height, the plan was always consistent with the master plan.

Board member Acosta stated a fire truck requires a minimum of 14 ft. clearance. The height of the building may have to be raised.

Ms. Knight stated they would still have to be below 46 ft. If the first floor would need to be higher, the architect would have to work within their plan they submit to ensure it remained within the permitted maximum height.

Board member Bergman stated regardless of however high the fire department requires at a site plan committee meeting, it should not go over 46 ft.

Ms. Knight stated when the applicant comes to the Planning Board, they will come not seeking any variance relief.

Mayor Amatorio inquired what is the purpose of this presentation, whether it's consistent with the master plan or is the Board allowed to change the proposal.

Board attorney Oh stated the purpose of the presentation is to seek recommendation from the Planning Board and ensure the plan is in sync with the master plan.

Mayor Amatorio stated the issue of it being consistent with the ordinance is before the Mayor and Council, not this Board.

Ms. Knight stated the Board is tasked with master plan consistency. The master plan is the document of the Planning Board.

Vice Chairman Bergman stated the goal for tonight is to say this plan is consistent with what the master plan says, but does not solidify the plan is set in stone. There will be a time the developer will come before the Board for questions and discuss the units and inside the building.

Ms. Knight stated the S. Washington Avenue and W. Main Street redevelopment plan is a great example. It was a redevelopment and now you see it is going through the process of approvals. They met with the site plan committee, received feedback, and went back to make some changes. They are coming to the Planning Board. Ms. Knight explained they received feedback from this Board's engineer and addressed his questions and concerns. Although this is a document that will steer the development on the property, the plan presented is not necessarily the development that will be happening. There are still multiple steps and checks and balances along the way.

Councilman Lodato inquired what are the number of units proposed. He inquired about the proposed parking spaces.

Ms. Knight stated there are a maximum of 45 units being proposed, nine units will be set aside for affordable housing. There will be space for a small retail on the first floor, like a coffee shop or convenience store. There are 1.35 parking spaces per unit. She stated they don't know exactly how many units there will be.

Councilman Lodato stated he has a issue with the percentage of parking spaces required for a unit. He stated any unit that is occupied by two people will need two cars. There will be a deficiency in the number of parking spaces. He inquired about who suggested that 25% of parking spaces be 8 feet.

Ms. Knight stated she had written that. If it is a one-bedroom apartment, one person lives there, the person will most likely have one vehicle. There's the extra .35 to account for instances where there are two vehicles. It averages out. RSIS uses those percentages, also. It's a common way to calculate parking calculations.

Councilman Lodato stated having 8 ft. parking spaces exposes people to injury and doesn't see it as being realistic. He inquired about how many parking spaces would be devoted for commercial use.

Ms. Knight stated there isn't a parking requirement for commercial use because there are parking spaces that will be located in front of the building. The intention is that the retail space will be used by the people in the building, people in the school, and by people walking by. It will be mostly pedestrians that will be accessing it, but there will be on-street parking like the other businesses in town.

Vice Chairman Bergman suggested having limited parking, perhaps a five to fifteen minute window. It's not meant to be a restaurant. A subject to approval can be that the Mayor and Council put a fifteen minute parking zone there so that people are not there for an extended period of time.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the development is proposing widening of the street.

Ms. Knight stated there currently isn't, but are proposing to set it further back. There is the cut out further north on the property, where the bus stop is. They are proposing to continue that on the property.

Board engineer Panagopoulos inquired if the 1.35 parking space takes into account credit for EV parking. It could be 1.25 then. He inquired if it's possible to increase the parking in anticipation of losing 15% of those parking spaces. It would be potentially another seven spaces that would be lost.

Ms. Knight's response was no. Once EV is accounted for, it can be 1.25. Technically, there can be a 10% reduction. She stated instead of the 10% reduction, they can just put it on the front end of the parking. Proactively, they can account for the 10% that will be reduced most likely.

Board member Acosta inquired about handicapped parking. He inquired about tandem parking.

Ms. Knight stated handicapped parking is required. EV is state law and needs to be provided. Typically, tandem parking is provided when there is a two or three bedroom unit, where there are two people accessing it and is restricted to those people. There is some kind of management plan that would be presented to the Planning Board.

Councilman Lodato stated it shouldn't be the developer telling the borough what he is going to do, it should be the borough, the governing body, or the Planning Board telling him what he can do. If there is an issue with the parking, the number of units should be reduced.

Mayor Amatorio stated the developer met and spoke with the Mayor and Council and the engineers and he was told about the parameters. The standard they are using is almost similar to the standard being used in the town. There were a couple of meetings prior it being written in an ordinance. They also received feedback from the building department.

Ms. Knight stated the developer does not show up and give a plan and state that is what he wants to build. There are several meetings in which they are in the process of saying it's too high, they need to setback further, need articulations, use different materials. There are meetings occurring with the borough prior to writing the redevelopment plan.

Mayor Amatorio stated all of the plans presented to this Board have been consistent with height, setback, and parking as it had been vetted in several meetings. There have been multiple developers who have presented plans for the bank property owned by the borough and it has not been acceptable to the borough.

Borough engineer Panagopoulos stated the type of users in these buildings generally have one, maybe a second car if it's a bigger family, sometimes no car, especially where there is mass transit available. Times are changing. They need to have open minds about how the younger generation are operating.

Ms. Knight stated there are a lot of e-bikes being used now, also.

Vice Chairman Bergman stated he would be a target audience for a building like this in his town residence. He has contemplated getting rid of his car. He works from home 95% of the time and has frustrations attached with having a car.

Board member Acosta inquired if the plan is proposing parking spaces for all the tenants.

Councilman Lodato stated it is written the first floor can only be for commercial use.

Ms. Knight stated at this time they don't know the number of units and know the parking layout. They would have to come to the Board to say the number of units they will be providing, the parking ratio based on that, and would have to show a parking layout. They will try to put as many parking spaces at surface level as it is way too expensive to go underground and would have ability to go higher. If anything, they will have a smaller retail space to accommodate parking. Ms. Knight stated in mixed-use developments there can't be residential units on the first floor. If there is parking on the first floor, it has to be screened. The minimum lot is 145 ft., minimum lot depth is 200 ft, but requiring 10 ft. on each side yard. The front has a front yard setback of 20 ft., rear yard setback of 15 ft., and a maximum lot coverage of 70%.

Approve Proposal of Revised Redevelopment Plan for 150 S. Washington Avenue and Recommend it's Consistent with the Master Plan

Motion By: Mayor Amatorio

Second By: Board member Bergman.

5 Ayes, 1 Nay.

MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING

Motion By: Mayor Amatorio

Second By: Board member Bergman

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Hilda Tavitian, Clerk
Planning Board