

**BERGENFIELD PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
June 15, 2026**

Chairman Jason Bergman called the meeting to order at 8:10 P.M.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

In compliance 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 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 themselves from participating in any discussion on this matter.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led By Councilman Lodato.

OATH OF OFFICE TO APPOINTED BOARD MEMBER

Oath of office was administered to Ariel Forman by Mayor Amatorio.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Amatorio, Joseph Picheo, Councilman Lodato, Ariel Forman, Romeo Abenoja, Ernesto Acosta, Jason Bergman, Edgar Dimaren, and Oriole Familia

Absent: Yehuda Borg (excused)

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

APPROVE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – May 18, 2026

Motion By: Mayor Amatorio

Second By: Board member Abenoja

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

CORRESPONDENCE

A letter from John Smith, on behalf of the Zoning Board of Adjustment, was received requesting the Planning Board draft an ordinance regarding the placement and the setback of residential back up generators and air conditioner units. Chairman Bergman stated there was a resident who recently was at the building department while John Smith was present complaining their neighbor had moved their electrical equipment from the back to their side yard, which was only 3-5 feet from their property line. It was very loud and shook their house. The Planning Board has been asked to review the letter and recommend to the Mayor and Council to draft an ordinance.

Mayor Amatorio stated that comment should have been brought to the building department. He didn't know if the Planning Board had the expertise to address the issue.

Chairman Bergman stated the specific case happened a long time ago and it was written in the memorialization of the previous homeowners, they were not allowed to move the AC unit.

Board engineer Panagopoulos stated there currently is a variance for the units. Personally, there should be no obstructions in the setback lines, not just air conditioning units. Everything should have a setback

requirement, i.e. sheds, window wells. There are setback requirements. However, by definition, it doesn't include these units. It's a loophole. Any permanent structure should be disallowed from being in the setback lines.

Mayor Amatorio stated there is an existing setback requirement in the ordinance. There should be no obstruction within 4 feet from the wall of the house or structure to the boundary of the property.

Board member Picheo stated originally, the plan was that the units were in the back. Everything was fine until the new owner moved them without a permit. There's a bump out on the house. Mr. Picheo explained the owners tucked it in the corner where the neighbor's bedroom is. It was never supposed to be on the side.

Mayor Amatorio stated the minutes from this meeting and the Board engineer's comments and recommendation be sent to the Mayor and Council.

Board engineer Panagopoulos stated there are noise requirements. There should be a way to say it's too noisy at property line and should dampen it somehow or move them. It is a state statute and should be looked at.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

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

Desiree Paton, resident of 49 Smith Avenue, stated she resides within 500' feet of S. Washington Avenue and was not notified about the development on S. Washington Avenue. She had read it was going to be a six-story building with 220 apartments. The traffic around town is terrible as is and will become worse with the construction. No one knows what is going to be built. There are no names, no picture of what is being built. All Bergenfield residents should be notified, not just residents who live within 200'. Ms. Paton stated all the development will affect the school systems. There should be a better system to inform all Bergenfield residents.

Chairman Bergman stated 500' is outside of the radius for which applicants need to notify residents. The law only requires residents within 200' to be notified. Everything is listed on the borough website and is published in the newspaper. There isn't much else that can be done.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – Were Dispensed With

1. Site Plan
2. Parking Legal
3. Capital Improvements
4. Master Plan
5. Liaison to Board of Adjustment

OLD BUSINESS

1. Resolution – ETD Discount Tire, 220 South Washington Avenue, Request for Extension

Motion By: Mayor Amatorio

Second By: Chairman Bergman

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Proposed Amendment to the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan

Stan Slachetka, from Pennoni, 2 Aquarium Drive, Camden, NJ, stated they prepared the proposed amendment to the land use plan element to the master plan. When the Planning Board adopted the reexamination report of the master plan in 2024, there was a recommendation to change the land use element to eliminate the R-40 land use category and replace it with a new R-20 land use category. Mr. Slachetka stated the Borough Council is now considering an ordinance to implement that recommendation. He suggested the Planning Board should formally consider an amendment to the land use plan element of the master plan. If an ordinance is introduced, the Board has to evaluate the proposed ordinance as to its consistency with the master plan. Mr. Slachetka explained the land use plan element of the master plan has been amended to incorporate the recommendations made in the 2024 master plan reexamination report. The proposed amendment will eliminate the R-40 land use category and replace it with a new R-20 category. The recommended land use category would be for single-family residential developments with a minimum lot size of 20,000 sq. ft. Currently, the R-40 is 40,000 sq. ft. Mr. Slachetka stated it was found in the analysis done that a change in the category from R-40 to R-20 would put that land use category more in line with the surrounding zoning districts in Bergenfield and adjoining municipalities. The master plan reexamination report also recommended revisions to the bulk and yard standard to include maximum improved lot coverage. Mr. Slachetka stated assuming the Board is in favor of making the amendment to the land use plan element to implement the recommendations in the master plan reexamination report, there would need to be a corresponding amendment to the land development ordinance of the municipality and the zoning map. It would need to be introduced by the governing body and referred back to the Planning Board to determine if it is consistent with the master plan.

Mayor Amatorio stated the R-40 zone will be eliminated and changed to R-20. The subdivision before was bigger and were allowing residential units to be built. The districts that are impacted are near Knickerbocker Country Club, bordering Tenaflly. The borough is consistent with the zoning in Tenaflly.

Mr. Slachetka stated the rational for making the revision is when you look at the surrounding zoning districts of R-40, there is significant disparity in the land use characteristics permitted in those districts. The Borough will be making it consistent and uniform with the portion of the Knickerbocker Country Club that is in Tenaflly.

Questions from the Public:

No one came forward.

Motion to Accept Amendment to the Land Use Plan Element of the Master Plan

Motion By: Mayor Amatorio

Second By: Board member Abenoja

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

2. Application: Ferdoni Realty LLC
150 S. Washington Avenue
Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan

Matthew Capizzi, attorney for applicant, stated the lot was the subject of an area in need of redevelopment designation by the council in July 2025. A redevelopment plan specific to the project was adopted by the council on August 2025. The ordinance making the redevelopment plan effective was adopted by the council on November 6, 2025. The project is a four-story building containing 45 units, 9 are affordable housing, 61 parking spaces, and 1,000 sq. ft. retail on the first floor. The first floor contains 61 parking spaces, 1,000 sq. ft. of retail, and the second, third, and fourth floors contain 45 units of the various one, two, and three bedrooms. There are no variances required. The proposed application was sent to the County of Bergen. Mr. Capizzi stated the ingress/egress to the site is from a two movement driveway along the southerly side of the site. The county has reviewed and approved the circulation

pattern. They anticipate receiving conditional county approval within the next 2-4 weeks. Mr. Capizzi explained they met with the borough's Site Plan Review Advisory Committee and addressed building and EMS questions.

Mayor Amatorio stated they are not seeking any variances and comply with the ordinance set by the municipality.

Mr. Capizzi stated the Board engineer had requested additional drainage information and they had met with him last week to review the open questions.

Chairman Bergman stated most of the comments made by the Fire Department and others at the Site Plan Committee meeting were taken into consideration and have fallen back in line. There weren't a lot of concerns.

Mr. Capizzi stated there were some questions about the elevator size and if a certain size elevator could be accommodated, which they would not be able to. The building will be fully sprinklered and all the parameters required of the building code will be met. There are a total of 15 one-bedrooms, 21 two-bedrooms, and 3 three-bedrooms.

Matthew Clark, MCB Engineering Associates, 11 Furler Street, Totowa, NJ, stated the proposal is for a four-story mixed-use building with 45 units, 1,000 sq. ft. retail, and 61 parking stalls with EV stalls. Trash will be collected and stored on the property inside the building. They will continue the widening on the south side along the property frontage. Mr. Clark stated the widening will provide room for someone to pause or stand, or drop something off. There is room on the property for Uber, Amazon, FedEx, etc. deliveries underneath. The grading from the front to the back will be maintained. They will not be increasing the impervious area and are proposing a subsurface infiltration system. The applicant did soil testing and found the system drains half the time it's supposed to. The drainage system was found acceptable by the Board engineer with a few additional back up information requested.

Board engineer Panagopoulos stated overall the system is adequate for the site. They are not increasing the impervious. The system they are putting in should make it better. Mr. Panagopoulos stated they did ask for a few technical items in the review letter.

Mayor Amatorio stated they will create a circle in the front of the building.

Mr. Capizzi stated it will come out and jut back in.

Board member Dimaren inquired about parking for the retail store. He inquired how many parking spaces there will be for visitors.

Mr. Capizzi stated the ordinance does not require any parking for the retail. There will be 15 parking spaces for visitors. There is no parking for the retail. The retail will be a stop and go business, step in quickly while walking up Washington Avenue. They're not anticipating it being a destination type use.

Mr. Clark stated the majority of the site will be lighted through a ceiling mounted lighting layout. There will be decorative plants along the foundation and a few ornamental trees. They are proposing a series of streetscape lights along the frontage.

Councilman Lodato inquired if the two tandem spaces would be reserved. He inquired about the remaining parking spaces. There are 43 units that are competing for 57 spaces. He inquired what will be

done if the demand for parking is underestimated. He inquired about parking for the employees of the retail store.

Mr. Clark stated the tandem spaces would be assigned to a unit.

Mr. Capizzi stated there would be some kind of allocation. The spaces will be numbered and each tenant will have an assigned space. The traffic study done supported the ratio that's being provided for the project. Based upon studies with similar sites, the parking demand is 1.4 spaces per unit. The field is limited by that parking supply. The employees for the retail store would share the open spaces designated for visitors.

Councilman Lodato inquired how far off the property line is the building structure.

Mr. Clark stated on the north side it's 10.69 on the one side, 11.6 on the south side.

Chairman Bergman read from the Site Plan Committee meeting minutes where Fire Chief Naylis had given his review. The only concern he had was for the EV charging stations and lithium ion batteries. Nothing could be done about those due to the fact it is a state mandate.

Board engineer Panagopoulos inquired if the bump back requires any dedication of the land to the county. The redevelopment plan does not require parking for the retail. The plan does not show the locations for the EV charging stations. The locations should be designated during resolution compliance.

Mr. Capizzi stated it is by way of easement.

Mr. Clark stated the trash will be in an enclosed room.

Mayor Amatorio inquired if the ingress/egress was moved from what was previously discussed.

Mr. Capizzi stated initially it was on the north side of the building, but moved it to the south side to be away from the school and put the retail closest to the school, as requested by the Borough.

Board member Dimaren inquired if a tenant would be able to make a left to exit the building. The area is quite congested and there is a lot of traffic. He inquired if the traffic and the buses were taken into consideration, especially during peak hours.

Mr. Clark's response was yes, they will be able to make a left and a right. Yes, the county found it to be acceptable.

Mr. Capizzi stated it's a small project and the number of trips in and out of the site is relatively insignificant from a traffic engineer's standpoint.

Mayor Amatorio inquired if the projected traffic for the project is less than the traffic for the car wash. The cars at the car wash can also make a left turn. The county had requested the egress/ingress be moved to the south side of the building.

Mr. Capizzi stated the car wash is a heavy trip generation business. There would be significantly more trips for the car wash than the proposal.

Questions from Residents Within 200' and Beyond:

Desiree Paton, resident, inquired how the retail will be helping the community when there are already six other establishments along the way to school where kids can pick up something quick to eat as they walk past it. She inquired what kind of business is it going to be and how are they going to ensure parking will not be a problem. She inquired if this is a done deal already.

Mr. Capizzi stated they would not be providing any on street parking.

Chairman Bergman stated there will be 15 visitor parking spaces underneath the building in which the employees, mostly likely only 2, could use to park their cars. Chairman Bergman stated it's not a done deal. They are here to listen to the testimony. There was a Site Plan Committee meeting previously where it was open to the public regarding the same project.

Mr. Capizzi stated tonight's hearing is about whether the proposed plan matches the zoning ordinance that's applicable to this property. If the application meets the zoning requirements, then the application needs to be approved. They are not asking for any variances and are providing testimony that they are not asking for any variances. The site plan being considered was reviewed by the Board engineer and was found to meet the industry standards.

Michael Licameli, 155 S. Washington Avenue, inquired if the visitor parking will be underneath the building and if the back end of the building will be on stilts.

Mr. Clark stated the building will be supported by columns and will continue to slope from the front to the back. There will be 15 stalls for visitors. All of the parking will be underneath the building.

James Virgona, Virgona & Virgona Architects, 125 River Rd, Edgewater, NJ, licensed architect stated the building is four stories. The first floor of the building has 61 parking spaces in the garage located behind the retail and the lobby. The entrance to the garage is on the south portion of the property. The retail space is on the northerly portion to make it easier access for school children. It was a request from the borough when they were beginning the project. The lobby is in the middle of the project. Mr. Virgona stated there is a loop underneath the building the provides the ability for all cars to come in and out without making U turns inside the parking area. In addition, there is a mailroom, fire egress stair, and a trash room. He stated that the parking area at the entrance is approximately 11 ft. high, which can fit box trucks. A trash hauler can pull into the garage, retrieve the trash under the building, and pull around the loop. They will be filling part of the sloped area to raise the parking up. The clearing in the back will be 16-17 ft. high. The building will have utility areas, in addition to an electric room that will be underneath the building. There are two tandem spaces. There are 45 units, two of the units will require the two tandem spaces, leaving a total of 61 minus 4 spaces, leaving 57 spaces. If you subtract 43 from the 57 spaces, that leaves 14 guest spaces. It is common for the guest spaces not to be used much during the day and be useful for employees from the retail to park there. Mr. Virgona stated the trash room has a 30 foot long wall and have the opportunity for a hatched area to allow traffic to flow in and out. The hatched area can be used for Uber pick ups, Fedex, UPS deliveries underneath the building. The second floor, R-1, has 14 units along with two amenity spaces. The building has an elevator, two fire stairs, a corridor, and is organized as a U shape. The R-1 floor has one and two bedroom units that vary from 714 sq. ft. to 770 sq. ft. for the one bedroom unit and 1,152 sq. ft. to 1,224 sq. ft. for two bedroom units. There are 9 affordable units, 5 two bedrooms, 2 one bedrooms, and 2 three bedroom units as required. The outside of the building on Washington Avenue has a storefront entrance way for the main lobby in the middle of the building and an additional series of storefront panels and windows to the right of the building for the retail space. The building will be constructed with a full NFPA13 sprinkler system because of the size and height. Most of the units will be cooled with either PTHP units or with a mini split system. Parapets will be supplied to

hide anything on the roof. Mr. Virgona stated there are a total of 26 two bedroom units, 17 one bedroom units, and 2 three bedroom units. All units will be handicapped adaptable.

Board member Picheo inquired what the U shaped elevation looks like. He inquired what is the reasoning for the design.

Mr. Clark stated it's a roof over the garage. It won't be utilized by the residents. It provides relief, there is more perimeter, and will allow for more windows with direct light. Management will control move ins. All of the guest spaces are not all used always and are always over anticipated. They have no idea what the future brings.

Mr. Capizzi stated the parking spaces will be fluid. It's based on the parking demands.

Board engineer Panagopoulos stated he wants to make it clear that the spaces may or may not be used for guest parking, but are going to provide the required parking spaces. Credit is received for every EV spot up to 10%. 6 spaces are credited back and they will actually be getting credit for 67 spaces. It's state statute. He inquired if there is any special sprinkler system for EV vehicles.

Mr. Clark stated no, there is not.

Questions from Residents with 200' and Beyond:

Melinda Cruz, 11 Edward Street, inquired when will the project start and how long will it take to complete. She inquired if decals or permits would be given for all parking at the building. Ms. Cruz inquired if Chairman Bergman is involved with the project.

Mr. Capizzi stated it would take a year and a half to build it and six months or so to plan it. All of the vehicles would have to be registered with management.

Chairman Bergman's response was no, he is not involved with the project.

Comments from Residents within 200' and Beyond:

Cherise Infante, resident of 145 E. Clinton Avenue, stated she resides in a condo with 108 units and there are 115 parking spaces and 20 garages. It's not enough parking spaces and they have to park on the street in front of other people's homes, creating a lot of traffic and accidents. It is statistically proven more accidents occur around apartment buildings than homes. Ms. Infante stated the project will be next to a daycare, not just a school. She inquired how it is feasible not to allow people to come with more than one car. She inquired about the families and kids that live in the homes next to the project. She inquired how the Board members are OK with all the buildings being built in town, creating a city rather than remain the suburbs Bergenfield is supposed to be. Everyone is being affected by this, with the traffic in the mornings, car accidents, and taxes. She has to worry about her kids walking to school. Ms. Infante inquired why the space can't be a parking lot or drop off/pick up area for the students. The parking can not be regulated. She inquired how Bergenfield residents can stop this from happening in the future. It's not fair as residents of Bergenfield that they have to continue watching the buildings be erected with no say. She is not for the project that will create more congestion, accidents, more people coming in, more crime. She doesn't understand why it's OK and continues to pass. The community doesn't want this. She inquired how many Bergenfield residents were at previous meetings held who are not in favor of this. There needs to be better communication with the residents of Bergenfield.

Chairman Bergman stated the building is in a designated zone and is where it's allowed to be built. Currently, the taxes on the property are significantly lower than they will be when the building is erected. Safety issues are taken into consideration and were discussed tonight. Overnight parking is a police issue

and have to be called if anyone is parked illegally. There are three options for this area: build an apartment building like this, build a large retail space, or leave it vacant. This is the best process for this, to communicate and talk about things like drainage, stormwater, parking, and all of the requirements allowing the property owner know all of the concerns there are from the police department, fire department, and other departments, and what should be changed.

Mayor Amatorio stated it's private property and not owned by the Board of Education. The Borough can't dictate to the private owner what to build on the property. In every municipality, there is an ordinance about what can be built based on the zoning requirements. They are following all of the standards, not just with the state code. If they comply with all of the requirements without asking for variances, there is limited discretion of what the Borough can do. They can't prevent people from developing the property because of the fear. The Borough is susceptible to a loss from the property owner as well.

Board engineer Panagopoulos recommended Ms. Infante start attending Mayor and Council meetings. It starts with the Mayor and Council and it's how the decisions are brought here. Everything they do is based on something. Mr. Panagopoulos stated they have to look at the big picture and follow the standards. There's a process the Board and the Borough follows and the standards.

Desiree Paton, resident of 49 Smith Avenue, stated there's a bus stop once you make a left out of the proposed project, the car wash, and residents trying to get to their jobs or taking their children to school. The congestion already there, alone, is a big problem. As constituents and taxpayers, they should be entitled to a say. Ms. Paton stated there are only 5 out of 28,000 residents present tonight as it is not known out there and inquired why is it such a secret if it is a good idea. Ms. Paton stated the Board is supposed to be looking out for Bergenfield, not the developers, lawyers, or architects. This is not good for the environment, the community, and traffic. This panel should not have a problem with notifying the Bergenfield residents in a more outward way. The best interest of Bergenfield residents is being addressed. She inquired what good does this do for Bergenfield and the area. It takes away from the aesthetics.

Chairman Bergman stated that is a personal opinion. There are other people in town that may say this is good for the town. Legally, only residents within 200' have to be notified. It is posted on the municipal website, on the bulletin board downstairs, and on Facebook. There was a traffic study done that concluded that the project would not have a significant impact on the traffic operations of the adjacent roadway network.

Board engineer Panagopoulos stated the traffic study mentioned the project would be creating 16 new peak hour trips. The congestion already there has nothing to do with the site. The 16 cars coming from the site are not going to change the amount of traffic that's on Washington Avenue. He stated by reducing the amount of parking, there is less traffic on the road. The bus system is there. People would rather take the bus than drive their car because of the congestion. These are all national standards looked at with real numbers.

Motion to Accept Application Subject to Board Engineer's Review and Conditions

Motion By: Mayor Amatorio

Second By: Chairman Bergman

8 ayes. 1 nay.

MOTION TO ADJOURN MEETING

Motion By: Mayor Amatorio

Second By: Board member Dimaren

All present, voting in favor. None opposed.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:17 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Hilda Tavitian".

Hilda Tavitian, Clerk
Planning Board