

BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG

PLANNING BOARD

TRACEE SCHAEFER, CHAIRWOMAN

**Regular Meeting
September 15, 2020**

**OFFICIAL MINUTES
Adopted October 20, 2020**

Chairwoman Tracee Schaefer called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Board members present were Mr. Al Ellis, Ms. Karen Pennett, Councilman Pete Martino, Mayor Keith Balla, Mr. Donald Speeney, Ms. Ellen Spingler, Mr. Steve Pote, Mr. Paul Fiorilla and Mr. Troy Sims. Also present were Francis P. Linnus, Esq., Board Attorney, Thomas J. Herits, Board Engineer, Mr. Mark Healey, PP and Theresa Snyder, Board Clerk. There were 2 members from the public present.

Chairwoman Schaefer read the statement indicating the meeting was being held in compliance with N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 of the Open Public Meetings Act, the Municipal Land Use Law requirements, and the recording of the Minutes as required by law. She also stated that in order to comply with the executive orders signed by the governor, and in an effort to follow best practices recommended by the CDC, the meeting was being held virtually for all board members, board professionals, the applicant, the applicant's professionals, interested parties and members of the public. The Board members identified themselves for the record. She then led the flag salute to the American flag.

MINUTES

On motion by Ms. Spingler, seconded by Ms. Pennett, the amended minutes from August 18, 2020, Regular Meeting, were accepted and carried on voice vote with Mr. Sims abstaining. The changes included the following:

Councilman Martino asked that the name "Watchung Fire Headquarters" be used when referring to the Exempt Hall.

Mr. Pote wanted to clarify Mr. Linnus' comment that The Master Plan was essentially a "wish-list" by adding that "The Master Plan reflects the recommendations and considerations provided by Watchung's Planning Board after careful thought, discussion, and consideration, with the intent to best use the Master Plan and its revisions to protect Watchung's and its residents' long-term, best interests. These 'recommendations' are essentially input to the Mayor and Council, from a separate and impartial third party (the Planning Board), which the Planning Board hopes the Mayor and Council will take under serious consideration."

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CASE NO.: PB 19-02; THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

100 UNION AVENUE

BLOCK: 7801 LOT: 1

BB ZONE

Expiration: 12/31/20

Mr. Stephen F. Hehl, Esq. appeared on behalf of The Learning Experience applicant. He requested that the application be carried without further notice to the October 20, 2020 meeting. The revised plans were submitted to the Board office more than 10 days in advance of the hearing, but as a courtesy, he wanted to give the Board professionals an acceptable time to review the revisions. He also granted an extension to act through December 31, 2020.

MASTER PLAN REEXAM

Mr. Healey prepared revisions to the Master Plan based on comments from the Board at the previous meeting. He highlighted those changes in green.

Mr. Healey incorporated the changes to page 11 to create a pedestrian network within the Borough. On page 22 (b), the word "existing" was taken out of the paragraph. Page 25, Section 4 was changed to include landscape buffering when the driveway setback is below a certain width.

Mr. Healey moved onto page 27 #13. There were changes to the impervious surface limits in the commercial zone and the inclusion of the Green Development Checklist.

On suggestion of Mayor Balla, Mr. Healey agreed to change the wording for commercial zones to include more green space for future development.

Mr. Speeney added that along with the expansion of green space in the commercial zone, there should continue to be the required parking.

Madam Chair made the comment that parking had to be predicated on square footage with each site having its own plan.

Mr. Linnus added that if you hold on to parking requirements, the applicants will only do the parking they need to do.

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Mr. Speeney reminded the Board that Walmart has more parking because they did underground parking.

Madam Chair explained that Mr. Speeney had a made suggestions for Item #14. She ran it by Steve and Mark.

Mr. Healey read section #14 and asked Mr. Speeney to explain what he had added.

Mr. Speeney suggested that under Item #14 on page 27 that an environmental checklist be added to the application process as a matter of environmental consideration to create awareness of environment.

When the Board reached page 28, Ms. Pennett wanted to add some suggestions as a representative of the Environmental Commission. The recommendation was to use Blue Star for affordable housing. She suggested wording be included that would encourage the protection of the environment.

There was a brief discussion about bank stabilization around the lake. The Board wanted natural barriers with the right root system. They understood that DEP would be involved in that process.

Ms. Pennett brought up the tree ordinance that requires a permit to remove any trees. The Board recommended the Tree Ordinance not be changed.

Councilman Martino suggested that the impervious coverage amounts be increased for homes that have longer driveways because their home is set back further from the street.

Mr. Healey reminded the Board that the Board of Adjustment made similar recommendations in their annual report. He said when you have a home set back, the driveway becomes a penalty. He suggested language that might eliminate the driveway from the impervious coverage calculation, if the home is set back.

Chairwoman Schaefer asked Mr. Healey to work on the language for that section.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Ms. Spingler read the Resolution PB 20-R11 into the record.

On motion by Mr. Pote, seconded by Mr. Speeney, the Board entered executive session based on the following roll call vote:

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Roll Call:

Ayes: Ms. Spingler, Mr. Ellis, Councilman Martino,
Ms. Pennett, Mayor Balla, Mr. Speeney, Mr. Pote
Mr. Fiorilla and Madam Chair

Nays:

Not Eligible: Mr. Sims

Abstain:

Absent:

At the conclusion of the Executive Session, the Board closed the closed portion of the meeting, and Opened the Open portion of the meeting. Roll call was taken to ensure all members were present.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Speeney welcomed Troy Sims to the Board, and expressed that he hoped Troy would be involved on some of the sub committees.

Mr. Ellis suggested that Ms. Snyder notice the remainder of the meetings held in 2020 be virtual.

Mr. Linnus in response said that he hesitated to have the Board take action. The virtual meetings were being conducted because of a pandemic. He suggested that the Board go with the flow.

On question by Chairwoman Schaefer, Mayor Balla said that the Borough was looking into resuming in person meetings contingent on the technologic logistics.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The meeting was open to the public. There were no comments from the public.

ADJOURN

On motion by Madam Chair, seconded by Mr. Speeney, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Theresa Snyder
Board Clerk