BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
April 21st, 2026 | 7:30 PM
15 Mountain Blvd., Watchung, NJ 07069

Adopted On: 9/15/2026

CALL TO ORDER: Chairwoman Schaefer was absent, filling in was Don Speeney, Vice Chair who called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:32pm. Chair 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 and proper notice has been given. Chairman Speeney led the group in saluting the American flag and the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- ABSENT	Mr. Dustin Antonio - present
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman – present	Mr. Troy Sims – present
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – present	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – present
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – ABSENT	Mr. Francis P. Linnus, Esq. - present
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – present	Mr. Mark Healey, PP – present
Mr. Robert Weck – present	Mr. James Giurintano Board Engineer - present
Ms. Karen Pennett – present	Mr. John Jahr, Board Traffic Engineer - ABSENT
Mr. Stephen Pote – present	Ms. Catherine Furlan Board Clerk- present

A quorum was present for the meeting. Chair waived the reading of the Regular Meeting Minutes from February 17th, 2026 and made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Spingler, followed by a unanimous voice vote to approve. Chair waived the reading of the Special Meeting minutes from March 2nd and made a motion to approve. Seconded by Ms. Pennett and followed by a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Speeney announced that the two Alternate Members would be voting tonight due to 2 absences. Next, Mr. Linnus discussed four out of the five ordinances delt with the Fair Share Housing Plan and all would have two votes and reviews from Mr. Healey, Board Planner. Next, Mr. Healey reviewed the ordinances that were introduced and his consistency report to the board starting with **ORD 26-02**. Mr. Healey recommended the board adopt the resolution since the ordinance was not inconsistence with the Master Plan. Board voted to approve as there were no questions. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Ms. Spingler read **Resolution PB26-R10** into the record. On motion to approve by Ms. Spingler, seconded by Ms. Pennett. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Second **Ordinance 26-03** was reviewed by Mr. Healey and he provided his report summary to the board. He recommended the board adopts it as drafted. On motion to approve by Mayor Jubin and seconded by Mr. Antonio. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Next, Resolution **PB26-R11** was read into the record. On motion by Mayor Jubin and seconded by Mr. Antonio**.** Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Next, **ORD 26-04** was reviewed by Board Planner, Mr. Healey who recommend the board adopts the resolution since it was not inconsistent with the Master Plan. On motion by Chairman Speeney and seconded by Ms. Spingler. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Next, **PB26-R12** was read by Ms. Spingler in the record. On motion by Chairman Speeney and seconded by Ms. Pennett. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

ORD 26-05 was reviewed by Mr. Healey as changes to the Affordable Housing fees which were not inconsistent to the Master Plan and he recommended it be adopted. On motion to approve by Chairman Speeney and seconded by Ms. Spingler. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Resolution **PB26-R13** was read into the record. On motion to approve by Chairman Speeney and seconded by Ms. Spingler. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Ordinance 26-06 was reviewed and Mr. Healey presented his summary to the board. Ordinance updated the pool barrier code. Changes were not inconsistent with the Master Plan. Ms. Pennett had a question about fences and barriers and if hedges could be used as a barrier? The board discussed and it was determined that was not a fence. On motion to approve by Chairman Speeney and seconded by Mr. Antonio. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Resolution PB26-R14 was read into the record. On motion to approve by Chairman Speeney and seconded by Ms. Spingler.

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye

Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

APPLICATIONS:
Case No.: PB 26-01; Shoprite
1701 Rt. 22
Block: 6404 Lots: 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.04
Represented by: Michael P. O’Grodnick, Esq.
HD Zone
Expiration: Thursday, July 23rd, 2026

Click Here for Plans
The prior approval relied upon the creation of 67 EV parking stalls within the shopping center. Pursuant to the code, an applicant is permitted to take credit for each make ready parking stall at a two to one ratio thereby increasing the number of physically constructed parking stalls by an additional 67. Amended Site Plan Review Blue Star Shopping Center Watchung Borough, Somerset County, NJ March 25, 2026 Page 2 of 3
5 Pitcairn Drive PO Box 99 Roseland, New Jersey 07068 Roseland, NJ 07068 T: (973) 228-0999 BrightViewEngineering.com

This application was submitted to eliminate the construction of the 67 EV parking stalls and replace same with eight (8) “Fast Charging” stations.
It should be noted that the applicant has filed an amended application which will impact the overall parking variance for the project. As such, while there is no plan revisions included with this application, the future application may require revision.

Mr. Linnus explained that both applications will be heard independently and gave background on the applications and state law for EV Chargers. Mr. O’Grodnick approached representing Levin Management and both Applicants which were coming back for amended Site Plans. Mr. O’Grodnick gave background on the application for Blue Star and ShopRite. Mr. O’Grodnick said the applicants would comply with both the State Law and Watchung Borough’s EV Ordinance. Applicants seek an amendment to the layout of the EV Chargers and associated bulk relief for parking spaces. The ordinance requires 1,891 spaces, while 1,566 spaces are constructed with 32 banked stalls, 1,606 spaces were proposed with EV Chargers and credits.

The Applicant is seeking to install fewer chargers than originally proposed and install 8 fast chargers as opposed to ‘make ready’ or slow chargers. Mr. O’Grodnick went over DCA requirements which hold to new construction vs. expansion of existing sites. EV statutes only require ‘make-ready’ spaces vs. what the Applicant is proposing, which are fast chargers. The latter will provide a better service to the site. Mr. O’Grodnick stated that there would not be a decrease in the number of physical spaces and the variance that is triggered is due to the credits from the EV charger stations decreasing. Lastly, Mr. O’Grodnick mentioned that the Applicant would comply and install the 3 level two chargers now, while they wait for approval and power from PSEG for the 8 fast chargers (which could take 1-2 years).

Mr. Linnus stated that he reviewed the notices and the board has jurisdiction to act. Ms. Pennett had a question about the number of parking stalls. Mr. Streker, from Bohler Engineering in

Warren, NJ was sworn in and was accepted as a professional in his field. Mr. Streker entered into evidence Exhibit A-1 dated September 14th, 2022 a colorized Site Plan from the original ShopRite application PB22-01. Mr. Streker reviewed improvements that have been made to the site and the number of required parking spaces for the site. Current law does not specify what type of chargers need to be installed to comply. Mr. Streker pointed out where the new spaces would be installed, (southernly side of Arby's) which is remote.

Chairman Speeney asked if the board has ever disagreed with Levin's applicants in the past (no). Chairman Speeney also clarified the number of EV spaces and opened it up to the board for questions. Ms. Pennett asked how long charging takes (8-15 mins generally). Mayor Jubin asked if the Planner or Engineer had questions. Mr. Giurintano provided his feedback about the site and how it operates currently in regards to parking. He asked if 1% or 5% will be ADA accessible (yes). Lastly, he asked about the status of the punch list for the Shoprite and when it will be addressed (ongoing construction site). Chairman Speeney asked how the public would know which chargers would be fast or ADA compliant (signage). Mr. Healey stated his March 13th memo and the need for relief for parking spaces. He agreed with Bright View's memo. Mr. Healey reviewed the variances and parking spaces/credits.

Mr. Streker clarified that the applicant would install the 3 type-two chargers (operational) for Raising Cane's to satisfy their CO. The 8 fast chargers would be installed at a later date. Mr. Giurintano explained that board approval would not be needed for the 8 fast chargers if they installed the 3 slower chargers first. Mr. Linnus concurred that would be legal and sufficient, but there are two separate applications and resolutions. Ms. Pennett asked when the 8 fast chargers are installed, would it increase traffic with lines like a gas station? Would they be taking up a parking space or waiting in a line? Mr. Streker said the area is remote and people can park in spaces adjacent to the EV Chargers. Mr. Linnis asked a similar question about the cost. Mr. Streker reviewed the cost of charging which increases over time and makes it less likely people will hang around more than needed. Ms. Bodnar asked about incentives to charge off peak hours to reduce traffic? She also asked what would prevent people from disconnecting and remaining in the spot? It was opened up to the public for comment, hearing none, comment was closed and Mr. O'Grodnick approached.

Mr. O'Grodnick reviewed the variance and its stated the chargers are an accessory use permitted in the zone. He introduced the next witness, a resident of Watchung and leading professional in the field. Dr. Shihab Kuran was sworn in and provided his credentials. Dr. Kuran is the founder and CEO of EV Edison. Dr. Kuran explained EV charging and the different types of chargers. Dr. Kuran has over 30 years of experience in the field, but was characterized as a fact witness. It was opened to the public for comments, hearing none, public portion was closed. Mr. Giurintano asked about people who disconnect chargers but remain in the spot and cameras to hold them accountable.

Spach Trahn, Planner from Phillips Price, approached and was sworn in. She was accepted as a professional in her field, and her license is in good standing. Ms. Trahn reviewed the application from a planning perspective and how much parking is required on the site. The state law applied to new construction vs. renovations. Ms. Trahn reviewed the C1 and C2 variances quoting the Borough Master Plan and MLUL as the EV chargers would advance the general public health and welfare. Mr. Linnus asked if the original parking was already approved in 2022? Yes, but the request was just to have them 'make ready' not operational. Mr. Streker approached and clarified that the original spaces were existing and not 'new' at the time. Mr. Healey discussed the Master Plan and how Watchung's tax base is mostly retail dependent. He asked Ms. Trahn to speak to this and how Blue Star has been revitalized. Then, Mr. Healey asked Ms. Trahn to clarify the relief being sought (1,598 spaces plus 3 level two chargers to equal 1,601 spaces with 8 fast chargers later down the road). Mayor Jubin thanked everyone for educating the board on EV chargers. He than asked if more EV chargers are desired is the wiring there or would it have to be added? Is there room for more spots? Ms. Pennett asked if PSEG can even supply the power without causing a detriment to others (1-3 years is the timeline and it's not certain PSEG can supply the power). Mr. Linnus asked Mr. Streker to clarify the timing for the next 8 fast chargers and what happens if they don't follow-through (12-24 months). Mr. Streker commented that there is every intention to install the spaces, but due to equipment and supply it could take time.

Mr. Giurintano asked Mr. Streker if it is the applicant's intention to follow the current guidelines for the 8 rapid charging stalls (yes). Should the board not consider the 8 fast chargers for this application since board approval is not needed (yes). The board was in agreement to keep the project moving, Mayor Jubin echoed this sentiment. Mr. Linnus asked the board to take action and duplicate the ShopRite's testimony for Raising Cane's (yes). Mr. O'Grodnick gave his closing remarks.

Mr. Linnus directed the board to first vote on ShopRite and to approve with the standard conditions. Mr. Antonio asked a question regarding the number of spaces and the Environmental Commissions comments. Chairman Speeney reiterated that the Applicant would not need approval for the 8 fast chargers. Mr. Linnis confirmed this vote is for Preliminary and Final Site Plan approval. Chairman Speeney requested a motion to vote in the affirmative, on motion by Ms. Spingler, seconded by Mr. Pote. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – NO
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Case No.: PB 26-02; Raising Cane's
1701 Rt. 22
Block: 6404 Lots: 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.04
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Mr. Linnus announced that they would proceed with voting for Raising Cane's, which is the same testimony. Chairman Speeney asked to clarify the number of chargers and levels (3 level two chargers). Mr. Healey confirmed these chargers would be installed and operational (not make-ready) for Raising Cane's to obtain their CO. Chairman Speeney asked for a motion to approve, on motion by Mr. Antonio and seconded by Ms. Spingler. Mayor Jubin asked to confirm one space will be ADA compliant. Roll Call:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Absent	Mr. Dustin Antonio – Aye
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman - Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman – Absent	Mr. Robert Weck – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair opened it up to the public for comment, hearing none, the public session was closed.

Mr. Linnus reported on the ongoing litigation to the board that oral arguments will occur April 30th. He also stated no executive session was needed tonight.

Chairman Speeney brought up AI and his concerns from a planning perspective since the Borough has no policy on the issue. He encouraged council to come up with a stance on AI and if it should be permitted or not permitted. The board discussed the quarry zone and other zones in regards to data centers

The next Regular Meeting will be Tuesday, May 19th at 7:30pm. Meeting adjourned at 9:47pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Furlan
Board Clerk