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Regular Public Meeting  
July 15, 2025  
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*The following minutes are a summary of the Planning Board meeting of July 15, 2025. Interested parties may request an audio recording of the meeting from the Board Secretary for a fee.*

**Call to Order & Statement of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act** - Mr. Joel called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

**Roll Call** – The following members were present: Rob Willis, Richard Joel, Michael Stern, Jim Van Goor, David Refkin, Elizabet Timofeeva and Sammy Thomas. Also present were Joseph Mecca, Board Attorney; Kendra Lelie, substituting for Beth Mc Manus, Planning Consultant for Affordable Housing, and Jane Wondergem, Board Secretary. John Young, Deputy Mayor Perron, Fran Barto and Reese Campbell were absent.

**Public Comments on Topics not Pending Before the Board:**

Alyssa Becker, 214 Marshall Street, asked why the neighbors were not noticed about the meeting. Mr. Mecca explained the procedure regarding the proposed ordinance being sent to the Planning Board by the Mayor and Council to review in regards to consistency with the Master Plan and with the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.

Kaelyn Tomaszewski, 355 Marshall Street, commented that the neighbors should be part of the review as it will correlate with the next phase of development. Mr. Mecca said the Board would not be voting on the proposed ordinance, they will send a letter to the Mayor and Council with their comments on the proposed ordinance.

**Committee/Commission/Professional Updates for Non Agenda Topics; Correspondence Received by the Board:** There were no comments at this time.

**Review of proposed Ordinance #4052 to amend Chapter 190 of the Village Code, Land Use and Development, to establish S-1 Senior Overlay Zone District on Block 3611, Lots 1, 19 and 22.**

Mr. Mecca went over the process of the Planning Board reviewing the proposed ordinance in relation to the Master Plan and sending their comments to the Mayor and Council. Mr. Mecca reiterated that the Board would not be voting on the matter.

Kendra Lelie, Professional Planner, was sworn. Ms. Lelie went over the process and said that the Public Hearing regarding the ordinance is at the Council.

Ms. Lelie described the S-1, Senior Overlay Zoning District, which is expected to be heard at the Council in August. Ms. Lelie said an overlay zone overlays on top of the base zoning, and this overlay zone would allow an assisted living facility. The assisted living facility would go towards unmet need in the Fourth Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. The base B-2 Zoning district allows mixed retail.

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Ms. Lelie went over the list of permitted uses and what the Assisted Living Overlay would allow, including the accessory uses of parking, signs and related uses. Ms. Lelie went over the permitted setbacks, coverages, building height and compared them to the what is permitted in the B-2 Zone. Ms. Lelie stated that the permitted height would be comparable to the apartment building across the street. Ms. Lelie said the ordinance was worked out with the Village and the developer, Kensington Group, for this site to be a part of their affordable housing plan as an assisted living facility.

Ms. Lelie stated that the ordinance is consistent with the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan and went over some specific parts of that plan where it mentions the Kensington Assisted Living facility in the proposed location. This ordinance would allow an assisted living development with approximately 125 beds, of which not less than 10% of the beds would be reserved for low- and moderate-income households consistent with New Jersey licensing requirements.

Ms. Lelie stated that the ordinance is not inconsistent with the 2022 Master Plan, citing specific sections that discuss housing diversity recommendations, including senior housing and additional supportive housing.

Board members asked that while this site is not in the Historic Central Business District, could the proposal be more consistent with the goals of historic preservation. Ms. Lelie said that sections E (1) and (2) mention that 'an overall theme of design and architectural motif shall be utilized within the development for the purpose of presenting an aesthetically desirable effect and shall be such that they provide varied building elevations, design and structural appearance within the context of the unifying theme.'

Board members asked about the permitted height of 56 feet and how much of the property could be actual building. Board members asked about the height of the apartment building across the street, which Ms. Lelie said is 50 feet. Board members asked if there would be underground parking. Ms. Lelie said this is not a development application at this time, but they would have to address all environmental issues. Board members asked if there would be any sustainable requirements, Ms. Lelie said that would not be included in this ordinance, but they would need to comply with the Village stormwater ordinance.

Board members asked about the section of the ordinance, E(12), regarding roof design, and if the height could exceed 56 feet. Ms. Lelie said that elevator shafts go above the roof line and there would be additional rooftop equipment. All roof top equipment would have to be screened.

Board members said the Master Plan said that the buildings in the B-2 Zone should be small scale and aesthetically pleasing and compatible with character of neighborhood, but the type of building being permitted in this ordinance would be a taller facility with smaller setbacks and canopies encroaching into setback. The permitted signs would be bigger than anything seen downtown. Ms. Lelie stated that a building height of 56 feet is typical of a 5-story building and

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that height is not necessarily what is proposed, but what would be permitted. In regard to setbacks, the S-1 zone would be in line with or greater than in B-2 Zone, and the lot coverage permitted in the B-2 Zone is greater than in the S-1 Zone.

Board members asked about parking and traffic concerns. Ms. Lelie said she would find out about what is required regarding parking, as it is not part of the ordinance. In regards to traffic generated by this use, the developer would have to give the Board a traffic impact study when a site plan application is submitted.

Board members asked about screening. Ms. Lelie said a six foot fence would be permitted at the rear of property for screening and a planted buffer would not be required. The parking and access design would be reviewed by the Village Planner and Village Engineer.

Public questions and comments:

Kieren Doyle, 330 Franklin Avenue, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Building height – the permitted height was compared with the apartment building across the street which is a looming structure compared with the surrounding area.
- Having no traffic access from North Maple Avenue would mean more traffic on Franklin Avenue and Marshall Street where there are already issues due to the short traffic signal.
- Comparing this lot to what is permitted downtown is not right because this is not downtown, this is where the residential area begins. The NOMA multifamily development was scaled back from what was originally proposed.
- The Village is looking to address affordable housing issues that were ignored for years with this project.
- Having a hearing on August 4 is unreasonable as it is a time when people are on vacation.

Ava Brett, 359 Marshall Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Gratitude to the Board for taking this seriously.
- This development would put extreme strain on these streets where flooding and traffic are already an issue and underground parking would be a problem.

Mr. Mecca said that parking under the building does not necessarily mean underground. Ms. Lelie read the definition of 'Assisted Living'.

Dorothy Woodburn, 66 North Irving Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Ms. Woodburn said assisted living includes a critical care facility and that the neighborhood shuts down during flood, which means this place would need to shut down as well.

There was discussion regarding what assisted living means.

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Kaelyn Tomaszewski, 355 Marshall Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Mr. Mecca explained the purpose of this meeting to address questions from Ms. Tomaszewski.
- Commented that the Planner used persuasive language to explain to the Board about the objective of the S-1 Overlay Zone. Ms. Lelie explained her job as a Planning consultant working for the Village to talk to the Board about how this ordinance would be consistent with the Master Plan and address the objectives of the Fair Share Housing Plan. Ms. Lelie said that she is not being persuasive, but giving factual information.
- Concerns about the parking under the building.
- Ms. Tomaszewski expressed concern about the height plus the permitted rooftop equipment.
- Concerns regarding traffic, including delivery trucks, ambulances and other vehicles related to an assisted living development.
- Concerns about idling trucks on the property and the street.
- There are many other empty lots where this building could go.

Pam and Andy Welch, 363 Marshall Street, were sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Ms. Welch shared a letter she sent to the Board regarding flooding on Marshall Street and surrounding streets and the impact this development would have on that.
- Ms. Welch was concerned about the impact of the development on traffic due to the existing issues on Marshall Street which is very narrow, has a sharp bend, and is used as a cut through for high school students, parents and police as well as being used for parking by lawn services, delivery trucks and parking for sporting events.
- Mr. Welch commented that this is an opportunity for the Board to look at the people impacted by this proposed ordinance.
- Mr. Welch said they already feel disenfranchised due to the traffic and dealing with the field lighting and artificial turf.
- Mr. Welch asked if the Kensington has tried to do this anywhere else in town.

Alyssa Becker, 314 Marshall Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- There would also be traffic from the residents who would be driving.
- Visual impact and noise from the rooftop equipment, noise pollution.

Shelley Rothstein, 324 Franklin Avenue, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Ms. Rothstein submitted a photo taken this morning, which is not a school day, showing the traffic along Franklin Avenue, including service trucks, lawn services, etc., stating that she was unable to pull out of her driveway. How would emergency vehicles be able to get through?

Ralph Hacker, Warren Place, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Ridgewood is a Village and it should stay that way, not become more like a built-up city, comparing it to a place like Phoenix, Arizona.

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Matt Connolly, 86 Warren Place, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- The Board is to review the ordinance for consistency with the Master Plan and any recommendation for changes to the ordinance.
- Regarding a technical aspect, the Master Plan contains a safe routes to school component which should be considered.

Meghan Bracken, 353 Franklin Avenue, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Ms. Bracken suggested that Board members walk the area, especially when school is in.

Robert and Abigail Donnellan, 308 Marshall Street, expressed the following concerns:

- They live next to the parking lot of the subject property and feel the problems will snowball.
- A six foot fence will not do much for a 5-story building in regards to lights shining on their property and into windows.
- Safety concerns.

Michael Noe, 623 Ellington Road, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- The height will be overwhelming, the apartment building this is being compared to is a 'monstrosity'.
- The Care One in Paramus is a two-story building and people need to park on the side street when visiting the facility.

Dom Magliano, 42 North Irving Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Height and parking issues.

Chelsea Leary, 328 Marshall Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Ms. Leary has small children and can walk to the library, etc., and is concerned she will not be able to with all the traffic.
- Referenced the recent fire in a Massachusetts nursing home.
- The Village doesn't have the resources for an assisted living facility.

Mitch Ottinger, 319 Marshall Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- Mr. Ottinger has a young son and is already concerned about the traffic as Marshall Street is very narrow.
- Driving from Marshall onto Franklin is an awkward turn and can't imagine a box truck doing that.

Hiskias Siefkes, 253 South Irving Street, was sworn and expressed the following concerns:

- He drives through Marshall Street and is concerned with putting a facility this size on a street like this, there are other places in town to put a structure this size.
- Mr. Siefkes asked about the size of the building. Ms. Lelie stated that the maximum impervious coverage could be 85%, that would not be just the size of the building but of the building and parking area, sidewalks, etc.

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- Mr. Siefkes stated concern that a massive building could be put there and expressed parking concerns. Ms. Lelie explained that the developer would need to show that there would be sufficient parking and said she would look at parking requirements for assisted living facilities.
- The ordinance should be re-worked.

Mayor Paul Vagianos, 280 Rivera Court, was sworn:

- Thanked the Board for listening to the residents' concerns and the Planner for her expertise.
- Explained that this will come to the Council and he was taking notes regarding the concerns of the neighbors. Mayor Vagianos stated that their goal is never to ruin someone's neighborhood.
- Explained that the Village has affordable housing requirements from the State and this S-1 Overlay Zone would help towards the Fair Share housing requirements. The Board is to look at the ordinance in relation to the Fair Share Housing requirements.
- The Board should look at the ordinance scrupulously that if it is approved that it has no, or negligible, impact on the neighborhood.
- The ordinance will not be heard by the Council on August 4 or any earlier than September.
- The Mayor believes the zoning ordinance will be approved as it is critical to the Fair Share Housing Plan.

Joe D'Amato, 329 Marshall Street, commented that it is a dangerous corner for a senior person to get across.

Hiskias Siefkes, 253 South Irving Street, asked about the effect of the development on Village services. Mr. Mecca explained that those issues would be part of a development application on, as well as stormwater and other remediation services.

There was Board discussion regarding the proposed ordinance. Board members asked why there would be no access from Maple Avenue as there is already commercial access there and putting it on the side streets create traffic issues. Board members found the comments from the residents helpful and when the Board needs to review a site plan application, it should be examined thoroughly to minimize the concerns the neighbors have.

Mr. Joel commented that the ordinance is not inconsistent with the Master Plan and that there were good comments made. Mr. Joel listed some of the concerns that were brought up:

- Height
- Traffic and parking issues, access to the facility
- Screening
- Flooding
- Pedestrian safety

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Mr. Joel explained that this meeting was limited to review of an ordinance and the Board needs to address the Affordable Housing requirements. Mr. Joel reiterated that there is no development application before the Board at this time.

Mr. Mecca suggested that the minutes of this meeting be presented to the Mayor and Council as part of a letter so they can see what the public has stated and can highlight the different points made.

**Adoption of Minutes:** The minutes from June 12, 2025 and June 23, 2025 were adopted.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jane Wondergem, Board Secretary

Date Approved: August 5, 2025