

Ridgewood Planning Board
Reorganization and Regular Public Meeting
January 6, 2026
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The following minutes are a summary of the Planning Board meeting of January 6, 2026. 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: Joseph Mecca, Esq., called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Reorganization of Planning Board

Administration of Oaths of Office to New Members and/or Reappointments – Joseph Mecca administered the Oath of Office to John Young, Class II Member; Deputy Mayor Perron, Class III Member; David Refkin, Class IV Member, and Reese Campbell, Class IV Member.

Roll Call – The following members were present: Rob Willis, John Young, Deputy Mayor Perron, Richard Joel, Fran Barto, Jim Van Goor, Michael Stern, David Refkin, Reese Campbell, Elizabet Timofeeva and Sammy Thomas. Also present were Joseph Mecca, Esq., Board Attorney and Jane Wondergem, Board Secretary.

Election of Officers

Chairman – Richard Joel was nominated and elected as Chairman.

Vice Chairman – Michael Stern was nominated and elected as Vice Chairman.

Board Attorney – Appointment and resolution of the Mecca Law Firm, attorneys Joseph Mecca, Jr. and Christopher Martin, as the Planning Board Attorneys.

Municipal Planning Consultant for Affordable Housing – Appointment and resolution of Elizabeth McManus, of Kyle + McManus Associates, as the Professional Municipal Planning Consultant for Affordable Housing for the year January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2026 was adopted.

Site Plan/Subdivision Review Committee – Jim Van Goor, Fran Barto and David Refkin were appointed to this committee.

Site Plan Exemption Committee – John Young was appointed to this committee.

Master Plan Committee – Mr. Joel, Councilwoman Perron and Rob Willis and Michael Stern were appointed to this committee.

Open Space Committee – Mr. Van Goor was appointed to this committee.

Historic Preservation Commission – Mr. Stern was appointed to this committee.

Liaison to the Zoning Board of Adjustment – Ms. Barto was appointed.

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By-Laws – The Board reaffirmed adoption of its By-Laws.

Resolution re: Compliance with the Requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act and the Schedule of Meetings. The resolution was adopted.

Reorganization portion of the meeting was closed. Regular Meeting was called to order at 7:48 p.m.

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

Public Comments on Topics not Pending Before the Board – No one came forward at this time.

Committee/Commission/Professional Updates for Non Agenda Topics -

Deputy Mayor Perron provided a Council update.

Mr. Refkin provided an update regarding the report by the Columbia University group and the NJDEP response.

Mr. Van Goor provided an update from the Open Space Committee and the success of the Open Space tax referendum.

Review of proposed Ordinance #4071 to Amend Chapter 190 – Land Use and Development – to Establish S-1 Senior Overlay Zone District

Mr. Martin explained the Board's charge in reviewing proposed ordinances which have been introduced at the Council and then referred to the Board for review. Mr. Martin stated that this is not a site plan application and the Board will not discuss hypotheticals regarding potential site plans and developments and the Board will not vote on these ordinances.

Beth McManus, Professional Planner, was sworn and her qualifications accepted.

Ms. McManus explained that Ordinance #4071, the S-1 Overlay Zone District, was also the subject of Ordinance #4052 which was defeated. Ms. McManus stated that the developers objected to the Ordinance #4052 not being adopted and the Village went through a remediation process.

Ms. McManus went over the proposed ordinance and the key differences from the previous ordinance. Ms. McManus discussed the ordinance in relation to how it is consistent with the Master Plan and the land use goals it supports.

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Board members asked if Ordinance #4071 needed to be adopted and Ms. McManus said it does. Board members viewed the map of the properties involved.

Mr. Martin asked for an explanation of what an overlay zone is. Ms. McManus explained that the existing zoning for the area remains and the overlay S-1 would be a conditional option.

Board members asked why the density was changed. Ms. McManus stated that 10% is reserved for Medicaid residents.

Review of proposed Ordinance #4072 to Amend Chapter 190 – Land Use and Development – to Establish TO-1 Townhouse Overlay District

Ms. McManus testified that Ordinance #4072 would rezone 299 Goffle Road to permit townhouse development. Ms. McManus went over what would be permitted regarding density and setbacks. The TO-1 would be an overlay district with the R-3 Zone.

Ms. McManus discussed the ordinance in relation to how it is consistent with the Master Plan and the land use goals it supports.

Board members asked how close this property is to Wyckoff and if they would be notified of the change and any proposed development. Ms. McManus said the property is very close to Wyckoff and the town and the neighbors would be notified.

Review of proposed Ordinance #4073 to Amend Chapter 190 – Land Use and Development – to Modify Zoning Standards to Establish the C-R-1 Commercial – Residential District

Ms. McManus identified the lots on Chestnut Street which would be affected by this ordinance, which would allow the property to be redeveloped with a variety of uses, including residential and commercial.

Ms. McManus went over the permitted setbacks, density and coverages.

Ms. McManus discussed the ordinance in relation to how it is consistent with the Master Plan and the land use goals it supports.

Board members asked why this ordinance proposes a new zone and not an overlay. Ms. McManus explained that overlay zones permit one use other than the underlying zone, whereas this zone permits multi-family in addition to commercial uses and modernizes the existing zoning. Board members asked if there were any specific proposals for this area. Ms. McManus said there were not.

Review of proposed Ordinance #4074 to Amend Chapter 190 – Land Use and Development – to Modify Zoning Standards for the B-1 and B-2 Districts

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Ms. McManus explained that the amendments are not actually in the B-1 and B-2 Districts, but it is in Village Code chapter 190-124 which is referenced in the B-1 and B-2 Zone districts and it amends the density permitted in these districts.

This ordinance allows for the density to increase to 20 units per acre where affordable housing is provided, and lots with frontage along the west side of South Broad Street and are not a historic site or in the historic district could be developed at density of 24 units per acre.

Ms. McManus discussed the ordinance in relation to how it is consistent with the Master Plan and the land use goals it supports.

Board members asked why the allowable floor area remained the same while the density increased. Ms. McManus said any developer would need to comply or apply for a variance. Board members looked at the map and asked about the areas not included.

Review of proposed Ordinance #4075 to Amend Chapter 190 – Land Use and Development – to Modify the Mandatory Affordable Housing Set-Aside Standards

Ms. McManus explained that this ordinance increases the mandatory affordable housing set aside from 15% to 20% of the residential units.

Ms. McManus discussed the ordinance in relation to how it is consistent with the Master Plan and the land use goals it supports.

Public comments:

Natallia Pratasevich, Ridgewood resident, read a statement and commented that the residents do not agree with how the Village is complying with the affordable housing law and listed her concerns with how the cumulative affect of the 5 proposed ordinances affect the town and may not be consistent with the Master Plan.

Alyssa Becker, 314 Marshall Street, asked that the ordinance for the Chestnut Street location take into consideration of the balconies overlooking the neighbors behind them, and the S-1 Overlay ordinance shows an outdoor area for residents where they can see into Marshall Street properties. These issues affect the neighbors' privacy.

Pam Welch, 363 Marshall Street, spoke of her concerns regarding flooding issues, coverage issues and concern with the residents of an assisted living facility being evacuated in a flood.

Jeanette LaRocco, 454 Bogert Avenue, commented that the proposed ordinances are not good for the residents and do not benefit Ridgewood residents

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Robert Zell, Beechwood Road, asked what authority the Planning Board has with respect to making a decision and if they have to give an opinion if it 'has to be adopted'. The resident asked if the Planning Board members have actually read the Master Plan.

Kerry Morgan, Franklin Avenue, backs up to the proposed Kensington development and commented that a 6 foot difference in height is not significant. Ms. Morgan has concerns regarding pedestrian safety, lack of privacy with the development next to her property, and asked the Board to review the meetings and the comments and concerns of the residents.

Rocio, President of the Ridgewood Moms Club, asked if the Board has spoken with new residents coming to Ridgewood from towns that are over built because they have young children and are tired of over development. Rocio asked if the Master Plan was taken into consideration when reviewing these ordinances and when the settlement was negotiated with Fair Share was the Master Plan taken into consideration.

Jenny Coates, 337 Bogert Avenue and member of Ridgewood Newcomers, stated it's hard to listen to an outside consultant weigh in on what is best for Ridgewood when she knows why people move here. Ms. Coates expressed concern about piling on more than what is necessary and losing the Village feel.

Lorraine Reynolds, 550 Wyndemere Avenue, said she had been a member of the Planning Board when the Master Plan was being created and was part of the stakeholders meetings where everyone was welcomed. Ms. Reynolds stressed that Ridgewood residents wanted the small town feel, charm, trees, schools and walkability. Ms. Reynolds told the Board not to be afraid of lawsuits when affordable housing is pushed on the town.

Steven Orovitz, Marshall Street, commented on seeing dramatic change over the years and has concerns about the assisted living facility and the traffic around Marshall and Franklin, the parking, safety concerns and the height of the facility. Mr. Orovitz says assisted living is needed somewhere, but not in this location.

Cynthia O'Keefe commented that she doesn't understand why all the ordinances need to be passed at once. Ms. O'Keefe is against the Kensington as it is too big in that location and concerns with flooding, and does not like that the owners of the properties downtown can now build up. Ms. O'Keefe said there are so many questions and the Board members are in a position to ask them.

Public comment closed.

Mr. Martin instructed the Board that this is a consistency hearing on Village Ordinances that can only be enacted by the Village Council. The review for the Board is whether it is consistent with

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the Master Plan. The Board is to consider the testimony of the planner and the comments from the public.

Board members discussed the ordinances and how they are and are not consistent with the Master Plan. Board members asked what would it mean if they said these five ordinances as a bundle were not consistent with the Master Plan.

Ms. McManus stated that the Mount Laurel doctrine and Fair Housing Act do not care what the rest of the Master Plan says and it is a constitutional obligation to fulfill the housing obligation. The Council would need to adopt the ordinances and acknowledge the inconsistencies with the Master Plan.

Board members gave examples from the Master Plan where it mentions working to keep a small town feel while allowing for adaptation and change, stressing that it is a balance. Board members commented that the Board should recommend to adopt the ordinances and go back to F.A.R. at a later date.

The Board will recommend approval of the five ordinances, stating that there is consistency with the Master Plan, but there are also some inconsistencies and other concerns regarding bulk, traffic, flooding, density, walkability and small town feel.

Adoption of Minutes: The minutes from October 21, 2025 were adopted.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Wondergem, Board Secretary

Date Approved: February 17, 2026