



380 Hillsdale Avenue  
Hillsdale, New Jersey 07642  
201-666-4800 (main)

Planning/ Zoning Board

MINUTES

March 28, 2023

7:30 PM

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman S. Riordan, Vice Chair M. Kates, Secretary S. Raymond  
E. Alter , D. Friedman, S. Griep, J. MacEwen ,  
Mayor J. Ruocco

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Council Liaison John Escobar, A. Berliner, L. Thoms,

**EMPLOYEES PRESENT:** M. Stinely, Board Attorney  
C. Statile, P.E., Board Engineer  
T. Burgis, Board Planner  
Deputy Secretary N. Rowe

Chairman Riordan called the meeting to order at approximately 7:31 pm. Deputy Secretary Natalie Rowe recited the Open Public Meeting Statement and Pledge of Allegiance.

**OPEN TO PUBLIC (for matters not on the Agenda):**

The meeting was then opened to the public for matters not on the agenda. As no one wished to speak, the meeting was closed to the public.

**APPOINTMENT OF PLANNING BOARD PROFESSIONALS**

Chairman Riordan noted that although the Board Planner and Board Deputy Secretary were previously appointed by the Board, a vote was never conducted.

A motion was made to appoint Natalie Rowe as Planning Board Deputy Secretary for 2023 was made by Mayor Ruocco and seconded by Secretary Raymond. The Board was polled and the motion passed.

A motion was made to appoint Burgis Associates as Planning Board Planner for 2023 was made by Mr. Alter and seconded by Mr. Griep. The Board was polled and the motion passed.

**INVOICES**

A motion to approve invoices for Bugis Associates for \$1368.75 was made by Mayor Ruocco and seconded by Mr. Alter. The board was polled and the motion passed.

A motion to approve invoices for Cleary Giacobbe Alfieri Jacob, LLC for \$5512.50 was made by Mayor Ruocco and seconded by Secretary Raymond. The board was polled and the motion passed.



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A motion to approve invoices for C.P. Statile Associates for \$1875.00 was made by Secretary Raymond and seconded by Mr. Alter. The board was polled and the motion passed.

### MEETING MINUTES

March 9, 2023

A motion to approve the minutes of 3/9/23 was made by Secretary Raymond and seconded by Dan Friedman. The board was polled and the motion passed.

### HEARINGS

**Case: PZ-11-22**

**Block: 1706 Lot: 23**

**39 Hopkins St;**

**Buesser (Bulk variance)**

The applicant, Mr. Robert Buesser, 39 Hopkins Street was sworn in and provided testimony regarding the application and necessity of the generator to support vital medical equipment. The applicant seeks to install a generator within the required side yard setback area. The application is for a "c" (bulk) variance due to the generator not meeting the minimum required 10 ft. side yard setback.

The generator is being placed in the vicinity of the other utility services which is within the required setback. Board members made comments regarding the understanding of the need expressed by the applicant.

Chairman Riordan then opened the floor to any members of the public who wished to speak. As no one was in attendance, the meeting was closed to the public.

A motion to approve the application was by Secretary Raymond and seconded by Mr. Alter. The Board was polled and the motion passed.

Mr. Statile requested that the Board attorney expedite the drafting of the resolution so that it is ready for the next PB meeting.

**Case: PZ-01-23**

**Block: 1604 Lot: 6**

**5 Howell Ave**

**Bell (Bulk variance)**

The applicant, Mr. Christopher Bell was sworn in and provided testimony regarding the application. The applicant proposes to re-construct and re-direct the direction of stairs attached to a covered porch that will be connected to the home. The applicant is appealing an October 18, 2022 denial letter from the Zoning



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Official. The application is for a “c” (bulk) variance due to the proposed covered porch encroaching into the required front yard setback area. The existing and proposed improvements will not exceed the permitted impervious coverage. The re-construction is also being redesigned to provide needed repairs and to add aesthetic value to the property.

Mr. Brian Callahan, licensed architect for Mr. Bell, provided his credentials and qualifications and was also sworn in. Mr. Callahan was acceptable to the Board.

Board members had questions regarding the proposed plan, the height of the stairs, impervious coverage, the design’s consistency with surrounding properties and the pre-existing non-conformities on the property.

Chairman Riordan then opened the floor to any members of the public who wished to speak. As no one was in attendance, the meeting was closed to the public.

A motion to approve the application was made by Mr. MacEwen and seconded by Secretary Raymond. The Board was polled and the motion passed.

### **OPEN SESSION**

Secretary Scott Raymond recused himself at 7:57 pm.

#### **Area in Need of Rehabilitation Review; DMR Presentation**

Mr. Francis Reiner of DMR Architects was invited to make a presentation to the Planning Board regarding the Resolution 23073 regarding a proposed resolution determining that certain properties constitute “An Area in Need of Rehabilitation” (“AINRh”) pursuant to N. J. S. A 40 A:12A – 14A, Et Seq.

Ms. Stinely summarized the Planning Boards role and noted that the 45 day period to provide PB comments to the governing board expires on March 31, 2023.

Mr. Reiner provided an overview of the Preliminary Investigative Study recently performed by DMR architects and explained that the definition of an area in need of Rehabilitation has a much lower threshold than an area in need of Redevelopment. Mr. Reiner explained that an Area in Need of Redevelopment is defined by a property by property basis and whether that property meets the criteria whereas an area in need of Rehabilitation is not. Rehabilitation areas are defined by area and not property.

Mr. Reiner explained that this is a two-step process and provided the details of each step. The second step is the creation of a redevelopment plan should the governing body pursue it.

Other benefits include considerations for street scape improvements, parks, plazas, open spaces, outdoor dining and minor financial incentives such as a five (5) year tax abatement.

The Blocks and Lots included in the proposed area are summarized on page one (1) and the Statutory criteria is listed on page four (4) of the DMR report. [Rehabilitation Report](#)

The proposed area is a primarily commercial district. DMR utilized criteria number six (6) to qualify the area. *“A majority of the water and sewer infrastructure in the delineated area is at least 50 years old and is in need of repair or substantial maintenance.”* Mr. Reiner reviewed his findings and stated that there is significant damage to the sewer/drainage structures within the area due to the age of the structure and freeze/thaw conditions.

Mr. Reiner explained that the determination of AINRh and subsequent redevelopment plan allows the Borough to

- Codify zoning that aligns with a community’s shared vision outlined in the master plan,
- Permit uses that are not currently specified.
- Set higher design standards.

Mr. Reiner summarized the next steps regarding hearings and public comments should the Borough decide to proceed. The Block and Lots included were proposed by the governing body. It was noted that the Borough received American Rescue Plan money. A five-year tax abatement on improvements can be granted by the governing body once the Redevelopment Plan pursuant to the AINRh is completed.

Board professionals and members provided comments and asked questions about density considerations, the involvement of developers, parking, affordable housing, the investment of money in repairing the sewers, the downtown designation, the inclusion or exclusion of blocks and lots, the requirement of public notice, historical building designation, the establishment of a transit center/village and the pros/cons of this effort.

Chairman Riordan then opened the floor to the public for any questions or comments.

Mr. Scott Raymond from Cottage Place and Patterson Street asked questions.

- Q: What is the difference between and Area in Need of Redevelopment vs an Area in Need of Rehabilitation. Is this a pre-cursor to Redevelopment?
- A: Mr. Reiner explained that the thresholds defining each are different. This Rehabilitation study is a pre-cursor to defining a redevelopment plan for an AINRh.
- How will the 5 Year tax abatement be applied?

- A: The tax abatement applies to taxes for the improvements only and are the discretion of the governing body.
  
- Q: Why are some of the blocks/lots adjacent to the defined area excluded?
- A: Mr. Reiner explained that he was provided a list of the blocks/lots to include which are mostly commercial. Some of the adjacent lots are industrial or non-commercial which may be why they were excluded.
  
- Q: How will American Rescue Plan money be used?
- A: The Borough council will determine how to use it such as for repaving for roads or other infrastructure projects.

As no other residents were in attendance, the meeting was closed to the public.

The Board took a straw poll to agree/confirm that all the properties identified in the DRM report meet the criteria for AINRh.

Yes: 6 No: 1

The Board took a straw poll to recommend to the Borough Council to include additional properties to the AINRh.

Yes: 7 No: 0

Board members listed the below comments and recommendations to forward to the Borough council.

- Include George White Middle School property. (Block 1410; Lot 1)
- Include Industrial Lots adjacent to the currently defined area. (Block 1201; Lots 1-3)
- Provide explanation/reasoning as to why St. John's church and school were included.

Mr. MacEwen also suggested including areas north of Broadway as part of the AINRh but after some discussion it was decided not to recommend these properties.

A motion to approving the collaboration of the Board Attorney with Mr. Reiner from DMR to draft comments and recommendations from the Planning Board to the Borough council was made by Vice Chairperson Kates and seconded by Mr. MacEwen. The Board was polled and the motion passed.



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Bergen County Planning Notice

The Borough of Hillsdale received the below notice. Planning Board members are encouraged to attend.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING – BERGEN COUNTY PLANNING BOARD  
BERGEN COUNTY MASTER PLAN

The Bergen County Planning Board will be considering action on the Bergen County Master Plan at its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 11th, 2023 at 5:00PM. The meeting will be held in the Bergen County Board of County Commissioners Public Meeting Room, One Bergen County Plaza, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hackensack, NJ. The public is invited to attend. The Master Plan is posted on the Bergen County Planning & Engineering Department's page of the Bergen County website at:

<https://www.co.bergen.nj.us/departments-and-services/planning-and-engineering> or by using this URL:

<https://www.co.bergen.nj.us/county-master-plan-public-notice>. Questions or comments should be directed to Lori Haggerty, Bergen County Planning Board Secretary at (201) 336-6450 or via email at [bcmasterplan@co.bergen.nj.us](mailto:bcmasterplan@co.bergen.nj.us)

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Next Public Hearing- Thursday, April 13th, 2023 7:30pm; Borough Hall Council Chambers