Borough of Demarest

Joint Planning Board Reorganization Meeting

MINUTES

January 7, 2026	**7:00 PM**	**DEMAREST BOROUGH HALL**

The Borough of Demarest Planning Board held a special meeting on WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. located at 118 Serpentine Road Demarest, NJ 07627.

CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chair Woods.

FLAG SALUTE

The Board was led in a salute to the flag by Chair Woods.

SWEARING IN OF 2026 JOINT PLANNING BOARD APPOINTMENTS

Mayor Bernstein swore in the new members to the board.

David Lerner, Class II, Term Expiring 12/31/2028
Timothy Woods, Class IV, Term Expiring 12/31/2029
Jodi Brenner, Class IV, Term Expiring 12/31/2029
David Jiang, Alternate #1, Term Expiring 12/31/2026
Mary Hamilton, Alternate #2, Term Expiring 12/31/2027

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Todd Adelman, Mayor Brian Bernstein, Jodi Brenner, Kiran Chin, Camile DiSclafani, David Lerner, Fatemah Mamdani, Timothy Woods, David Jiang, Mary Hamilton

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Councilwoman Daryl Fox, Theodore Alevrontas

ALSO PRESENT: Nick Chelius – Engineer, Darlene Green – Planner, Danielle Federico – Attorney, Michael Greco – Secretary, Zoning Officer

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

CHAIR

Mr. Greco called for a nomination for the Chair of the Board for the year 2026 from among the Class IV members. Ms. Brenner nominated Timothy Woods for Chair of the Board, the nomination was seconded by Mayor Bernstein.

With no other nominations, On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Ms. Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*

Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

VICE CHAIR

Mr. Greco called for a nomination for the Vice Chair of the Board for the year 2026 from among the Class IV members. Ms. Brenner nominated Kiran Chin for Vice Chair of the Board, the nomination was seconded by Mayor Bernstein.

With no other nominations, On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

BOARD PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS:

Resolution JPB-001-26 Appointment of the Joint Planning Board Attorney

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to appoint Danielle Federico from the firm of CSG Law as the attorney for the Joint Planning Board for the year 2026, and was seconded by Ms. Brenner.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

Resolution JPB-002-26 Appointment of the Joint Planning Board Engineer

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to appoint Nick Chelius of Colliers Engineering and Design as the engineer for the Joint Planning Board for the year 2026, and was seconded by Ms. Brenner.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

Resolution JPB-003-26 Appointment of the Joint Planning Board Planner

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to appoint Darlene Green of Colliers Engineering and Design as the planner for the Joint Planning Board for the year 2026, and was seconded by Ms. Brenner.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*

Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

Resolution JPB-004-26 Appointment of the Joint Planning Board Secretary

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to appoint Michael Greco as the secretary for the Joint Planning Board for the year 2026, and was seconded by Ms. Brenner.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

APPROVAL OF 2026 MEETING DATES

Mr. Greco explained that even though the board approved some tentative meeting dates for 2026, the new board should memorialize the dates. He also stated that the April meeting has a holiday conflict, and that he is requesting to move that date one week back to April 8th.

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to approve the Joint Planning Board meeting dates as amended for the year of 2026, and was seconded by Ms. Brenner.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

2025 YEAR END REPORT

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to approve the 2025 year end report prepared by Danielle Federico and transmit it to the governing body, and was seconded by Vice Chair Chin.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

Mayor Bernstein thanked Ms. Federico and Mr. Greco for working on this report.

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to approve resolution JPB-26-0001 to authorize the convening of a closed session to discuss potential litigation, and was seconded by Mr. Adelman. Chair Woods was asked to recuse himself due to his proximity to the property connected with the litigation.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*n/e*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to conclude the closed session and return to public session, and was seconded by Mr. Adelman.
All in favor – Motion Passed.

NEW/CONTINUING APPLICATIONS

JPB-25-007 – 32 Brookside Avenue – Patrick Min

Patrick Min was confirmed as previously sworn in by Ms. Federico and reminded that he is still under oath. Mr. Min presented his application and reminded the board of the prior meeting for his application. He spoke briefly on the history of the property. Mr. Min stated that the work was performed already to make the patio compliant with the backyard setback. He stated that the plan presented to the board is incomplete as it does not reflect this change.

Chair Woods asked if the coverage was decreased, why does the plan show the new coverage as higher than the old plan. Mr. Min stated that he had believed the plan would be submitted by the prior owner. Chair Woods stated that the board is not in a position to do anything with the documents submitted. Mr. Min apologized to the board and stated that he understands that he needs to get his information together.

Ms. Federico stated that the board has two options, to either dismiss the application without prejudice requiring a resubmission, or to grant another adjournment. She stated that if the board grants another adjournment than this is the last one, and that the applicant should understand that the board has been more than fair in this process.

Chair Woods recommended that Mr. Min speak with the zoning officer to confirm that everything needed is submitted.

Mayor Bernstein asked if the application is adjourned, would Mr. Min be able to get all the information in. Mr. Greco recommended that the applicant be adjourned for 2 months and be given the time to speak with professionals and get everything together.

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to open the meeting to the public and was seconded by Ms. Brenner.
All in Favor – Motion Passed

No member of the public wished to make a comment.

Mayor Bernstein made a motion to close the meeting to the public and was seconded by Mr. Adelman.
All in Favor – Motion Passed

Mayor Bernstein Made a motion to adjourn the application to the March 4, 2026, meeting provided that the applicant extends the board's time to act through this meeting and was seconded by Mr. Adelman.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote	Board Member	Vote
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*Yes*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*n/e*
Mr. Jiang	*Absent*	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	*Absent*

Motion passed

Ms. Federico advised that the application would be adjourned to the March 4, 2026, meeting with no further notice, and confirmed with Mr. Min that he would extend the board's time to act.

Ms. Federico stated that the next two applications involved D variances and as such the Mayor and Councilmember are not eligible to participate and would need to step down from the board.

Mayor Bernstein stepped down from the board.

JPB-25-010 – 8 Glenwood Avenue – Barbara & Martin Vitale

Mr. Jiang stated that he has a relationship with the applicant and chose to recuse himself from the board.

Matt Capizzi introduced the application. He explained that the owner recently acquired this property intending to move to Demarest as a neighbor to his daughter, and to create a home for him and his wife who has some medical issues that require care. He stated that they are proposing an addition on the first floor of this home in order to make the home a fully first floor living space for the applicant as they will be unlikely to utilize the upstairs place. He stated the variances the application requires.

Michael Dipple, LTA land design LLC, was sworn in by Ms. Federico and had his qualifications accepted by the board.

Mr. Dipple described the plans for the application and the location of the home. Mr. Dipple explained that the property is just over 10,000 square feet and is compliant with the lot area requirements. He explained that there is an existing dwelling on the property. He stated that there are a driveway and a two-car garage. He explained that the proposed addition would be mostly in the rear of the house as a single-story addition. He explained that they would be cleaning up the front area of the house with the walkways to remove some of the lot coverage. Mr. Dipple explained that there is an existing non-conformity in the front yard setback, and that the application is creating a bump out on the side of the home creating a need for a variance for a side yard setback. He stated that the application has a balcony in the rear yard which extends into the rear yard setback.

Mr. Dipple explained that they were seeking a variance for building coverage. He stated that the application is compliant with the building height. He stated that they would need a D4 variance for livable floor area. He stated that they would need a variance for improved lot coverage. He stated that the plan is missing some AC units which would need to be added to the improved lot coverage. He also stated that they would need a variance for residential and parking coverage. Mr. Dipple explained that the property backs to a large, wooded property. He spoke on the depths of the adjacent properties as compared to the proposed addition. He stated that the addition would be similar to the setbacks of the neighboring homes.

Chair Woods asked how much over the proposed is what is allowed in the town. Mr. Dipple explained that the application is 11% over what is allowed in livable floor area. Chair Woods explained that the amount that is being requested is 40% over what is allowed by the town. The board discussed the numbers with Mr. Dipple.

Ms. Disclafani asked for confirmation that the addition is primarily on the first floor. Mr. Dipple explained that the addition is all on the first floor, though there is some significant grade change. Ms. Brenner asked for confirmation on whether the first floor is the basement or the floor above that. Mr. Capizzi stated that the architect can expand on this.

The board asked if there were any rear yard structures proposed. Mr. Dipple explained that there was no rear yard structures proposed.

Ms. Disclafani asked if the property behind the home is private property or green acres. Mr. Dipple stated that it is private property.

Chair Woods asked about the slope of the grade and how the grade could affect the neighboring properties.

Ms. Chin stated that the applicant is requesting a lot of coverage, and she is interested in hearing from the other professionals as to what justifies these overages.

Mr. Lerner asked them to explain more about the overhang in the side yard and why it is required. He asked for confirmation on the setback. Mr. Dipple stated that it is 8.36 feet from the property line, and that the rest of the explanation would come from the architect.

Ms. Chin asked how many iterations of the design they went through before they settled on this one. Mr. Capizzi stated several.

Mr. Capizzi asked Mr. Dipple to run the board through the proposed landscaping. Mr. Dipple explained the mix of evergreens and the giant arborvitae to help buffer the proposed additions for the neighboring properties.

Mr. Chelius asked for a dimension on the balcony. Mr. Dipple stated that it is on the architectural plans. Mr. Chelius asked for the square footage of the AC units. Mr. Dipple provided it. Mr. Chelius asked about the drywell system and what portions of the house are being handled by this system. Mr. Dipple explained that the intent is to provide compensation for the runoff storage if the application was in compliance. Mr. Chelius discussed drainage with Mr. Dipple. Mr. Chelius asked for clarification on the building height as there is a discrepancy. Mr. Dipple explained that as the house design changed there was some shifting in the average natural grade number.

Ms. Green asked for a clarification on the building coverage and what was included. Mr. Dipple confirmed that everything Ms. Green asked about was included. He stated that he does not have it broken down, but that he would check the numbers to make sure that the relief granted is correct. Ms. Green asked about the height of the evergreen plantings. Mr. Dipple confirmed that they would all be planted at the proposed height.

Chair Woods stated that the questions from the public would be held until the end of the meeting.

Jose Carballo, 179 Main Street, Hackensack, NJ, was sworn in by Ms. Federico, and had his qualifications as an architect accepted by the board.

Mr. Caraballo explained his exhibit to the board, describing the necessity of the house being close to family as well as the need for an aid to help one of the residents, requiring extra space than in your normal home set up. He explained that even though the house has an existing second floor and a basement, the addition is a one-story addition.

Chair Woods asked for confirmation on the position of the house depicted in the plans in relation to the neighboring properties.

Mr. Caraballo described the proposed addition in detail.

Chair Woods stated that while the board is sympathetic to the applicant's position and needs, a variance granted lives with the land and could be sold right after received, meaning the individual situation is not relevant to the granting of a variance.

Mr. Capizzi stated that there will be testimony from the planner, but that the architect was merely providing context for his structural decisions.

Mr. Caraballo described the remainder of the addition.

Ms. Chin asked for clarification on the existing front yard setback. Ms. Brenner asked if there is an existing condition submission. Mr. Capizzi directed the board to the survey that was submitted.

Ms. Brenner asked if the property is ADA compliant, and Mr. Caraballo confirmed that it is.

Ms. Chin expressed concern over the side yard setback variance. For an application already asking for a lot it seems that the plan is ignoring the code.

Chair Woods agreed that the biggest issue on this request is the bulk of the home, in the FAR. He stated that in his 20 years on the board he has never seen this big of an ask on a compliant lot.

The board discussed the enormity of the request and whether the applicant had created any other iterations of the plan that may be less.

Mr. Capizzi requested a brief recess.

The board took a 5 minute recess at 8:46pm.

The board returned at 8:51pm.

Mr. Capizzi requested to have the matter carried to a future meeting to discuss with his client and rework the plan.

Ms. Federico stated that the application would be carried to the March 4, 2026, meeting without further notice. Mr. Capizzi agreed to extend the board's time to act through the end of March.

JPB-25-009 – 35 Knickerbocker Road – Hyun Jin Park & Hyun Joo Lee

Matthew Capizzi returned to the podium as counsel to the application JPB-25-009 for the address at 35 Knickerbocker Road.

Mr. Capizzi described the application as a "D" variance request for an extremely undersized lot. They are proposing a way to eliminate a problem aspect with their garage while adding living space for the homeowners. He explained that despite the area of the building being quite small, the percentages seem larger due to the size of the lot.

Thomas Skrable, was sworn in by Ms. Federico, his business address is 65 Ramapo Valley road in Mahwah. He gave his credentials to the board, and they were accepted by Chair Woods. He is the applicant's engineer.

Mr. Skrable described the plan he had displayed for the board. Mr. Capizzi confirmed the plan was filed with the board and did not need to be marked.

Mr. Skrable described the existing conditions of the land and the current size of the lot and the way this size presents a problem. He explained that the plan is to remove the under garage which has created flooding problems over the years. The garage would be brought up to grade and the living space would be expanded and improved. Mr. Skrable explained that there would be about 412 square feet of additional building, which is a modest addition. He explained that all of the variance are caused by the size of the lot, and that none would be needed if the lot was conforming. He explained that the improved lot coverage was being reduced from the existing conditions by reducing the patio in the rear and removing a side yard walkway.

Chair Woods confirmed that the side yard setback is not being changed, but that the house is increasing into the existing non-conforming setback and would require a variance.

Mr. Skrable described the grade changes as minor, explaining that the only grade change is where the driveway was, which is being raised to match the existing first floor grade of the house, just filling in a section of depression where the driveway sloped down into the basement garage. He walked the board through the proposed additional drainage measures being added to the property.

Chair Woods confirmed that the applicant is reducing coverage.

Ms. Green asked Mr. Skrable to speak to a number of items she put in her letter about clean up for wording and numbers. She also asked to confirm if certain structures are included in the building coverage, and Mr. Skrable confirmed they are. Ms. Green confirmed that the structures on the north side are all being removed.

Chair Woods asked about the measurement to the roof height, as it shows to the mid-point. Mr. Skrable stated that they would modify the plan to be compliant, the building height will be under 30 ft.

Mr. Capizzi called the applicant's architect and planner, Martin Santini, 506 Sylvan Ave, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Mr. Santini was sworn in by Ms. Federico. Mr. Santini had his credentials confirmed by the board.

Mr. Santini showed the board his plans for the addition and explained that he would show the board how this is the best use of the undersized lot.

Mr. Santini explained the size of the addition and how what is being added is very modest. Mr. Santini presented to the board a colorized plan which they marked as A1. Mr. Santini explained the plans to the board in detail.

Mr. Santini explained to the board the variances being requested. Mr. Santini explained that on this undersized lot, the ordinance would allow an 1800 square foot house at the 30% livable floor area. He explained that this is a very small house for the area. He stated that the FAR value being added is 419 square feet, which is modest. He explained that this means the applicant needs a "D" variance, and that it should be granted because the lot size is a hardship and it will not be detrimental to the zone plan, and the lot can accommodate the addition being proposed. He also explained that the C Variances are maximum building coverage, maximum improved lot coverage, and maximum residential and parking coverage all of which are modest, one of which is a reduction of coverage. He requested that the board please approve the variances.

Chair Woods stated that the building was built nicely to break up the bulk of the building.

Mr. Greco stated confirmed that the variance for side yard setback was included.

Ms. Chin stated that the applicant did a good job preparing a plan that is modest and a benefit for themselves and the neighborhood.

Ms. Brenner asked what happens to the water that used to go down into the garage. Mr. Santini explained that the cultec chambers which they added will be collecting the storm water from the home and be a benefit to the neighborhood.

Ms. Green confirmed the number of bedrooms currently in the home and the proposed.

Mr. Adelman made a motion to open the meeting to the public and was seconded by Ms. Brenner.
All in Favor – Motion Passed

No member of the public wished to make a comment.

Mr. Adelman made a motion to close the meeting to the public and was seconded by Vice Chair Chin.
All in Favor – Motion Passed

Mr. Capizzi asked that the board vote in favor of the application.

Chair Woods stated that there is no substantial impairment and that Mr. Santini stated it all very well, and that this is a very well put together application.

Ms. Brenner made a motion to approve application JPB-25-009, for 35 Knickerbocker and was seconded by Mr. Adelman.

On a roll call, the vote was recorded as follows *n/e = not eligible*

Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*	Board Member	*Vote*
Mr. Adelman	*Yes*	Mayor Bernstein:	*n/e*	Ms. Brenner:	*Yes*
Vice Chair Chin:	*Yes*	Ms. DiSclafani:	*Yes*	Councilwoman Fox:	*Absent*
Mr. Lerner	*Yes*	Dr. Mamdani:	*Yes*	Chair Woods:	*Yes*
Mr. Jiang	-	Ms. Hamilton	*Absent*	Mr. Alevrontas	-

Motion passed

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Adelman made a motion to open the meeting to the public and was seconded by Vice Chair Chin.
All in Favor – Motion Passed

No member of the public wished to make a comment.

Mr. Adelman made a motion to close the meeting to the public and was seconded by Vice Chair Chin.
All in Favor – Motion Passed

ADJOURNMENT
With no further business presented, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by: Mr. Adelman and seconded by Ms. Brenner.
All in Favor – Motion Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.
Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Greco, Joint Planning Board Secretary