

**BOROUGH OF ELMWOOD PARK  
SPECIAL TOWN HALL MEETING**

**February 24, 2015**

**7:00 p.m.**

The Special Town Hall Meeting of the Elmwood Park Mayor and Council was called to order by Municipal Clerk Keith Kazmark at 7:00 p.m. Statement of Compliance was read.

Whereas, Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of the State of New Jersey requires at the commencement of every meeting a Statement of Compliance be read by the presiding officer.

Now, Therefore Be Advised that the meeting requirements for this meeting have been met by the publishing an annual notice in The Record of Hackensack and Herald News of Woodland Park and by posting such notice in the office of the Borough Clerk as well as in a public place within the Municipal Building and by notifying interested citizens. Said notice was posted on January 27, 2015.

Governing Body Members Caramagna, Colletti, Martino, Vuoncino and Council President Dombrowski were present. Councilman Pettigano was absent. Also present was Mayor Mola, Borough Attorney Giuseppe Randazzo, Borough Planner Michael Kauker, BIC Director Don Smartt and Borough Clerk Keith Kazmark.

**1 – Proposed Zone Changes to areas near Market Street and Route 4/Broadway:**

Mr. Kazmark briefly discussed the possibility of changing zoning requirements on Market Street and Broadway and introduced Mr. Kauker. Mr. Kauker introduced himself and discussed his credentials and summarized some of the discussion held by the Mayor and Council with regard to these considered zone changes. Mr. Kauker discussed the current zoning and the permissible uses along both roadways. He addressed the commercial zones and the proximity to the residential zones nearby. He addressed setbacks distances and the proposed overlay zone, addressing parking and property rights. Mr. Kauker discussed that a business man would be able to approach a residential property owner and offer to purchase the home behind the business for parking. It is solely voluntary. What is also proposed is that a rear parking area would provide for a 20 foot buffer between commercial and residential properties. Mr. Kauker discussed the Borough Council working to address both commercial and residents needs and meeting both. The zone would be changed to neighborhood-commercial and be able to provide off street parking of which there is tremendous need for.

Mr. Kauker introduced Donald Smartt who has worked with the Borough of Fair Lawn as part of the Broadway Improvement District, which provides for the revitalization and renewal of the Route 4/Broadway commercial district.

Mr. Smartt discussed the needs of the commercial district on Broadway. He stated his experiences in the Fair Lawn section of Broadway and the vision that was developed by the business property owners there. He discussed the value of properties and how the stakeholders in Fair Lawn have worked together to address the improvements. He discussed the studies conducted by Fair Lawn relative to Broadway, which have included the Elmwood Park section. The vision developed was between the Mayor and Council in Fair Lawn, NJ DOT, NJ Transit, business owners and others. The vision was and continues to be to develop a destination along Broadway. Mr. Smartt discussed the changes to the zoning ordinances in Fair Lawn to keep the commercial district viable. Fair Lawn also made changes to make it easier to make property conversions without an expensive visit to the Zoning Board. He also addressed commercial taxes. In addition, he spoke about ways in which they have worked to make Broadway more pedestrian friendly. There is also a commitment the BIC has made to keep the Broadway train station open. Mr. Smartt discussed zoning incentives, parking and the overall plan which has been developed. The plan is available and downloadable on the BIC website. Mr. Smartt stated if you would like more family business these changes proposed with help that.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

Shakira Saleem, 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue thanked the Mayor and Council for the opportunity to speak. He addressed the business owners and the commercial areas expanding to the residential areas.

Councilman Colletti responded that in the event you decided to sell to a commercial property, it would only be for parking and there would be a 25foot green zone (buffer). The speaker returned to the microphone and addressed the buffer zone area and how it would change over time. The Councilman addressed the financial challenges of property owners on Market Street and Broadway.

Robert Shouldis, 85 Rosedale, asked who will maintain the buffer area. He expressed concerns about how business owners are maintaining their properties now. Councilman Colletti addressed how the



proposed ordinance will help with parking problems. Mr. Shouldis discussed parking on one side of the street.

Jerry Bakal, 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, discussed the commercial challenges that exist around his property and asked if the buffer goes into effect without and sale of additional property. Councilman Colletti stated no, but that is what we are looking to establish in the new ordinance. Mr. Bakal stated that he shares a property boarder with Firestone. It is essentially a 24 hour a day business as they drop cars off all night long and what would happen if his neighbor was to sell and have it become a parking lot.

Fred Schmidt, 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, asked about any entrances to the new parking lots off 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He asked whether garbage haulers and snow plows would be coming into the lot from there. He asked about the proposed Shop Rite and some of the parking challenges in the area, including around the school.

(First name inaudible) Balgahoom, 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue, stated that there are issues in the neighborhood including noise, but does understand that there is a need for economic development. She expressed concern about infringing on the residential area. She further expressed having a parking hub, rather than having residential areas become commercial. Mr. Smartt discussed cooperative parking and the possibility of a zoning ordinance which includes that concept.

Cindy Ackerman, Van Riper Avenue, wants to see Market Street thrive, however she is concerned about many trucks speeding down the street and causing noise and dangerous situations. She asked how the town would keep the area safe if these zone changes went through. Ms. Ackerman asked about what could be purchased to create a parking lot. The Mayor stated that some of the houses on Van Riper do not have 50 feet behind them. Councilman Colletti discussed the buffer zone. She again expressed safety concerns.

Judy Shouldis, Rosedale Avenue discussed the business owners being more friendly to the residents. She stated there is much garbage that is not cleaned up. She also stated that she does not want to live in a business area with more cars and more people, but rather in a neighborhood.

(Name inaudible), stated they live on the south side of street, expressed concern about multi-family homes being developed if the ordinance changes.

Councilman Colletti stated the ordinance would only allow for parking and green area. The existing zoning laws would remain.

Robert Liedenfrost, Market Street, stated that the purchase of a home to a business owner is going to sell at a higher price. It's a win-win for everyone. He discussed parking on East 55<sup>th</sup> Street and other parking options. He spoke about Conte Funeral Home and the parking at St. Leo's and behind the funeral home. He expressed concern about the funeral home exceeding the number of occupants allowed and whether the Fire Inspector should have issued a summons. Mr. Liedenfrost then discussed dismissal time at St. Leo's School and the deed restrictions on a certain property. He discussed what he felt setback requirements should be on residential properties.

Councilman Colletti stated we are here tonight to try to address parking issues.

Karen Varrecchia, Market Street, discussed being a business owner and how she does cleanup to keep up her storefront. She spoke about the need for municipal parking. Mrs. Varrecchia spoke about the research she did when she first came to Elmwood Park. Elmwood Park needs to be a better community and we need the Council to help create municipal parking. She addressed the empty stores in town and how she installed new curbs and sidewalks to keep up her store front.

Aniello Imbombo, Broadway, spoke about his commercial property and the amount he purchased it for and the new assessment. He stated that he invested in the town and how horrible the current situation is. He questioned the thought process of putting parking behind the businesses. He encouraged municipal parking and discussed that it is hard to rent certain spaces. He stated that K-Mart is an eyesore and the difficulty with parking restrictions.

Kenneth Arabia, Locust Street, addressed closing the roads down and his concerns about the streets.

The Mayor closed the public portion after seeing no one else from the public wishing to be heard. He further addressed the next steps. The Mayor discussed his own concerns about 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He feels it is residential and should stay residential. He doubted the buffer zone would help and questioned homes being bought out on either side of other homeowner's properties.

Mr. Kazmark discussed the notification process should this ordinance move forward.

The Mayor discussed two new businesses one on Orange Avenue and one being Wells Fargo, both of whom went to the Zoning Board and acquired approval.

Councilman Colletti discussed what would be included in the ordinance and thanked everyone for coming.

Council President Dombrowski thanked everyone for coming out to be heard tonight.

A resident asked the Mayor about the Shop Rite application.

The Mayor stated it is before the Zoning Board and described the Shop Rite building on the K-Mart property. The Mayor then addressed the residents on Market Street. He discussed height restrictions and parking.

A motion was made by Council President Dombrowski and seconded by Councilman Martino to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,



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Keith Kazmark, RMC/CMC/MMC  
Borough Clerk

*Minutes approved at the December 3, 2015 Regular Meeting of the Mayor and Council.*