

BOROUGH OF RIVERDALE

MORRIS COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Paul M. Carelli  
Mayor

Abubakar T. Jalloh  
Registered Municipal  
Clerk



**RIVERDALE PLANNING BOARD  
MINUTES  
APRIL 23, 2026**

The Regular Meeting of the Riverdale Planning Board is opening on April 23, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.  
Chairman Trowse read the Sunshine Law.

<b>ROLL CALL:</b>	<b>Present:</b>	<b>Mayor Paul Carelli</b> <b>Council Pres. Vincent Pellegrini</b> <b>Rick Malanga</b> <b>Michael Reilly</b> <b>Christopher Scilingo</b> <b>Vice Chairman Warren Sheps</b> <b>Chairman Scott Trowse</b> <b>James Talerico (Alt. No. 1)</b> <b>Brendan Lynch (Alt. No. 2)</b>
	<b>Absent:</b>	<b>Sal Poli</b> <b>Kevin Bulger</b>

Also, present is Blagoja Petreski, Board Attorney, and Tom Boorady, Board Engineer

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:                      March 26, 2026**

Thereupon Rick Malanga set forth the motion seconded by Michael Reilly to approve the minutes for March 26, 2026, as written and submitted.

<b>ROLL CALL:</b>	<b>Ayes:</b>	<b>Malanga, Reilly, Carelli, Pellegrini, Scilingo, Sheps, Trowse, Talerico</b>
	<b>Abstained:</b>	<b>Lynch</b>
	<b>Nays:</b>	<b>None</b>
		<b>(7 Ayes – 1 Abstained – 0 Nays – Motion Carried)</b>

**APPROVAL OF BILLS:**

Thereupon Chairman Scott Trowse set forth the motion seconded by Vice Chairman Warren Sheps to approve bills to Darmofalski Engineering, Inc., totaling \$3,920.00.

<b>ROLL CALL:</b>	<b>Ayes:</b>	<b>Trowse, Sheps, Carelli, Pellegrini, Malanga, Reilly, Scilingo, Talerico</b>
	<b>Nays:</b>	<b>None</b>
		<b>(8 Ayes – 0 Nays – Motion Carried)</b>

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Thereupon Chairman Scott Trowse set forth the motion seconded by Christopher Scilingo to approve bills to Collier’s Engineering, totaling \$570.00.

**ROLL CALL:           Ayes:           Trowse, Scilingo, Carelli, Pellegrini, Malanga, Reilly, Sheps, Talerico**  
**Nays:               None**  
**(8 Ayes – 0 Nays – Motion Carried)**

**RESOLUTION:**

**1. Application No. 2025-14 / 7 Federal Place / Melaine Berlinger / Block: 26 Lot: 14 / R7.5 Zone**

Thereupon Michael Reilly set forth the motion seconded by Christopher Scilingo to approve the Resolution for 7 Federal Place, as written and submitted.

**ROLL CALL:           Ayes:           Reilly, Scilingo, Carelli, Pellegrini, Malanga, Trowse**  
**Abstained:       Sheps, Lynch**  
**Nays:               None**  
**(6 Ayes – 2 Abstained – 0 nays – Motion Carried)**

**COURTESY PRESENTATION: Riverdale School Improvement**

Matthew Lucciola, a licensed architect from Solution Architecture and Trevor Curtis, a licensed engineer from L2A Land Design Civil Engineers came forward to represent the Riverdale School Improvement Project. Mr. Petreski swore in Mr. Lucciola and Mr. Curtis. Both Mr. Lucciola and Mr. Curtis stated their background involving this project. Chairman Trowse asked if this was the same project that was presented upon the vote for the Referendum. Mr. Lucciola stated that there were some minor improvements to the fields, drainage, and parking lot design as discussed with the Borough to make the project better. Chairman Trowse asked if this was a better plan with the input from the Borough. Mr. Lucciola stated that the drive through was moved closer to Newark Pompton Turnpike to leave grass area for the graduation and celebrations to still be on the lawn, the turnout on Oak Street is 90 degrees, there are underground retention basins. Chairman Trowse asked who was going to be using this driveway. Mr. Lucciola stated that it is for the buses and anyone visiting the school during school hours. Chairman Trowse stated that the traffic letter states the driveway is exclusively for buses. Mr. Lucciola stated that is for pick up and drop off only there will be a gate at the walkway to prevent the buses from going over the sidewalk, the buses will not be able to move until pick up or drop off is completed. Chairman Trowse asked who controls the gate. Mr. Lucciola stated the district does. Mr. Lucciola stated that there is always staff out helping. Mr. Scilingo stated that he drops his child off everyday at school, the police are out there and the crossing guard and he does not observe any staff outside. Mr. Lucciola stated that there is staff helping get the children off the bus. Chairman Trowse asked how is the gate operated. Mr. Lucciola stated that

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the controls will be in the office. Chairman Trowse stated how can someone who is in the office see if someone is walking up the walkway to determine if it is safe to open the gate for the buses to drive through. Mr. Lucciola stated that it was confirmed by the district that the buses have permission to stay behind the gate until drop off is finished. Mr. Carelli asked what the purpose of the drive way is. Mr. Lucciola stated that it is to separate the buses from the cars. Mr. Carelli stated why can't the buses turn onto Oak Street to drop off the children, they would be separate from the cars parking there, the children are getting off on the same side of the school, Oak Street is currently a one way street during drop off and pick up. Who is going to be watching the children that walk to school and now have two additional curb cuts to cross over, do two additional crossing guards need to be hired. Mr. Lucciola stated that this was part of the Referendum. Mr. Pellegrini stated that there was no discussion when the project was first presented that it was only about Phase 1 and could not discuss the ball fields and driveway at that time. Mr. Boorady stated that in reading the traffic letter from their professional it read as if the driveway was for buses only. Mr. Scilingo stated that currently the buses are dropping the children off and once the bus is empty the buses are leaving as parents are still dropping off their children. Mr. Lucciola stated that the buses would remain in the driveway until the second bell rings. Mr. Sheps asked how much does this part of the project cost. Mr. Lucciola stated that the project as a whole is costing about two million dollars. Mr. Sheps asked if the removed this from the project and used Oak Street as the Mayor stated wouldn't that save money. Mr. Lucciola stated that they would not be able to reallocate that money. Mr. Malanga stated that it is about the safety of the children. Mr. Pellegrini asked if the Borough Traffic Officer could say a few words. Mr. Blagoja swore in Mr. Famularo, Riverdale Police Traffic Officer. Mr. Carelli stated first that a few months back they arranged a meeting with the school to discuss the project, after that meeting it was decided that for the Traffic Bureau to review the project from a safety stand point, the police are present at the school every day.

Mr. Famularo stated that the Police Department have an issue with the two new points where something could potentially happen, where now they are not going to. The driveway is a lot of real estate for four buses; it is creating a hazard. These two curb cuts are not good, no one is going to manage the gate.

Chairman Trowse stated that with no Board of Education members here it is sending a message. Jared Wolf was sworn in, he is a member of the Board of Education, but wants to speak as a resident, he does not agree that Board members not attending sends a message.

Mr. Carelli stated that when the Referendum came up a few years ago, he has gone out of his way to keep the Borough out of this project for the School it is the Board of Education. At this point the Borough will have to be involved to do the driveway the Council has to approve the curb cuts. This is why the Borough Engineering, Police and Planning Board are weighing in. I do not want to give the impression that we do not like the project, so far it is going well but with the driveway we want the Council to be informed when making a decision on the curb cuts. All

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of the Board members have put children through the school system and have the safety of the children in mind, to make sure that we are doing the right thing.

Paul Purcell, 95 Riverview Terrace, stated that the driveway is a large area that will be unchaperoned and children can wander across any point of the driveway they are from Kindergarten to Eighth Grade and rarely use a cross walk.

Mr. Reilly stated that the project has been going well so far he has been able to see a little bit of the updates and it looks good. About 20 years ago he was member on the Board of Education the driveway came up at that time as well. The Mayor brought up about using Oak Street for the buses to pick up and drop off, has that been brought up at all when discussing how to separate buses and cars. Mr. Lucciola stated they are doing what the New Jersey School Boards recommend, buses and cars be separated from drop off and pick ups and they must be on school property. Mr. Sheps stated it is a shorter walk from Oak Street to the entrance of the school.

Jared Wolf asked if there is any handicapped parking in front of the school, in this plan are we providing better access for handicapped parents/residents. Mr. Scilingo stated that the one handicapped spot in front cannot be used until after the second bell. Mr. Carelli stated that the parking lot has additional handicapped spots.

Mr. Talerico stated that this has been going on for an hour now and there has been no positive feedback on the driveway. All of the traffic with this plan is exiting onto Oak Street, why can't the buses park on Oak Street and drop the children off on the sidewalk that enter the school. What are we gaining by adding the driveway, two curb cuts, more policing, and electronic gate that no one knows who is operating. This is not going to benefit the education of the children just creates more potential for someone to get hurt.

Mr. Malanga ask Mr. Boorady if there would be enough of a radius for the buses to exit the driveway. Mr. Boorady stated that yes, the buses would be able to turn out but the issue is the sight distance. A school bus has multiple points in the sight distance to check if they can turn. By the time the bus checks to see if the road is clear and make the turn a car can turn around the corner and have to slam on the breaks. If the bus drop off was on Oak Street the would be able to pull out safer they would only have to look behind and continue driving forward.

Mr. Wolf asked if the buses were to park on Oak Street to drop off and pick up children would it be a no parking zone. Mr. Carelli stated we could make it no parking.

Mr. Scilingo stated regarding pick up, cars could be parked in the visitor spots when school lets out and who is going to be letting those cars that they cannot leave those spaces. Chairman Trowse asked Mr. Scilingo what is profession is, Mr. Scilingo stated that he is a police officer and

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has the traffic safety designation. Mr. Lucciola stated there is a police office at the curb cuts now where the buses and cars come out. Officer Famularo stated there is a police car present but not an officer watching the cross walk, this is creating a risk the way that it is set up. Mr. Malanga asked what the protocol is for the buses at pick up, kids will be lingering. Mr. Lucciola stated that school will be over and normal traffic will resume. Mr. Malanga stated this is not safe and someone is going to get killed.

Mr. Trevor Curtis came forward to speak about the rest of the school improvements in this phase. A few improvements included on the plan will be a total reconstruction of the parking lot adding about 40 additional spots, the driveway is located further west on Newbury Place. There are lift gates throughout the parking lot, there will be a walking path around the whole property, a baseball and softball field, a soccer field, adding sewer to the Community Center. There will be stormwater improvements. There will be a paved portion in the front of the school for graduation ceremonies and there will be landscaping. Chairman Trowse asked about the gates on the property and emergency vehicles having access. Mr. Curtis stated there are systems that emergency vehicles can have access to the gates, this would have to be worked out with the fire department. Mr. Talerico asked about the purpose of the lift gates in the parking lot. Mr. Curtis stated the idea is for visitors coming during the day so they cannot drive through the parking lot. Mr. Lucciola stated that this was the Board of Education's decision on where they wanted to gates placed. Mr. Wolf stated he believes the idea was for the gates to protect the children when they leave the cafeteria to go out for recess. Chairman Trowse stated if the children are using the crosswalk to get to the fields for recess why is the gate placed after the crosswalk where cars can still drive in, shouldn't the gate be moved up in front of the crosswalk. Mr. Lucciola stated that would make sense. Chairman Trowse stated that the parking lot is great just need a few tweaks with gate placement for safety. Mayor Carelli asked when the project was scheduled to be completed. Mr. Lucciola stated next year they were hoping to do the media center then the last thing would be roofing. Chairman Trowse asked if there was a problem with the roof. Mr. Lucciola stated that it is old and needs to be replaced. Chairman Trowse asked why not allocate what has to be done for the school prior to doing items outside of the school. Mr. Lucciola stated that you can use capitol money for the roofing since it is still a capitol project. Mr. Wolf stated there are a few different sections of roofing on the school and there is money in the budget for roofing. Ms. Lisa Ferrara, 115 Newbury Place, came forward and stated that she does agree with what the Board is saying about the driveway. She believes landscaping is an issue on Oak Street for busing and she asked if this includes the new playground and the pavement area. Mr. Lucciola stated that is part of the second-floor addition. Ms. Ferrara asked if there was a timeline for when this would go out for bid. Mr. Lucciola stated they would like to go out as soon as possible they have to go back and discuss with their consultants. Ms. Ferrara asked if they changed that plan do they have to go back and get approval from the DOE. Mr. Lucciola stated that they cannot re-allocate money in the project, they budget is set by each line item for the work being completed. Mr. Scilingo stated that note 18 on the plans state that there is no drop off on Oak Street, all of the cars will be entering from

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Newark Pompton Turnpike onto Newbury Place that will cause a lot of traffic and idling cars on Newbury Place waiting to enter the school property. Mr. Lucciola stated that about 24 cars would be able to fit in the drop off area behind the school. Chairman Trowse stated that the sight line for the crossing guard has been cut in half with the buses turning into Newark Pompton Turnpike and cars will be trying to drive the bus and not being able to see the crossing guard, this is putting the safety of the crossing guard and children he is trying to cross in danger. Mr. Wolf came forward and stated about leaving the parking spaces that are proposed in the front of the school for handicapped visitors. A few Board members mentioned extending the parking lot south to add more handicapped parking spaces.

Mr. Petreski stated that the Board can leave it at their comments that they gave tonight or the Board can make a motion to write a non-binding Resolution. Mayor Carelli stated that they have to come get a road opening permit which generates a Resolution if the curb cuts are approved.

**Thereupon Rick Malanga set forth the motion seconded by James Talerico to move forward with a Resolution that the driveway not be installed it is unsafe for all traffic and anyone using the crosswalk to the school, to extend the northern parking lot south closer to the front door, buses to drop off and pick up on Oak Street, and the gates must be relocated further north for safety, and add in all of the site plan items the Board does approve of. Also including Darmofalski Engineering’s Review Letter implementations.**

**ROLL CALL:                   Ayes: Malanga, Talerico, Reilly, Scilingo, Sheps, Lynch, Trowse  
                                      Nays: None  
                                      (7 Ayes – 0 Nays – Motion Carried)**

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Thereupon Chairman Scott Trowse set forth the motion seconded by Christopher Scilingo to adjourn the meeting.

**ALL IN FAVOR / MOTION CARRIED**

**Meeting adjourned at 9:44 PM**

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**Stephanie Colella, Planning Board Secretary**

**\*\*\*NO VIDEO OR AUDIO RECORDINGS OF THESE PROCEEDINGS WITHOUT EXPRESSED PERMISSION FROM THE BOARD\*\*\***