

The Township of Haddon Planning/Zoning Board

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, April 3, 2025

A regular meeting of the planning/zoning board of the Township of Haddon was held on Thursday, April 3rd, 2025, in the municipal building court room (2nd floor), located at 135 Haddon Ave, Haddon Township, New Jersey was called to order by Chairman, Richard Rotz.

Flag Salute

Confirmation of Sunshine Law

Roll Call

Richard Rotz	Present
John Foley	Absent
Renee Bergmann	Present
Marguerite Downham	Present
Joe Buono	Present
Frank Ryan	Present
James Stevenson	Excused
Commissioner Mulroy	Present
Gregory Wells	Excused
Jose Calves	Present
Meredith Kirschner	Present
Chris Jandoli	Present
MaryRita D'Alessandro	Present

Also

M. Lou Garty – Solicitor

Greg Fusco – Township Planner & Engineer

Lee Palo – Zoning Officer

Board Member, Chris Jandoli, sworn in.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion by, Marguerite Downham, to approve the minutes from March 6, 2024 and seconded by, Renee Bergmann. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Application 25-02 – Block 4.16 lot 10 – Zone C-3 - 400 Black Horse Pike – Quick Buds, LLC- This application has been moved to the May 1st, 2025 meeting. No further notice or publication will be given.

Application 25-16 – Block 13.03 Lot 15 – 625 Rhoads Ave (Van Sciver School) – HT Board of Education – Applicant is seeking a courtesy review for the proposed improvements which include improved vehicle circulation, dedicated bus loop and parent drop off lanes, expanded staff parking and dedicated stormwater management system.

Solicitor, Lou Garty, explained that the purpose of this review is to decide whether the proposed capital improvement plan is consistent with the budget. No notice was required.

Alena Hyatt, Associate with Parker McCay, representing the Haddon Township School District, introduced Superintendent, Robert Fisicaro.

Superintendent, Robert Fisicaro, sworn in.

RF, gave brief overview of the purpose of improvements:

- The number one priority within the school district, especially in modern age, is for student safety.
- Van Sciver school, as is, presents hazardous challenges every single day.
- There's not enough room for cars to get in and pick up and drop off, as well as nowhere for parents to safely park.
- That particular school requires school busses to drop off and pick up, and there is nowhere for the busses to load students safely and exit.
- The two major objectives that this project plan will deliver on is to help school busses load safely in front of the school and exit the school, and ensure parents have safe passage with the two-way traffic in front of the school for same side, drop off and pick up, and that's critical, same side.

Chad Gaulrapp, Engineer from Pennoni Associates, sworn in.

GC presented the first exhibit and explained pre-existing conditions:

A1: Current color aerial view of existing school, dated 2/7/2025

GC: Rhoads Ave currently serve two purposes. One is the through traffic, which is very minimal, but there is some through traffic, and it's two ways. But it also functions as a driveway that all of the folks using the school have to utilize, including perpendicular parking currently right along this drive aisle. And so, if you can imagine a road which in this case is maybe 20 feet wide, traversing that road and also having to navigate people backing in, pulling in and backing out with limited sight distance. You can certainly see that as a potential issue. And in addition to that, we have a loop here, which you would think is a bus loop, but it's actually where the parents drop off, and then the busses are made to stage in this other eyelid of the loop here, and again, just it commingles the busses with the parents, and with the staff.

GC presented the second exhibit and explained the proposed site plan:

A2: Proposed site plan, dated 2/13/25

GC: We're keeping the general geometry of Rhodes Avenue as it proceeds just to the east of the school building, but we're widening it. Rhoads Avenue currently is only about 20 feet wide as it progresses through the property. So, we're widening it to what would be designed as a two-way drive mile or 24th and then, addition to that, rather than having perpendicular parking off road, we're taking away all that parking and consolidating it with existing parking, mostly dedicated for staff. And in doing so, we're increasing the parking just by four spaces. So, increasing the parking, getting the parking off of the drive aisle, which passers through are using, as well as staff and parents dropping off along the road, we are creating dedicated parent drop lanes with dedicated crosswalks to get the children safely from the lane into the school. The loop, will finally be dedicated to get the busses closest to the front entrance, keep a gap for the parents dropping their children and keep the vehicles from co-mingling. Other improvements we're providing are lighting on the site, new pavement, and storm water facilities. So, for the most part,

this site's getting an overhaul, and if you know the conditions out here, it's really a necessity. We have two surface basins proposed, along with a conveyance is due to catch the water from the improvements, get them to a basin, and then have those basins operate to a capacity as dictated by the DEP. It's called best management practices.

Environmental Commission Liaison, Marguerite Downham, raised concerns about the impact on existing vegetation and stormwater management.

GC: All of the improvements on the site, but for a portion down here, which currently discharged directly off site, will be captured, routed back to one of these two basins and then discharge in a controlled fashion to the existing drainage ditch, which runs through the wooded area.

MD: The rain garden was to prevent the rain water from going, the storm water from going into the back of Sadler's woods and into the Sadler's Creek. So that was the purpose of the rain garden at the time when it was designed. That was to take the roof run off from the building.

GC: The new pavement is what sees tires of vehicles, and it also sees potential environmental issues, fuel oil leaks, that kind of thing. So, it's called Motor Vehicle surface. And, so what the state says we have to do is treat the runoff from the new paved areas to at least 8% reduction of those issues, and that's what this facility does.

MD: Okay.

GC: It's going to be planted. So, it's not going to be that barren base or the sand bottom, like you see everywhere and you see on the golf course, this will be a bio basin. So, it'll get a soil removal at the bottom and a specific soil specification put into it to promote the growth of, and it's not a wetlands planning, but a vegetative planning.

Discussion on Traffic and Safety Measures

JB: Suggested making Rhoads Avenue a one-way, rather than wider to improve safety.

GC: Explained that this is a school referendum, so changing traffic conditions, wasn't really the scope of this project.

RF: Discussed the potential impact on traffic flow and safety during school arrival and dismissal times, emphasized the need for safe parent drop-off and pick-up zones, and the challenges of making Rhoads Avenue a one-way.

The board considered the feedback and decided to recommend a speed table at the northern crossing of Rhoads Avenue.

Solicitor, Lou Garty, explained to the board that their task was to determine if tonight's proposed project was consistent with the purpose of the master plan. Also, to determine if they provided evidence that the proposed design is a capital improvement, which will enhance student safety, provide for better traffic circulation, provide additional parking, increase driver safety, and enhance the appearance.

RR opened curtesy review to the public.

Public comment: None

A motion by, Marguerite Downham, to close the public portion and seconded by, Renee Bergmann. Motion carried.

A motion by, Jose Calves, to find the plan consistent with the Master Plan, with a recommendation from the board of the additional speed table at the northern crossing of Rhoads Ave and seconded by, Marguerite Downham. Motion carried by a 9 -1 vote.

Application 25-03 – Block 5.08 Lot 6 & 14 – Zone I-1 – 601 Crescent Boulevard – The applicant is seeking a preliminary and final major site plan approval as well as a “C” variance relief to develop a two-story cannabis retail development with associated parking areas and landscaping. Applicant is seeking relief of minimum front yard relief of 5 ft, parking coverage relief .6% and maximum building footprint relief of 473 sq ft. With any and all variances deemed necessary to approve this application.

Solicitor, Lou Garty, stated that after review of the notices they are in compliance. She also clarified that this is a conditional committed use, so that a micro dispensary is conditionally committed here, and they are not asking for micro statute, but asking for variance to permit.

*Commissioner Mulroy and Mayor designee, Frank Ryan, left the room for this application.

Louis Capelli Jr. representing RB LJ Property Holding LLC, gave brief overview: Seeking preliminary and final major site plan approval for a two-story building with a class 5 retail cannabis dispensary in which they have received a resolution of support from the council, Board of Commissioners. Paragraph five of that resolution of support specifically supports a classified dispensary on this site. The project includes demolishing existing structures and constructing a new building with a vault for storing product.

Engineering and Planning Testimony

Larry Hanna, operator, sworn in.

LH presented the first exhibit, described the current existing conditions and described the proposed layout of the retail space.

A1: Floor Plan, First Floor

Solicitor, Lou Garty, explained to the applicants, they must submit these plans electronically to the board secretary and Camden County Board; they agreed to do so.

LH described the customer experience and basic layout of a cannabis retail store, which included a reception desk for checking ID's, a retail area, fulfillment center where the orders are filled, a vault for product and second floor for storage. He also discussed the security plans, which included a security guard on site when open and off-site surveillance, creating 24/7 security and no on-site consumption of cannabis. Security plan will be presented to local police chief for review. Hours of operation will also follow township ordinance.

LC: *Why is it that you're seeking this retail licenses versus a micro?*

LH: *With a micro license, we're limited to the number of employees we can have. So, limiting that's one thing. You can only have 10 employees, location can only be 2500 sq ft, and you can only purchase 1,000 pounds of usable product a month. When you get into edibles and vapes, those things weigh different than actual flower. With that being said, that kind of restricts the amount of business we can do, which then restricts the tax dollars that come into the city. The surrounding dispensaries are not micro; therefore, we would be at a competitive disadvantage.*

RR: *If that's what our ordinance envisioned, a micro business, then you're asking for something beyond what this board envisioned. You would like to have a larger business.*

LH: *It's not so much larger, a more successful business. There is a lot of money to be spent for licensing and security and things of that sort, so we just wanted to make sure that we are not at a disadvantage from all the surrounding dispensaries. I would say about 85% to 90% of micro cannabis businesses do not survive because they can't compete with other dispensaries.*

LG: *This is a highly regulated industry, just like the alcohol beverage industry, so as any condition of an approval that supports my grant, you agree and combine all state regulatory capsules including any local taxing and licensing requirements, and also, this would be a new nonresidential development, so it would be subject to construction of these subjects in the affordable housing contribution of 2.5% of the equals assessed value of the improvements on the site.*

LC: *Correct.*

Fusco, Township Engineer: *You obviously, if approved, have to comply with all the conditions of the state and cannabis license.*

LH: *Yes.*

GF: *There is no on-site construction permitted, responsible for odor control, security plan has to be prepared and submitted to police department and a copy given to the planning board, must comply with township's hours of operation, all building and accessory structures are dedicated to cannabis retail, no driving features, separate parking space at least 10 x 20 feet for deliveries, delivery by small sprinter truck, no tractor trailers or box trucks, comply with parking based on square footage, site plan requirements must meet ordinance, and lastly is the fact that the government body is only permitting two cannabis type licenses in Haddon Township and they are the first application.*

LH: *Yes.*

Kyle Humphreys, Engineer, sworn in.

Exhibits:

A2: Overhead Ariel View

A3: Demo Plan

A4: Site Plan

KH addressed the first-floor plan and ensured the board that the revised plan will show the staircase. He discussed the exhibits: the site plan, demo plan, parking, landscaping, driveway consolidation, beautification, revised lighting, revised grading, better runoff, and explained land coverage. The plan reduces impervious coverage from 85% to 46% and includes a 15-foot alleyway for access.

Solicitor, Lou Garty, explained to the applicants that an electric copy of the demo plan must be submitted to the board secretary, they must agree to work with Mr. Fusco, and the trees proposed, if any, are to be removed to compensatory funding.

KH: *The only real trees are on the residential property, on this portion of the land anyway, so we are really not proposing, we'll just revise the plan to confirm.*

Lee Palo, Zoning Officer, inquired about signage.

KH confirmed that there are no signage plans that are to be presented tonight.

John Fauci, Planner, sworn in.

JF explained the C variances needed due to the property's exceptional shallowness and shape, which would cause hardship in complying with setback requirements.

Variance Details:

- Seeking D3 variance for conditional use.
- Requesting relief from:

*2,500 sq ft micro-business limit (proposing 2,973 sq ft) * Front yard setback requirements * Impervious coverage limits

Site Improvements:

- Reduce site coverage from 85% to 46%.
- Create 44 parking spaces.
- Maintain 100-foot residential property setback.
- Consolidate multiple driveways.
- Improve corner aesthetics.

JF argued: The site remains appropriate for the proposed use despite variance requests. The discussion included specific site conditions, such as the 2500-foot setback requirement and the need for C variances due to the property's shape and size. The proposed building will be modern and attractive, with parking on the sides and front yard to accommodate the site's dimensions. The importance of the 100-foot setback to the residential property to the east is emphasized, meeting a key requirement. The proposed building will provide a modern facility, cleaning up a dilapidated corner, and will not impair the zone plan or master plan. The discussion includes the benefits of infill sites over greenfield sites, particularly for a dilapidated site. Planner mentioned the various regulatory hoops the applicant must jump through, including cannabis-specific regulations and land use requirements. The applicant's commitment to implementing the town's cannabis policy and providing local jobs and tax revenue is highlighted.

RR opened the application to the public.

Public Comment: None.

A motion by, Marguerite Downham, to close the public portion and seconded by, Renee Bergmann. Motion carried.

The Board had a discussion on Micro vs. Standard.

LG: Outlined the conditions for granting the D3 variance, including compliance with state regulations, security plans, and tax requirements.

The applicant agreed to remove the second floor if necessary to meet the variance conditions.

LG: Outlined the conditions for granting the design waivers, including compliance with Mr. Fusco's requirements and county planning board approvals.

Jose Calves, made a motion to grant the D3 variance with bulk variances based on the conditions outlined by Mr. Fusco, without the removal of the second floor, and seconded by, Joe Buono. Motion carried by a 9 to 1 vote.

Jose Calves, made a motion to grant the design waiver for drive isle width and distance from residential driveway and seconded by, Renee Bergmann. Motion carried by a 9 to 1 vote.

Resolution will be signed at the next meeting, May 1st 2025.

*Commissioner Mulroy and Mayor designee, Frank Ryan, re-entered the room for the rest of the applications.

Application 25-07 – Block 15.04 Lot 2 & 3 - Zone R-1 – 662 E. Greenman Road – Deadra Melillo - Applicant is seeking to build a front yard one-story porch addition. Seeking variance for front yard setback relief of 5.34 ft. With any and all variances deemed necessary to approve this application.

Solicitor, Lou Garty, stated that after review of the notices they are in compliance.

Deadra Melillo, Homeowner, sworn in.

RR, assigned exhibits:

A1: Survey, Walter H. Macnamara Assoc., dated 10/2/24.

RR: *Does A1 represent the passive condition at your property?*

DM: *Yes.*

DM proposed a one-story front porch addition and clarified that the porch will be at the front of the property with the front door centered.

Photographs and elevations presented:

A2: Photo Array, taken by Lee Palo, 2/19/25

Lee Palo confirmed that photos were not modified or photoshopped.

A3: Elevation plans

RR: *Elevation plans show a new front elevation and a side elevation to improve the front of the property.*

DM: *Yes, it will be a covered front porch that will be 12 ft wide and 5 ft deep, steps going up the middle, and a railing around the porch. It will cover two sets of windows at the front and it's going to run the length of the house. The roof covering will be where the current covering is.*

FR: *Are you removing all the landscaping in front of the house?*

DM: *Unfortunately, we may have to. There are actually two beautiful trees that are there that I would like to try to keep, but I don't know if it's going to be possible, but there will be landscaping added to the entire property.*

RR, opened the application to the public.

Public Comment: None.

A motion by, Marguerite Downham, to close the public portion and seconded by, Frank Ryan. Motion carried.

Lou Garty, explained about style, conditions, taxes, permits, inspections, assessments, tree ordinance, etc.

A motion made by, Marguerite Downham, finding that the applicant has met the requirements for variance relief requested based upon conditions and testimony and second by, Renee Bergmann. Motion carried by a 10-0 vote.

Resolution will be signed at May 1st, 2025 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Application 25-10 – Block 26.01 Lot 9 - Zone R-2 – 609 Cooper Street – Jackie Bernardi – Application has been postponed to the May 1st, 2025 meeting, due to a child care issue. No further notice or publication will be given.

Application 25-12 – Block 26.06 Lot 1 - Zone R-2 – 209 Cooper Street – Michael & Laura Izzo - Applicant is seeking to construct a rear yard two-story addition. Seeking variance for lot frontage relief of 11.97 ft and lot width of 4 ft. With any and all variances deemed necessary to approve this application.

Solicitor, Lou Garty, stated that after review of the notices they are in compliance.

Laura Izzo, Homeowner, sworn in.

LI presented existing land survey and gave a brief overview of the project:

- Seeking to construct a two-story addition in the rear yard facing Melrose.
- The existing house faces Melrose at 13 feet away, and the new foundation will be within the rear yard.
- Described the design as a low shed roof, 7.5 feet above the existing flat roof, and the new foundation will be within existing hardscape.

A1: Land Survey, Philip J. Schaeffer, dated 1/21/25

- LI, confirmed survey is accurate.

A2: Photo Array, Lee Palo, taken 3/11/25

- Lee Palo, confirmed that photos were not modified or photoshopped.

A3: Elevation Plans, Laura Izzo (Homeowner/architect)

- LI confirmed she did the elevation plans herself.

RR: *What relief are you specifically requesting?*

LI: *We're requesting relief of 4 ft where 21 ft exists, and we need a relief of 11.97 ft where 13.03 ft exists.*

RR: *How many square feet is the new foundation?*

LI: *The new portion of the foundation is 70 square feet and the new addition will not exceed the existing foundation. The covered stair will replace the existing uncovered stair and it will not affect the setback requirements.*

RR, opened the application to the public.

Public Comment:

Patrick Foulke, 200 Cooper St., sworn in.

PF: Supported the application, noting the design looks great and the corner lot makes it hard to meet setback requirements.

A motion by, Marguerite Downham, to close the public portion and seconded by, Joe Buono. Motion carried.

Lou Garty explained about provisions, style, conditions, taxes, permits, inspections, assessments, etc.

A motion by, Frank Ryan to approve application as submitted and seconded by, Jose Calvez. Motion carried by a 10 to 0 vote.

Resolution will be signed at May 1st, 2025 meeting.

Application 25-13 – Block 24.08 Lot 23 - Zone R-2 – 215 Emerald Ave – Dave Bruno - Applicant is seeking a construct a rear yard shed to replace existing garage. Seeking variance for shed size. 10x10 is permitted, seeking a 12x16, looking for 92 sq ft relief. With any and all variances deemed necessary to approve this application.

Solicitor, Lou Garty, stated that after review of the notices they are in compliance.

Dave Bruno, Homeowner, sworn in.

DB: Gave brief overview:

- Seeking to construct a 12 by 16 shed in the rear yard.
- Explained the old garage was in the same spot and the new shed will be pre-fabricated and delivered.
- Confirmed the shed will be for storage and will not have heat.

RR, assigned exhibits:

A1: Survey, dated 1/21/25

- DB, confirmed survey is accurate.

A2: Photo, Lee Palo, taken 3/11/25

- LP, confirmed that photos were not modified or photoshopped.

LG: *Is the shed size consistent with the neighborhood character?*

DB: *Yes, it is common in the neighborhood.*

Solicitor, Lou Garty, explained about style, conditions, taxes, permits, inspections, assessments, etc.

RR opened the application to the public.

Public Comment:

John Grounds, 210 Emerald Ave, sworn in.

JG: Supported the application, noting large garages or sheds are common in the neighborhood.

A motion made by, Joe Buono, to close the public section and seconded by, Chris Jandoli. Motion carried.

A motion made by, Jose Calvez, to approve the application and seconded/approved by the board by a 10-0 vote.

Resolution will be signed at May 1st, 2025 meeting.

RESOLUTIONS:

Solicitor, Lou Garty, reviewed and explained the resolutions:

25-08 – 207 Harding Avenue

25-09 – 102 Ardmore Avenue

A motion by, Frank Ryan to accept the above resolutions and seconded by, Chris Jandoli. Motion carried.

RR opened the meeting to the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT: NONE

A motion by, Marguerite Downham, to close the meeting to the public and seconded by, Renee Bergmann. Motion carried.

ZONING OFFICE REPORT: Brief summary of next month's meeting:

- Lee Palo, reported three residential and two commercial applications for the next month, including a cannabis application and a hardware store.
- LP, discussed emerging zoning concern, regarding front yard garden beds/structures.
- MD questioned outdoor seating in commercial parking lots.
- Greg Fusco, explained cannabis zoning strategy to the board:
 - Focused on Black Horse Pike and Route 130.
 - Emphasis on micro- business model; explained the logic behind categorizing cannabis businesses as micro businesses.
 - Explained the importance of parking requirements.
 - Discussed potential neighborhood impact assessment.

JUNE MEETING DATE:

Board Secretary, Kimberly Schemeley, brought up the issue of the June meeting date falling on Pride Parade night and suggested moving the meeting to June 4th, 2025.

Richard Rotz, Board Chairman, agreed to the change, and noted that the new meeting date will need to be advertised on the website.

With no further business tonight for the Haddon Township Planning/Zoning Board a motion by, Frank Ryan, to close the meeting and seconded by, Joe Buono. Motion carried.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, May 1st, 2025.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:33 pm.