

The Township of Haddon Planning/Zoning Board

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June, 4th 2025

A regular meeting of the planning/zoning board of the Township of Haddon was held on Wednesday, June 4th, 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	Present
Renee Bergmann	Excused
Marguerite Downham	Excused
Joe Buono	Present
Frank Ryan	Present
James Stevenson	Excused
Commissioner Mulroy	Present
Gregory Wells	Present
Jose Calves	Present
Meredith Kirschner	Excused
Maryrita D'Alessandro	Present

Also

M. Lou Garty – Solicitor
Greg Fusco – Township Planner & Engineer
Lee Palo – Zoning Officer

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion by Calvez to approve the minutes from May 1st, 2025, and seconded by Buono. Foley abstained. Motion carried.

Solicitor Lou Garty announced the adjournment of **Application 25-02 - Block 4.16 Lot 10 - Zone C-3 - 400 Black Horse Pike - Quick Buds LLC** to the July 10th meeting due to insufficient members with no re-notice. Foley made a motion to grant the adjournment, and seconded by Calvez. Mulroy and Ryan Abstained. Motion Carried.

HT FOURTH ROUND HOUSING ELEMENT AND FAIR SHARE PLAN:

Solicitor Lou Garty stated that after review of the notices they are in compliance and explained the purpose of the hearing and the township's obligation to maintain an affordable housing plan.

Tristan Harrison, the affordable housing consultant, was sworn in and provided background on the New Jersey Fair Housing Act and the township's compliance with it. Harrison, outlined the cumulative

affordable housing obligations, and the process for determining them, including prior obligations and existing affordable units. The fourth-round obligations were detailed, indicating a present need of 35 units and a prospective need of 69 units. The township's approach to addressing these obligations through redevelopment and inclusionary zoning were discussed. Frank Ryan, addressed the challenges of meeting affordable housing requirements amid economic forces. Harrison, explained the limitations of the obligations and the township's compliance efforts. The concept of "missing middle" housing was introduced as a potential solution, and the role of the affordable housing administrator along with the Affordable Housing Trust Fund was discussed. Frank Ryan commended the professionals involved in the housing plan for their thorough analysis. The board raised concerns about the township's ability to meet future affordable housing requirements and discussed the necessity for state funding and available grants to support affordable housing projects. Harrison explained the process for addressing unmet needs and potential alternative mechanisms. Richard Rotz opened the hearing to the public.

Public Comment: None.

A motion by John Foley to close the public portion, and seconded by Joe Buono. Motion Carried.

Lou Garty, summarized the purpose of the hearing and recommended adopting the housing element fair share plan. A motion was made by Frank Ryan, to adopt the plan based on the professional planner's testimony and authorize the chairman to sign the resolution, seconded by John Foley. Mulroy Abstained. Motion carried. Resolution will be endorsed at the July 10th Meeting.

OLD BUSINESS: NONE.

NEW BUSINESS:

Application 25-11 - Block 21.08 & 21.12 Lot 23-27 & 10 - Zone C1 - 129 Haddon Ave - Westmont Hardware, Inc. - The Applicant is seeking a minor site plan approval to construct a garden center 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.

Matt Madden, sworn in, represented Westmont Hardware and introduced the proposal to convert a former service station into a garden center that will operate as an extension of the hardware store. The proposal included site plan approval and variances for lot depth, rear yard setback, buffer between the property and adjacent residential use, and parking. Mr. Madden emphasized that the garden center expansion is intended to enhance the existing business and offer a "one-stop shop" for both hardware and gardening needs. He discussed the benefits of the expansion, highlighting increased competition and customer convenience. He noted that the existing hardware store has operated successfully with a parking shortfall for many years without issue and provided justification for parking variances. Mr. Madden concluded by affirming that the proposed use is permitted by ordinance, and the requested relief is justified by the long-standing success of the hardware store, the operational history of the site, and the improvements planned for the corner property.

William Getzinger III, the owner/operator of Westmont Hardware, sworn in, introduced himself and shared that he has been a full-time employee of Westmont Hardware for 33 years. He provided historical context, noting that his father built the current storefront addition 38 years ago, anticipating increased competition from big-box retailers like Home Depot. Mr. Getzinger believes that broadening the product

selection to include live goods and lawn and garden items will help differentiate Westmont Hardware and support the continued viability of the business.

Mr. Getzinger discussed operational aspects, including hours, deliveries, and potential employment changes. He explained the trash and waste management plans, parking adjustments, environmental considerations, site layout clarifications, signage, and parking testimony noting that no new signage is proposed at this time and any future signage will either comply with local ordinance or return to the board for approval. The board inquired about parking requirements and the impact on surrounding businesses. Mr. Getzinger concluded by expressing confidence that the 36 proposed parking spaces will be sufficient for operations. The applicant's engineer will provide more detailed calculations regarding current and required parking ratios.

Lou Garty, assigned and confirmed exhibits:

A1: Floor Plans, Jay Reinaert Architect, LLC, dated 2/4/25, exhibited the existing and Proposed floor plans.

Jay Reinert, architect, sworn in, shared his long-standing involvement with and anticipation for this development, noting that the property acquisition process took several years. During that time, the design team considered various ways to enhance the corner site and integrate it effectively with the surrounding downtown environment. The zoning ordinance encourages new buildings to be placed at the street frontage. This requirement inspired the design decision to locate retail canopies toward the sidewalk, enhancing street-level activation and pedestrian experience. The vision includes creating a park-like atmosphere, with a more welcoming walkable corner in contrast to the adjacent municipal building. The decision was made to retain the existing building, as it provides a large open floor plan well-suited for retail use, structural value and adaptability, and sustainability and cost effectiveness by avoiding demolition. Mr. Reinert gave detailed plans on building improvements, planned uses and features. The greenhouse area was explained as a physical connector between the hardware store and the garden center that will be ADA-compliant, climate-controlled passage, and usable year-round. The board discussed the lighting and signage plans for the site. There were no current signage plans. The existing ambient lighting is considered sufficient for general needs but they have proposed additional lighting including concealed fixtures in the canopies and decorative string lights for seasonal ambiance. All proposed lighting is designed to be non-intrusive, with no impact on neighboring properties.

Joseph Odenheimer, professional engineer, sworn in, gave an overview of the site plans.

Lou Garty, assigned and confirmed exhibits:

A2: Site Plans, Sheet 2, C-101 2, Joseph R. Odenheimer, Colliers Engineering & Design, dated 1/31/25, provided an overall view of the plan that shows the proximity of this site to the surrounding areas.

A3: Site Plans, Sheet 3, C-102 3, Joseph R. Odenheimer, Colliers Engineering & Design, dated 1/31/25, provided a blown-up view of the post garden center.

Mr. Odenheimer described how the proposed garden center is located on a lot adjacent to the main hardware store and near a municipally owned property across Haddon Avenue. The applicant also owns a nearby parking lot with 20 spaces, located across the street from the garden center. The plan indicated

canopy-covered retail areas, previously shown with gravel surfaces. Based on NJDEP input, the final surface will likely be asphalt or other impervious cover to comply with capping requirements. A pallet storage area is located near the trash enclosure, which faces Haddon Avenue but will be accessed from Reeve Avenue. Dumpsters will be on rollers for maneuverability. Trash pickup will either be scheduled for staff to roll out the dumpster, or the hauler will retrieve them as needed. Truck maneuverability studies were completed for both a front-loading garbage truck and 26-foot box truck. Both vehicles can enter and exit the site successfully using Reeve Avenue, taking into account existing striped parking and potential minor adjustments to the gate/fencing for clearance. Grading will remain essentially unchanged, and the site will be repaved. Drainage Patterns will continue to mimic existing conditions. A formal lighting plan will be developed in coordination with the municipal office. There will be fencing along Reeve and Haddon made of ornamental iron, featuring gates between canopies. Gates are intended for public access and circulation within the garden center. The difference in height is to provide human-scale entrances while maintaining decorative and functional consistency. Mr. Odenheimer gave a parking analysis, ensured all materials stored on site will be packaged/bagged and confirmed that no loose mulch, gravel, or soil will be stored on-site in compliance with stormwater regulations. No signage package has been submitted at this time and any future signage will be reviewed separately.

Julia, Professional Planner, Colliers Engineering & Design, sworn in, reviewed the project and site familiarity. This discussion included a review of existing non-conforming conditions, parking variance, and project time schedule. Julia addressed the newly raised issue regarding a fence height variance stating that the purpose of the requested variance is to enclose the garden center, mainly for security and containment during off-hours. Julia agreed to review the variances in terms of satisfying both positive and negative criteria, per statutory zoning requirements. Julia provided a detailed explanation of compliance and rationale, how the proposal meets variance criteria, and there was further discussion regarding satisfaction of planning board requirements. The board reviewed the schedule and finalized variance justifications. Julia elaborated on the fence height variances and gave an overview of additional variances requested. She explained that the lot depth variance is justified because it is an existing non-conforming condition since original construction in 1930 and the site has functioned effectively in its current configuration. The rear yard setback variance is an existing non-conforming condition. A privacy fence is already in place along the rear property line and there are no proposed changes to this condition. The buffer variance is an existing non-conforming condition and there is no proposed expansion or worsening of the condition. The parking variance is justified under both C1(hardship) and C2(benefit outweighs detriment) standards. Julia noted that on-street parking and a nearby public lot are available. Township ordinance permits public/on-street spaces to count toward total required, subject to board approval. Julia presented a summary of positive and negative criteria associated with the variances. Julia concluded that the requested variances are justified under applicable zoning standards. The proposed improvements will enhance the site visually and functionally while maintaining compatibility with surrounding uses. The garden center expansion supports the continued operation of an existing, community-serving business. Lou Garty explained about style, conditions, revised site plans, taxes, permits, inspections, assessments, affordable housing contribution (2.5%), etc. Richard Rotz opened the application to the public.

Public Comment:

Ernest & Diane D'Agostino, 3 Reeve Avenue, sworn in.

Mr. D'Agostino, a longtime resident of 3 Reeve Ave, spoke in general support of the project, citing a 20-year friendship with the property owner and frequent patronage of the hardware store. However, he voiced strong objections regarding the location of the proposed dumpster. D'Agostino explained that the dumpster would be approximately 16 feet from his front stoop and about 4.5 feet from his fence, raising concerns about odor, aesthetics, and the potential negative impact on his property value. He noted that although the dumpster was to be enclosed by masonry walls on three sides with a gate, its presence so close to this home remained problematic. As a professional in the construction field, he acknowledged that the enclosure would add both height and mass directly behind his existing wooden fence, compounding the visual and spatial impact. He emphasized that his house, originally built in 1950, faces the rear of the hardware store and is already limited in view. The addition of a solid structure so close to his front entrance, he argued, would diminish the appeal and possibly reduce the market value of his property. D'Agostino repeatedly asked whether board members would be comfortable with such a structure so close to their homes, underscoring his frustration. He stated clearly that his request was for the dumpster to be relocated or eliminated from the plan.

In response, the applicant clarified that the new dumpster had only been included to satisfy a municipal ordinance requiring one for new developments. They testified that the two existing dumpsters already in use by the hardware store were more than sufficient to handle waste for both the current and proposed uses. As a resolution, the applicant agreed to eliminate the proposed dumpster entirely and revert that section of the site to potential additional parking. The homeowner's concerns were thereby addressed to this satisfaction, and no additional public comments or objections were raised.

A motion by John Foley to close the public portion and seconded by Frank Ryan. Motion carried.

John Foley made a motion to approve this application based upon the testimony and standards in the summary and with conditions for the fence and signage, and seconded by Jose Calves. Motion approved (8-0). Resolution will be signed at the July 10th, 2025 meeting.

Correspondence/Discussion:

Resolution #2025-071 being referred to the board from Mayor and Commissioners pertaining to undeveloped Municipal land.

Mr. Rotz explained that the next item on the agenda was a referral request from the governing body, specifically a resolution from the Mayor and Commissioners, seeking input and recommendation from the Planning Board regarding the potential designation of various undeveloped municipal lands as open space. Mr. Fusco, the Township Planner, was tasked with conducting a comprehensive inventory and survey of all such properties

Mr. Fusco noted that this effort aligns with the affordable housing presentation previously delivered by Mr. Tristan. As part of that presentation, a Vacant Land Study was referenced. In coordination with the tax assessor and Mr. Tristan's office, the planning office undertook a detailed review of every parcel in the municipality that was either classified as vacant or appeared to be so based on existing records and physical site conditions. This review included extensive research into township data, field verification, and mapping. The findings of this effort significantly benefited the municipality's affordable housing strategy. It was discovered that many lots - some wooded, others open and unused - exist throughout

the township. Mr. Fusco explained that he had compiled both a map and a list of blocks and lots recommended for formal designation as open space. However, due to the unexpected continuation of one of the evening's development projects and the assumption that the meeting would extend into late hours, he chose not to present the materials at this session. Instead, he requested that this item be placed on the agenda for next month's meeting, at which time he will formally present the proposed list and mapping to the Board.

The Board was informed that no action would be taken during the current meeting. The Solicitor emphasized that the objective is to review engineering and land use records, identify suitable properties, and present them for discussion and potential recommendation to the governing body. The intent is to ultimately consider rezoning or formally designating these areas for public conservation, recreation, and open space purposes. The board agreed to revisit the matter during the next scheduled meeting, at which point a full presentation and discussion will take place.

RESOLUTIONS:

Richard Rotz reviewed and explained the resolutions:

- 25-10 - 609 Cooper Street
- 25-14 - 409 Yale Road
- 25 - 15 - 507 Avondale Ave
- 25 - 17 - 129 Bellevue Ave

A motion by Jose Calvez to accept the above resolutions and seconded by Joe Buono. Motion carried. Foley Abstained.

PUBLIC COMMENT: NONE

A motion by Joe Buono to close public comment and seconded by Frank Ryan. Motion carried.

ZONING OFFICE REPORT: (Lee Palo): Gave brief summary of next month's meeting: 3 residentials, 2 commercials.

Discussion ensues about the scheduling of meetings, with some members expressing availability issues for the upcoming meetings in July and August. The board discussed potential conflicts and the need to reschedule meetings to ensure full board participation. The decision was made to postpone certain applications to the August meeting due to scheduling conflicts. The meeting concludes with a plan to finalize the schedule and ensure all necessary members are present for the next meeting.

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

Next meeting – Thursday, July 10, 2025.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:24 P.M.