

The Reorganization Meeting of the Planning Board of the Township of Upper Deerfield was held on Monday, January 8, 2024, at 7:00 pm in the Municipal Building.

Russell Vanella called the meeting to order and read the following notice: This is a regularly scheduled meeting of the Planning Board of the Township of Upper Deerfield. In compliance with the "Open Public Meeting Act" a schedule of regular meetings containing the location and time and date of each meeting was approved at the Annual Organization Meeting of the Board, and within seven days following such organization meeting, a copy of such schedule of regular meetings was posted in the Municipal Building at Seabrook, New Jersey, which Notice has remained so posted throughout the year, and copies of the schedule of regular meetings have been mailed to The Daily Journal and The Press of Atlantic City and filed with the Township Clerk in compliance with said Act.

REORGANIZATION

Present:

Members: Russell Vanella, Jack Waselik, James Crilley, Anthony Lamanteer, Joseph Spoltore, Anthony Buono, Sr., Laura Hayes, Kenneth Jackson, Wayne Sabota, William Whelan alt 1, William Taylor alt 2, and Ken Mecouch alt 4.

Staff: Planner Randy Scheule, PP, AIC, Engineer J. Michael Fralinger Jr. PE, CME, Solicitor Matthew Ritter Esq., and Acting Secretaries Roy Spoltore and Sherrie Dixon.

Absent: Edward Geletka Alt 3.

Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson:

Solicitor Matthew Ritter requested nominations to elect 2024 Chairperson. On motion of Jack Waselik, seconded by Laura Hayes, Russell Vanella was nominated. On motion made by Jack Waselik, seconded by Ken Mecouch, the nominations were closed, and a unanimous vote was recorded for Russell Vanella to serve as Chairperson for 2024.

Matthew Ritter turned the meeting over to Chairperson Vanella and he requested nominations to elect 2024 Vice Chairperson. On a motion of Wayne Sabota, seconded by Ken Mecouch, Jack Waselik was nominated. On a motion of Anthony Buono, seconded by Kenneth Jackson, the nominations were closed, and a unanimous vote was recorded for Jack Waselik to serve as Vice-Chairperson for 2024.

Advertising Newspapers were approved by Township Committee at their January 4, 2024, reorganization meeting and are as follows:

The Daily Journal – Meetings and Legal Notices

The Press of Atlantic City – Meetings

Appointment of Professionals were approved by Township Committee at their January 4, 2024, reorganization meeting and are as follows:

Solicitors, Theodore H. Ritter, Esq. and Matthew Ritter, Esq.

Engineer, J. Michael Fralinger, Jr. PE, CME, Fralinger Engineering

Planner, Randall Scheule, PP, AIC, Scheule Planning Solutions, LLC

On motion of Ken Mecouch, seconded by Anthony Buono, the following meeting dates were approved:

2024 REGULAR MEETING DATES

January 22

February 12 & 26

March 11 & 18

April 8 & 15

May 13 & 20
June 10 & 17
July 15
August 12
September 9 & 16
October 7 & 21
November 4 & 18
December 9

REORGANIZATION MEETING - JANUARY 13, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M.

Committees Assignments 2024 Planning Board

Budget Committee

Russ Vanella
Joe Spoltore
Anthony Buono

Site Plan Review Committee

Michael Fralinger, Fralinger Engineering PA - Board Engineer
Jack Waselik
Wayne Sabota
Kenneth Jackson
Alternate
Bill Whelan

Master Plan Review Committee

Randy Scheule, Scheule Planning Solutions, LLC Board Planner
Russ Vanella
Anthony Buono
Jack Waselik
Joe Lacotte, Environmental Commission

The reorganization portion of the meeting was completed, and Chairman Russell Vanella carried forward with the regular meeting of the Planning Board on Monday, January 8, 2024

On motion of Anthony Buono, seconded by Kenneth Jackson, the minutes of the November 20, 2023 meeting were unanimously approved.

APPLICANT DEVELOPMENT:

GFJ Rentals LLC. located at 1240 Highway 77, Block 1201 Lot 2, was represented by Raymond Went, Esq. and Howard Melnicove Esq. for a minor subdivision and use and bulk variances. Chip Adamson, Land Surveyor/Engineer with Remington & Vernick Engineers and Gary Macklin, co-owner of GFJ Rentals were sworn in by Matthew Ritter, Esq. GFJ LLC is requesting a minor subdivision to create 2 lots out of the current 26.7-acre parcel along with use and bulk variances. Mr. Adamson presented 3 photo exhibits for the Board. Exhibit A-1 shows the proposed subdivision; Exhibit A-2 is an aerial map showing the existing conditions and Exhibit A-3 is additional photos.

The professionals presented their completeness reviews. Planner Randall Scheule went over his report for completeness and had no issues with the waivers requested by the applicant. Engineer Michael Fralinger went over his report and had no issues with the applicants' requested waivers.

On a roll call vote on a motion by Anthony Buono, seconded by Wayne Sabota, the application was deemed complete.

Roll Call:

Russell Vanella -Aye	Jack Waselik – Aye
James Crilley – No Vote	Wayne Sabota - Aye
Anthony Lamanteer – Aye	Joseph Spoltore – No Vote
Anthony Buono Sr.- Aye	Laura Hayes – Aye
Kenneth Jackson – Aye	
William Whelan, Alt #1 – No Vote	William Taylor Alt #2 – No Vote
Edward Geletka, Alt #3 – Absent	Kenneth Mecouch Alt #4- No Vote

Chip Adamson, PE stated the Lot in question is a 26.70-acre triangular parcel in the Eco-Agricultural Overlay Zone. There are multiple current uses on the lot, which is bisected by wetlands and has frontage on both Finley Road and NJ Highway 77. Poor Boy Pallet is located on Finley Road, and their use is not a permitted use in the Zone, but they were previously granted a Use Variance in 2007. Griffin Greenhouse is located on the Highway 77 side of the parcel. Because the lot size on which the pallet business operates is proposed to be reduced to 10.524 acres, a new use variance is required for the expansion of that non-conforming use. A side yard variance is also needed. Because the property contains Wetlands, the applicant requested and is awaiting approval from the NJDEP for the proposed wetlands delineation.

Gary Macklin, general manager for the Applicant described the daily operations at Poor Boy Pallet and indicated that the public does not access the business. There are approximately 7-10 truck deliveries per day. The purpose of the subdivision is to sell proposed lot 2.02 to tenant Griffin Greenhouse. Board members asked if there was room for trucks to pull into the property or do they have to back in and partially block traffic on Finley. Gary Macklin stated that they do have to back in. Board members asked if the pallets can be relocated because of the unsightliness. Due to the various elevations of the property, there are only certain areas where they can be stored.

Randall Schuele, PP, reviewed his technical report noting the need for a use and bulk variance and requested an explanation of the proposed evergreen screening. Michael Fralinger, PE, reviewed his technical comments. He explained that DEP will control the buffer distance for the wetland delineation and the applicant will have to conform to their decision.

Ray Went, Esq. requested a short break to confer with his clients to discuss the concerns brought by the board. Following the break, applicant's counsel informed the Board that his client did not believe that screening was possible due to the wetlands present. He further indicated that the business had been operating without screening and that because of the size and shape of the lot, current operations could not be modified to allow for other screening opportunities. Gary Macklin stated that it would be difficult to move the pallet storage area given the unique layout of the property being so uneven in multiple sections. Dennis Macklin, co-owner of Poor Boy Pallet was sworn in and explained that the business employs 50 local people and that he is a long time Upper Deerfield resident. He added that they have tried to plant multiple species along the 77 buffer, but nothing has grown there.

On motion of William Taylor, seconded by Wayne Sabota, the public comment portion was opened. Sandy Acevedo of Old Burlington Road asked what type of activity is permitted in the area where the Griffin Greenhouse building is located. Randy Schuele stated it is located in an Eco-Agricultural zone. Anthony Lamanteer Sr. of Acorn Drive stated that as the former Zoning Officer he had been to the property several times and that nothing will grow in that area of the stream. He suggested letting DEP determine what could be done in the area as the applicant is waiting on their wetland designation from the state. With no other comments, the public comment portion was closed on a motion made by William Taylor, seconded by Wayne Sabota, and unanimously carried.

Matthew Ritter, Esq stated that in 2007, the applicant received a use variance that required a visual buffer but that apparently all efforts have failed to have any kind of buffer grow in the area. Russ Vanella asked about the current height of the pallets. Mr. Macklin stated they are 15 to 16 feet tall. Wayne Sabota stated that the applicant is coming in to subdivide the property, not requesting any changes in uses; ultimately the applicant will have to follow whatever the DEP requires. Bill Whelan added that this is a DEP issue. Dennis Macklin stated that a majority of the damage done to the existing trees was done when the County Mosquito Commission used its machinery to clean up the wetlands area. Ken Mecouch confirmed that the County cleaned the stream area, and the applicant shouldn't be penalized for the County's actions.

The Solicitor reviewed the application and recommended that the Board consider the use variance separately from the other items, as the use variance requires 5 affirmative votes out of seven. The Board found that compliance was met by the applicant with each of the various requirements of the Open Public Meetings Law, P.L. 1975 c. 231. On a roll call vote motioned by Wayne Sabota, seconded by Kenneth Jackson, the Board voted 7-0 to grant the requested D(2) Use Variance.

Roll Call:

Russell Vanella -Aye	Jack Waselik – Aye
James Crilley – No Vote	Wayne Sabota - Aye
Anthony Lamanteer – Aye	Joseph Spoltore – No Vote
Anthony Buono Sr.- Aye	Laura Hayes – Aye
Kenneth Jackson – Aye	
William Whelan, Alt #1 – No Vote	William Taylor Alt #2 – No Vote
Edward Geletka, Alt #3 – Absent	Kenneth Mecouch Alt #4- No Vote

A second vote on the requested minor subdivision and side yard setback variance was granted 7-0, on a roll call vote on a motion of Anthony Buono, seconded by Wayne Sabota.

Roll Call:

Russell Vanella -Aye	Jack Waselik – Aye
James Crilley – No Vote	Wayne Sabota - Aye
Anthony Lamanteer – Aye	Joseph Spoltore – No Vote
Anthony Buono Sr.- Aye	Laura Hayes – Aye
Kenneth Jackson – Aye	
William Whelan, Alt #1 – No Vote	William Taylor Alt #2 – No Vote
Edward Geletka, Alt #3 – Absent	Kenneth Mecouch Alt #4- No Vote

PROFESSIONALS/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION:

The Board will begin a review of commercial parking requirements at the next meeting. The Zoning Officer has requested the Board review and address the concept of “Tiny Houses” and the current requirements for Home Occupations uses. There was also a brief discussion on agricultural buffers. These issues will continue to be discussed at the next meeting. Jim Crilley stated that there is anticipation that this year will have a number of new commercial projects.

On motion of Jack Waselik, seconded by Wayne Sabota, and unanimously carried the public portion was opened. With no public comment, the public portion was closed on a motion of Wayne Sabota, seconded by Ken Mecouch and unanimously carried. With no other business, the meeting was adjourned by motion of Laura Hayes, seconded by William Taylor and unanimously carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roy Spoltore, Acting Secretary

Sherrie Dixon, Acting Secretary