

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
February 20, 2025**

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Nees at 7:04 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

ROLL CALL

Board Members in Attendance:

Barton
Bola
Giallorenzo
Guerriero
Nees
Roglieri
Saad
Pascale

Board Members Absent:

Clay Mason

Others Present:

Board Attorney Joseph Tauriello, Board Planner, Michael Sullivan, Board Engineer Rob O'Brien and Board Secretary Ann Marie Lehberger.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION

WHEREAS N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (the Open Public Meeting Act) authorizes this Board to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which this Board discusses certain matters;

WHEREAS, the Board is about to discuss such a matter, specifically a matter falling within the attorney-client privilege where confidentiality is required for the Board Attorney to exercise his ethical duties as a lawyer with respect to attorney-client privileged legal advice he wishes to give the Board.

WHEREAS this Board believes the public should be excluded from this discussion and advice.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Readington Township Board of Adjustment on February 20, 2025 that this Board now go into closed session and the public be excluded and that the Board believes that the discussions conducted in the closed

session may not be disclosed to the public because they will involve attorney-client privileged advice and information.

Mr. Saad moved, and Mr. Bola seconded a motion to adopt this resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Saad moved, and Mr. Bola seconded a motion to come out of a closed session. The motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Saad moved, and Mr. Bola seconded, a motion to approve January 30, 2025 minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS

There were none.

ADJOURNMENTS OF ANY SCHEDULED HEARINGS OR MOTIONS

There were none.

OTHER BUSINESS

Whitehouse Mall, LLC (Starbucks Drive-Thru)
Block 34, Lot 33

Request to modify condition #17 of the resolution of approval memorialized 1/18/24 to allow an extension of time to commence construction.

Attorney Stephen Gruenberg was present on behalf of the applicant, Whitehouse Mall LLC. Mr. Gruenberg explained that the applicant had received amended site plan approval with "D" and "C" variances to relocate the existing Starbucks from its interior location in the mall to the end of the building with the addition of a drive-thru memorialized in January of 2024. He stated that the applicant is requesting a six-month extension of time to begin construction on the project due to some delays caused by weather, architectural plans from Starbucks and other approvals required by the Township. He confirmed that the applicant completed the resolution compliance and plans had been signed.

The Board questioned the reason for the delay and if any changes were made to the plans that were previously proposed. Mr. Gruenberg confirmed that there were no changes to the approved plans.

Mr. Saad moved, and Ms. Pascale seconded a motion to approve the extension for Whitehouse Mall LLC. The roll call vote follows:

Member	Motion	2 nd	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Not Eligible	Recused
Barton				X				
Bola							X	
Giallorenzo			X					
Guerriero			X					
Nees							X	
Roglieri							X	
Saad	X		X					
Mason						X		
Pascale		X	X					

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Hayden's House of Healing

Application ZB24-004- Preliminary & Final Site Plan with "D" Variance – Retreat Center
Block 57 Lot 7-11 Forty Oaks Road

Attorney Mark Peck was present on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Peck stated that they were previously here in front of the Board on October 17, 2024. He explained that the applicant is seeking preliminary and final site plan approval with use variance to operate a faith-based retreat facility at the subject property. He explained that the applicant had agreed at the last hearing to limit the retreats to no more than 26 per year with no more than 13 attendants total, provide the zoning office with notice of when the retreats will be happening and stipulated that the premises will not be used as an Airbnb or other rental and no organized activities outside after dark.

The following people were present on behalf of the applicant and sworn. It was noted that they were previously sworn.

Ady Dorsett, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Hayden's House of Healing

Robert Dorsett, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Hayden's House of Healing

John Hansen PE, PP, applicant's engineer and planner

The following exhibits were marked into evidence as follows:

A-3 Code of conduct for Hayden's House of Healing

A-4 Series of six pictures on an aerial photo depicting the type of vegetation that surrounds the property

A-5 Photographic exhibit dated 10/17/24 with photos of property from multiple viewpoints

Chair Nees opened the public portion of the meeting for continuation of questions of Mr. and Mrs. Dorsett on their previous testimony.

Joe Panzarella questioned how many people attended retreats last year, the cost per attendee and if the attendees were from Hunterdon County. Mr. Panarella also asked if they looked at any commercial properties before they purchased this residential property and if there were any planned changes to the existing home.

Joan O'Connell questioned if any legal or identity checks done on the retreat attendees.

Kerry DiPaolo inquired about the 2024 revenue, salaries, by-laws and a conflict-of-interest policy. Ms. DiPaolo asked what the tapered candles and lighters are used for that appear on the Hayden's House wish list. She also inquired about the use of Venmo accounts for payments.

Board Attorney Joseph Tauriello spoke to the criteria the Board needs to weigh in their consideration of a "D (1)" Variance.

Kerry DiPaolo requested clarification on the number of retreats proposed per year and questioned if the property had already been used for any Hayden's House of Healing events.

Ed Weber questioned whether Hayden's House of Healing was affiliated with a specific church. He also questioned if the church was a separate not for profit and if they provided spiritual guidance for the retreats. He inquired as to why they didn't look to locate the retreat center closer to the church they are affiliated with. Mr. Weber requested clarification on the background check process and questioned if the variance would only be valid while the applicant owned the property.

Ralph DeLorenzo questioned if there a document connecting the relationship between Hayden's House of Healing and the Dorsett's, the owners of the property.

Board Attorney Tauriello clarified that there is an owner's consent portion on the application form submitted to the Board that needs to be completed.

Marek Has questioned if the applicant had any other retreat homes. He questioned if there were ever any complaints by neighbors or incidents at previous retreats.

Board Attorney Tauriello clarified that under the MLUL (Municipal Land Use Law) the Board is to consider evidence for this application only.

Nicole Panzarella questioned why the location needs to be in a serene and secluded area, who makes decisions regarding the retreat center, and if the home would be used from November to January. She also asked if someone was present from the church they are affiliated with and requested a copy of the bylaws. She questioned if Hayden's House of Healing is a registered charity in the State of NJ.

Ms. Panzarella submitted the following exhibit as follows:

O-2 Email from the State of NJ indicating they could not be located in the database

Ms. Panzarella inquired about the sharing funds of Hayden's Heart and Hayden's House of Healing and questioned how the majority of attendees travel to the retreats and if they travel from within New Jersey.

Dennis Toro questioned the impact on the neighborhood because there are no sidewalks or crosswalks on the street and asked if there was a traffic study.

Caitlin Alicino questioned how operating the organization in the community would benefit Readington Township. She also asked if a code of conduct for the retreat host and guests had been developed and if so, how it would be enforced. Ms. Alicino also asked for clarification on the background check process.

Carolyn Fimbel inquired about the different organization names listed on the Facebook page and the different types of retreats. She asked if they would have more retreats if they had more people interested in attending and if there would be someone in the house every day. She expressed concern about people smoking outside.

Nicole Panzarella returned and questioned how the granting this use variance will benefit the general welfare of the community.

Pete Justo questioned the expectation of visibility and audibility to the neighbors if retreat guests are allowed to leave the property, go for walks etc.

Ed Weber asked if anyone sits on their board that is directly related to the church they are affiliated with.

John Hansen, PE, PP, the applicant's engineer and planner was sworn and was accepted by the Board as an expert witness.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan and Board Engineer Rob O'Brien were also sworn.

Mr. Hansen provided an overview of the existing conditions on the property stating that the property is in the AR (Agricultural Residential) and reviewed the permitted uses and bulk standards in the zone. Mr. Hansen stated that the closest home is approximately 310 feet.

He explained that the proposal is to use the property as a retreat use, there is really no land disturbance or construction that is being proposed other than an upgrade to the septic system, and the installation of some landscaping. A 6-foot-high fence along the property line as suggested by the Board's professionals to provide some additional buffer to lot 5.02. An EV (Electric Vehicle) parking space and charging station will be installed as required as well as a new septic disposal bed. He explained how 13 cars could be parked on the site.

The Board questioned where the (Electric Vehicle)EV parking space would be located.

The Board questioned how the property lines were delineated.

The Board questioned how many garages there were and in which garage the EV would be installed.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Hansen described how the cars would be parked.

The Board questioned if they looked at any ways to reduce the impervious coverage on the site.

In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Hansen discussed the soil study results and the proposed design of the septic system.

Board Planner Michael Sullivan asked about how the installation of the new septic system would affect the trees in the western corner of the property. Mr. Hansen stated that they could create a contingency plan in the event any trees needed to be removed for the septic field.

Board Engineer O'Brien asked about the parking design waiver.

Mr. Hansen confirmed that no signs were proposed.

The Board questioned the size of the septic field.

The Board questioned if the existing well can accommodate the demand.

Chair Nees opened the public portion of the meeting for questions of Mr. Hansen on his engineering testimony.

Dennis Toro questioned how property values of the homes in the neighborhood will be impacted.

Kerry DiPaolo requested clarification on the proposed fence height and asked about installing a natural buffer such as trees. She also questioned the number of bedrooms and the location of the detached garage.

Eileen Petriw inquired if the usage of their well and septic would affect any of the neighboring wells and septic systems. She also inquired about handicapped parking.

Pete Justo inquired about handicapped bathroom facilities.

Carolyn Fimbel had asked about the well with the change in use.

Nicole Panzarella requested clarification on the handicapped parking spot and electric parking spot and if there would be ramps. She also asked if there would be septic system education for guests and questioned the maximum occupancy for the home.

Kerry DiPaolo inquired about the design exceptions needed for the application.

Resident, Mario, inquired about fire safety measures.

Dennis Fimbel inquired about the type of septic system that would be installed.

Joseph Panzarella inquired if a generator would be installed.

Dennis Toro inquired if they knew that the previous owner had dump trucks of soil that were brought onto the property.

There were no more questions from the public for Mr. Hansen on his engineering testimony.

Due to the late hour, Chair Nees announced that the application would be carried to the meeting on April 17, 2025 at 7:30 pm with no further notice. The applicant agreed to provide an extension of time for the Board to act through April 30, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Saad moved, and Mr. Barton seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sherri Russo
Board Secretary