Zoning Board of Adjustment

January 21, 2026
Meeting
Minutes

THESE PROCEEDINGS WERE HELD VIRTUALLY

CALL TO ORDER

7:01pm

2026 REORGANIZATION

Full Members

Joseph Bianco, RA/PP- Reappointed
(New 4-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2029);

Alternates

Cochi Ho- Reappointed as #2
(New 2-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2027);

Hani Samaan- Reappointed as #4
(New 2-Year Term Expiring December 31, 2027);

Chairperson

A motion was made by Mr. Sabo and seconded by Dr. Brunell to nominate Mr. Bianco as Chairperson of the Board for calendar year 2026. The motion passed (6-0-1):

Yes- Tal; Ho; Messinger; Davida; Brunell; Sabo;

No- n/a;

Abstain- Bianco;

Late Arrival- Elias; Dhorajia;

Vice Chairperson

A motion was made by Dr. Brunell and seconded by Ms. Davida to nominate Mr. Sabo as Vice Chairperson of the Board for calendar year 2026. The motion passed (6-0-1):

Yes- Tal; Ho; Messinger; Davida; Brunell; Bianco;

No- n/a;

Abstain- Sabo;

Late Arrival- Elias; Dhorajia;

Secretary

A motion was made by Chairman Bianco and seconded by Vice Chairman Sabo to nominate Dr. Brunell as Secretary of the Board for calendar year 2026. The motion passed (6-0-1):

Yes- Tal; Ho; Messinger; Davida; Sabo; Bianco;

No- n/a;

Abstain- Brunell;

Late Arrival- Elias; Dhorajia;

Board Attorney

A motion was made by Secretary Brunell and seconded by Ms. Davida to nominate Daniel Steinhagen, Esq. of Beattie Padovano, LLC as Board Attorney for calendar year 2026. The motion passed (7-0-0):

Yes- Tal; Ho; Messinger; Davida; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;

No- n/a;

Abstain- n/a;

Late Arrival- Elias; Dhorajia;

Board Engineer

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Sabo and seconded by Ms. Davida to nominate Jeffrey Morris, PE of Boswell Engineering, Inc. as Board Engineer for calendar year 2026. The motion passed (7-0-0):

Yes- Tal; Ho; Messinger; Davida; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;

No- n/a;

Abstain- n/a;

Late Arrival- Elias; Dhorajia;

Calendar

The Board previously approved its Work Session and Meeting schedule of dates and deadlines for calendar year 2026 at its November 17, 2025 Meeting.

Newspapers

A motion was made by Mr. Messinger and seconded by Ms. Davida to approve both *The Record* and *The Star-Ledger* as the Board's official newspapers for purposes of public noticing for calendar year 2026. The motion passed (7-0-0):

Yes- Ho; Messinger; Davida; Elias; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;

No- n/a;

Abstain- n/a;

Late Arrival- Dhorajia;

ATTENDANCE

Present

Joseph Bianco, RA/PP- Chairman
Wayne Sabo- Vice Chairman
Leslie Brunell, PE- Secretary
Heena Dhorajia, EIT- Full Member
Evan Elias- Full Member
Kristie Davida- Full Member
Zachary Messinger- Alternate #1
Cochi Ho- Alternate #2
Yuval Tal- Alternate #3
Hani Samaan- Alternate #4
Christopher Cho- Council Liaison
Daniel Steinhagen, Esq.- Board Attorney
Jeffrey Morris, PE- Board Engineer
Paul Demarest- Board Coordinator

Absent

Dharamraj Baboo- Full Member

CORRESPONDENCE

The Board did not receive any correspondence since its December 17, 2025 Meeting.

OPEN TO PUBLIC

Brian Beddoe, 36 Maple Avenue, Closter, New Jersey expressed his gratitude to the Board on its adjudication of Case Z-2024-06 (31 Maple Avenue/Dahhan), for which it granted Bulk Variance Relief for the construction of an addition (with loggia), deck, roof overhang, steps/landing and walkway to supplement a 1-family house; he commended the appearance of the nearly-finished construction. He said he was especially pleased the applicant was required to install a new concrete curb and sidewalk extending from its corner lot at Second Street to Piermont Road at the behest of the Governing Body as part as a subsequent waiver request; he noted, however, there is neither from that point north to the bus stop on Piermont Road.

Welington Gomes, 60 Anderson Avenue, Closter, New Jersey expressed his pleasure that the redevelopment of 511 Durie Avenue, the site of the former Village Middle School, into 35-unit affordable housing complex is finally underway after several proposals considered and approved by the Board failed to materialize.

MINUTES

A motion was made by Ms. Davida and seconded by Mr. Messinger to approve the minutes for the December 17, 2025 Meeting. The motion passed (9-0-0):

Yes- Samaan; Tal; Ho; Messinger; Davida; Elias; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;

No- n/a;

Abstain- n/a;

Late Arrival- Dhorajia;

RESOLUTIONS

n/a;

CASELOAD

#1 CASE Z-2025-10

APPLICANT:	RYAN & JAIMEE WATSON
SUBJECT PROPERTY:	44 SMITH STREET
BLOCK/LOT:	302/19
ZONING DISTRICT:	2 (RESIDENTIAL B)
REPRESENTATION:	MATTHEW CAPIZZI, ESQ.
REAL ESTATE TAX:	CURRENT THRU 2025/3RD QUARTER
AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE:	JANUARY 8, 2026
AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION:	JANUARY 11, 2026

Synopsis

The applicant is seeking Bulk Variance Relief for the construction of a swimming pool (in-ground utilizing existing fencing), patio (on-grade) and retaining wall as well as a driveway reconfiguration to supplement a 1-family house; the application was received September 29, 2025 and scheduled for the November 25, 2025 Work Session, at which time, it was deemed complete; pending the Board's receipt of requested items and public noticing requirements, the application was scheduled for the **January 21, 2026 Meeting**.

Relief Sought
1.) Bulk Variance: impervious coverage (30% maximum allowed/34.80% provided);

Witnesses
1.) Angelo Onello, PE, 5 Beechnut Street, Hillsdale, New Jersey (on behalf of David Egarian, PE, 271 Route 46 West, Unit G(208), Fairfield, New Jersey);
2.) John Barree, PP, MJ Planning, LLP, PO Box 45, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey;

Exhibits
n/a;

Prior Subcommittee Requests
1.) provide detail on height and material of privacy fencing to be retrofitted as swimming pool barrier;
2.) depict existing buildings located on all adjacent lots along with their distances to both property lines shared with subject property and proposed swimming pool equipment;
3.) explore reducing proposed impervious coverage via smaller proposed swimming pool, demolition of existing carport/shed, etc.;

Prior Board Requests
n/a;

New Board Requests
n/a;

Public Questions
n/a;

Public Comments
1.) Ita Kelly, 36 Smith Street, Closter, New Jersey;

Decision
A motion was made by Mr. Messinger and seconded by Mr. Elias to approve the application. The motion passed (7-0-0):
Yes- Ho; Messinger; Davida; Elias; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;
No- n/a;
Abstain- n/a;
Late Arrival- Dhorajia;

Conditions
1.) provide requisite drainage calculations and soil analysis/percolation testing, along with associated engineering escrow deposit, to allow for Borough Engineer's review and approval prior to Building Department issuing construction permit;
2.) reduce height of proposed retaining wall to less than 4', if desired, to negate need for additional design calculations, engineering escrow deposit and certification post-construction;

#2 CASE Z-2025-12

APPLICANT:	LEONID & NELLIE FLEK
SUBJECT PROPERTY:	43 JANE STREET
BLOCK/LOT:	1713/5
ZONING DISTRICT:	2 (RESIDENTIAL B)
REPRESENTATION:	MATTHEW CAPIZZI, ESQ.
REAL ESTATE TAX:	CURRENT THRU 2025/4TH QUARTER
AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE:	JANUARY 7, 2026
AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION:	JANUARY 11, 2026

Synopsis
The applicant is seeking Bulk Variance Relief for the construction of a swimming pool (in-ground utilizing existing fencing), pergola, patio (on-grade) and walkway as well as a driveway reconfiguration to supplement a 1-family house; the

application was received December 5, 2025 and scheduled for the December 22, 2025 Work Session, at which time, it was deemed complete; pending the Board's receipt of requested items and public noticing requirements, the application was scheduled for the **January 21, 2026 Meeting**.

Relief Sought

1.) Bulk Variance: impervious coverage (30% maximum allowed/35.70% provided);

Witnesses

1.) Cory Vandervalk, PE, Schwanewede, Hals & Vince Co., 111 Littleton Road, Unit 200, Parsippany, New Jersey (on behalf of Tyler Vandervalk, PE, Civilized Engineering, LLC, 6 Joan Drive, Montville, New Jersey);
2.) Benjamin Ross Heller, PLA, Root Landscape Architecture Co., 2 Tempe Wick Road, Mendham, New Jersey;

Exhibits

A-1: site plan depicting alternate design whereby existing driveway remains fronting on Jane Street (not reconfigured to front on Maple Avenue), prepared by party whom Witness #1 appeared on behalf of, dated April 8, 2025 and last revised January 7, 2026;
A-2: landscape plan depicting alternate design whereby existing driveway remains fronting on Jane Street (not reconfigured to front on Maple Avenue), prepared by Witness #2, dated November 12, 2025 and last revised December 31, 2025;

Prior Subcommittee Requests

1.) post $1,000.00 engineering escrow deposit for Board Engineer's review;
2.) provide drainage calculations;
3.) notate proposed irrigation system;
4.) notate code compliance for existing privacy fencing to be utilized as swimming pool barrier or provide detail for replacement fencing;
5.) delineate portion of existing driveway to be eliminated;
6.) indicate width of proposed driveway;
7.) explore retaining existing driveway accessing Jane Street and eliminating proposed driveway accessing Maple Avenue which experiences high traffic volume as cut-through route via Piermont Road;
8.) provide elevation plan of proposed pergola;

Prior Board Requests

n/a;

New Board Requests

n/a;

Public Questions

1.) Robert Francavilla, 22 Clarke Street, Closter, New Jersey;
2.) Dahlia Cooper, 66 First Street, Closter, New Jersey;
3.) Patricia Lemus, 4 Maple Avenue, Closter, New Jersey;

Public Comments

1.) Robert Francavilla, 22 Clarke Street, Closter, New Jersey;
2.) Patricia Lemus, 4 Maple Avenue, Closter, New Jersey;
3.) Dahlia Cooper, 66 First Street, Closter, New Jersey;
4.) Brian Beddoe, 36 Maple Avenue, Closter, New Jersey;

Decision

A motion was made by Mr. Messinger and seconded by Mr. Elias to deem the Board is not bound by res judicata because the application substantially differs from the applicant's prior proposal, Case Z-2025-05 (43 Jane Street/Flek), which the Board denied. The motion passed (7-0-0):

Yes- Messinger; Davida; Elias; Dhorajia; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;

No- n/a;

Abstain- n/a;

A motion was made by Mr. Messinger and seconded by Ms. Dhorajia to approve the application as depicted in Exhibits A-1 and A-2. The motion passed (7-0-0):

Yes- Messinger; Davida; Elias; Dhorajia; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;
No- n/a;
Abstain- n/a;

Conditions

1.) provide hard copies of Exhibits A-1 and A-2 (not pre-filed);
2.) extend proposed vegetation buffer along northern property line to its westernmost point to fill void where curb cut installation along Maple Avenue had been contemplated;
3.) assess existing storm water management system in consultation with Board Engineer and upgrade accordingly;
4.) provide linear dimensions of proposed appurtenances and revise proposed impervious coverage calculations based on testimony this evening with respect to reconfiguring existing driveway, walkway, etc.;
5.) amend both Exhibits A-1 and A-2 utilizing date on which Resolution is slated for memorialization (February 18, 2026);

MISCELLANEOUS

Mayor John Glidden thanked Board members for their volunteerism. He commended the Board on its role in helping protect the Borough from overdevelopment and preserving its character by adjudicating the 4th and final application attempt to redevelop 511 Durie Avenue, the site of the former Village Middle School, into a 35-unit affordable housing complex, a project which was central in the Borough's housing plan to fulfill its 3rd round of New Jersey-mandated affordable housing requirements; he said the Borough's efforts culminated with a groundbreaking ceremony on-site earlier today.

Regarding Case Z-2025-03 (296 Piermont Road/Punla), the applicant, Romeo Punla, 296 Piermont Road, Closter, New Jersey along with his project manager, Martin Moreno, T. Laporta Architect, PC, 101 Hudson Street, Unit 2106, Jersey City, New Jersey, requested permission to deviate from the Board's approval which granted Bulk Variance Relief for the construction of an addition, portico and deck along with a driveway reconfiguration to supplement a 1-family house. The Board considered the following deviation requests depicted in a site plan prepared by Michael Huschman, PE dated January 14, 2025 and last revised January 14, 2026 as well as architecturals prepared by Thomas Laporta, RA dated August 28, 2025 and last revised September 17, 2025: 1.) amend proposed roof style of main roof from gable to hip and reduce its number of decorative dormers from 2 to 1; 2.) amend proposed roof style of front portico from gable to shed; 3.) amend proposed roof style of overhang above attached garage from gable to shed; 4.) install, eliminate and/or alter proposed windows throughout front, left, right and rear elevations.

A motion was made by Secretary Brunell and seconded by Mr. Elias instructing Mr. Demarest to prepare a memo informing the applicant for Case Z-2025-03 (296 Piermont Road/Punla) that the aforementioned deviation requests do not warrant Amendment Approval and are considered de minimis in nature being such would not negatively-impact the relief granted nor would they create new bulk standard deficiencies or excesses, subject to the receipt of revised architecturals indicating the proposed building height does not exceed 28' when measured to the midpoint, not top of highest ridge. The motion passed (5-0):
Yes- Davida; Elias; Brunell; Sabo; Bianco;
No- n/a;
Abstain- n/a;
Late Arrival- Dhorajia;

Due to the Board's heavy caseload, Case Z-2025-11 (437-439 Durie Avenue/Diamond Engineers & Developers, Inc.) was postponed to the February 18, 2026 Meeting.

CLOSED SESSION

n/a;

ADJOURNMENT

10:21pm