

RESOLUTION
Of the
PLANNING BOARD OF THE TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE

Heard: November 5, 2025

Case No.PB-25-08

County of Essex/Turtle Back
Zoo

WHEREAS, pursuant to Municipal Land Use Law N.J.S.A.40:55D-31, the Board heard an application for a proposed capital improvement project by the County of Essex for construction of certain improvements at the Turtle Back Zoo, which is County-owned property located at 560 Northfield Avenue, West Orange, New Jersey, said premises being designated on the municipal tax map as Block 163, Lot 1, Zone R-1; and

WHEREAS, the Board having heard the presentation and having performed its review pursuant to Municipal Land Use Law N.J.S.A.40:55D-31 hereby makes the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

1. The Board accepted into evidence the following exhibits:

<u>SUBMISSION ITEM</u>	<u>SIGNED BY</u>	<u>DATE/REVISION</u>
Aerial Map for the Proposed Hoofstock Barn	French & Parrello Associates	8/25/2025
Conceptual Site Plan for Proposed Hoofstock Barn	French & Parrello Associates	5/17/2025
Architectural Floor Plan and Rendering	Comito Associates, P.C.	Undated
Memorandum for the Proposed Hoofstock Barn	Zayibeth Carballo, PE, PLS, PP CME, CFM of the Township of West Orange Department of Engineering	10/9/2025

Planner's Memorandum	Malvika Apte, PP, AICP, Township of West Orange Consulting Planner	October 31, 2025
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2. Mark Fleder, Esq. of the law firm Connell Foley, LLP represented the Applicant.
3. The County of Essex owns the Turtle Back Zoo.
4. Andrew French, P.E., of French & Parrello, testified on behalf of the County.
5. Essex County is proposing to construct a timber barn within the existing African Adventure exhibit area. The barn will be located within a portion of the existing giraffe yard, just south of the main walkway.
6. The animals to be housed in the barn will include a bongo, which is a hoofstock species.
7. The one-story barn will feature a cedar board-and-batten façade, windows, and a shingle roof.
8. The structure will be approximately 52' x 96' in size and will contain six stalls, an indoor arena, hallways, a mechanical room, and storage space.
9. Two off-exhibit fenced areas, each measuring 20' x 40', will be located on the east and south sides of the bar..
10. Daily maintenance will be completed from the rear of the barn in order to avoid disrupting the visitor experience..
11. The timber barn will be accessed via the existing emergency access and maintenance driveway.
12. The exhibit yard will be designed to resemble the African grasslands and will include lawn areas and deciduous trees chosen to resemble African species, such as honey

locust and will oak. Along the existing pathway, new ornamental grasses and shrubs will be planted..

13. Three (3) new reed-thatch shade structures will be installed within the yard..
14. The conceptual plan shows the construction of a timber barn that is approximately 4,992 S.F. and the creation of two off exhibits totaling 1,600 S.F. with an overall proposed impervious coverage of 13,917 S.F. or .32 acres. The proposed improvements result in impervious coverage that triggers NJDEP stormwater management rules N.J.A.C. 7:8 and the Township's stormwater control ordinance which exceeds the 5,000 S.F. threshold for a Major Development under Chapter 25, Section 29 that was adopted in May 2025.
15. The Applicant's engineer testified that they will comply with all State DEP requirements for stormwater management.
16. The Planning Board's statutory duty pursuant to the Municipal Land Use Law N.J.S.A.40:55D-31 for an application of this type is for "review and recommendation" in conjunction with the West Orange Master Plan.
17. The Township's 2019 Master Plan Update provides an overview of changes to the Zoo and adjacent County facilities since 2010, as well as notes it continued increases in annual attendance.
18. A concern was raised in the Master Plan Update about maintaining a balance between preservation and recreation in South Mountain Reservation. While acknowledging the benefits to West Orange of the County's investment in this facility, the following is noted on page 61 of the December 2019 Master Plan Update:

[T]here are concerns about the amount of development in the Reservation, and the transformation of formerly open areas into active

recreation space and zoo facilities. The Township should continue to work with Essex County to allow for appropriate development without overwhelming what makes the South Mountain Reservation a special place.

19. The current proposal involves redevelopment of existing facilities within an already developed area of the Zoo and therefore would not result in expansion of the Zoo beyond its existing boundaries.
20. The Board finds that the proposed project and capital improvement is not contrary to the Master Plan of the Township of West Orange.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Board of the Township of West Orange that it finds the proposed project and capital improvements are not inconsistent with the Township of West Orange Updated Master Plan.

IT IS FURTHER RECOMMENDED that the following be incorporated into the proposed development:

1. An AED (defibrillator) be installed in the barn area.
2. A confirmation of the total area of proposed impervious coverage for the application (including the barn, paddocks, walkways, and driveway extensions) shall be added to the plans.
3. The Applicant's engineer will discuss the West Orange Stormwater Ordinance requirements with the Township Engineer and will work with the Township to employ any of the Township Ordinance requirements that may not be a DEP requirement.

ADOPTED:

Jamilet Baquerizo Vite
Planning Board Secretary

Vote Action Taken by the Board on November 5, 2025:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
K. Alper			X			
J. Guarino		X	X			
L. Klein						---
S. McCartney			X			
C. Morgan						---
F. Noborine			X			
W. Wilkes						---
S. Scarpa			X			
J. Cardoza			X			
L. Kapferer			X			
R. Bagoff	X		X			

Vote on Memorialization on _____, 2025:

Board Member	Motion	Second	Aye	Nay	Abstain	Absent
K. Alper						
J. Guarino						
L. Klein						
S. McCartney						
C. Morgan						
F. Noborine						
W. Wilkes						
S, Scarpa						
J. Cardoza						
L. Kapferer						
R. Bagoff						