

**DRAFT
MINUTES
TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
November 5, 2025, 7:30 P.M.**

The Township of West Orange Planning Board held its regular meeting on November 5, 2025, at 7:30 P.M. via virtual ZOOM videoconference.

Chairman Bagoff called the meeting to order at approximately 7:30 P.M. He announced that notification of the meeting was given to the Township Clerk, and posted on the Township Bulletin Board, sent to the West Orange Chronicle and the Star Ledger, and posted on the Township's website calendar. This meeting has been properly noticed to the public in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act. No new matters will start after 10:30 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

- *Chairman Bagoff* requested all persons stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next Planning Board special meeting will be held **Wednesday, November 10, 2025, at 6:00 P.M in person.**
- The next Planning Board regular meeting will be held **Wednesday, December 3, 2025, at 7:30 P.M via Zoom.**

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Dr. Robert Bagoff; Mr. Jerry Guarino; Mr. Ken Alper; Mr. John Cardoza; Mr. William Wilkes; Mr. Lee Klein; Mr. Christopher Morgan, Sr.; Mayor Susan McCartney; Mr. Frank Noborine; Councilwoman Susan Scarpa; Ms. Lori Kapferer

ABSENT:

ALSO PRESENT: Diana P. McGovern, Esq., Planning Board Attorney;
Gerry Haizel, Consulting Town Planner;
Jamilet Baquerizo Vite, Planning Board Secretary

MINUTES & RESOLUTIONS

SWEARING IN

- The Township Professional(s) sworn in.

APPLICATIONS

- **PB-25-08 Turtle Back Zoo/Timber Barn
Block: 163 Lot: 1 Zone: R-1**

560 Northfield Avenue

The applicant is looking to install a timber barn within the existing giraffe exhibit area.

PRESENTATION

- Andrew French, the professional engineer, entered on the record, and he was sworn under oath. He testified to the following:
- Mr. French presented the color rendering of the plan that was submitted as part of the application.
- The Essex County is proposing a hoofstock exhibit in the African Adventures section of the Turtleback Zoo.
- Presented on the plan is the existing barn for the giraffe facility on the top right.
- To the right is the lion and the hyena exhibit. Further to the south there is the penguin building. And in the lower center of the site, is where they're proposing the hoofstock barn exhibit area.
- This area isn't an area that's already been disturbed. It's an underutilized portion of the giraffe yard space. That's the area that the hoofstock exhibit is being proposed.
- It will be a one-story timber barn structure, 52x96. Also, as part of the barn, there will be two off-exhibit areas. One on the east side, which is a 20x40 space, and another off-exhibit area, 20x40, on the south side.
- As part of the improvements, the area just to the rear of the proposed barn will be utilized for maintenance purposes by the zoo personnel.
- In order to flatten out the area with the grade change, the applicant is proposing modular block retaining walls, one on the south side that runs along the southern portion of the maintenance yard, and then additional modular block wall on the west side of that maintenance space.
- The walls will be five to six feet in height, but just to change the grade to flatten out that space behind the barn space.
- On the left side of the plan, there's two refuse containers that'll be used for the purposes of managing the hoofstock exhibit space.
- For the stormwater management, what the applicant designed is the area that's to the rear will be consisted of a porous pavement system with uncontrolled runoff from the proposed improvements.
- The porous pavement system is a green infrastructure as part of the NJDEP stormwater rules, and the proposed project will be designed to be consistent with those DEP stormwater management rules.
- They also have an outdoor exhibit area that's associated with the yard space, and it's been designed to resemble an African grassland.
- In addition, there's some shade structures out in the yard area as well, to resemble an African grassland.
- They're also proposing some additional landscaping.
- On the left side of the open yard space, they have additional landscape screening including some evergreen trees, as well as deciduous trees.
- The entire yard space will be fenced in and secure, as well as both of the off-exhibit and outdoor spaces.
- This is not open to the public. Just north of the Hoofstock barn space, there's an elevated walkway. And this will be where the visitors will be able to view and experience the Hoofstock exhibit. But they will not be in the barn or in those outdoor spaces. This area would just be for zoo personnel.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Chairman Bagoff asked Mr. French if he would comply with all the recommendations on page 5 of the Heyer, Gruel & Associates' report dated October 31st, 2025. Mr. French said yes.
- Chairman Bagoff asked if this is ADA-compliant. Mr. French said yes, it would be ADA barrier-free accessible.
- Councilperson Scarpa asked Mr. French if he had reviewed the stormwater management ordinance. Mr. French said they are consistent with the New Jersey DEP stormwater management rules for what they're proposing.
- Vice Chairman Guarino asked on the diagram presented to the left of the hoofstock barn, are those new trees and plantings for this area. Mr. French said yes, there will be new trees on the north, west, and east side. They will be planting about 60 new trees.
- Vice Chairman Guarino asked what type of ground cover is it. Mr. French said it's going to be a long, natural lawn area.
- Chairman Bagoff asked if the trees will be native and non-invasive trees. Mr. French said yes.
- Mr. Noborine asked what size are the 2 refuse containers and how would they be emptied by the facility. Mr. French said they are a 20-foot yard dumpster and as it fills up, the truck comes, drops off an empty one, and picks up the loaded one.
- Mr. Noborine asked with the wall being there, how is there access to do that. Mr. French showed on the plan the existing emergency maintenance driveway within the zoo so that vehicles can traverse through that space. The area where the vehicles will go through is flat and manageable for vehicles.
- Ms. Kapferer asked Mr. French if he has done Geotechnical testing to confirm they could put in the porous pavement. Mr. French said yes, they done soil testing in the subsurface soils for infiltration in this space. They also have an underdrain below to help capture runoff in that stone space.
- Ms. Kapferer asked if there is a maintenance plan for the porous pavement. Mr. French, yes, there's an operation and maintenance manual.
- Ms. Kapferer asked if they are removing trees as part of this project. Mr. French said there are some trees that are in poor conditions that are going to be removed as part of the proposed improvements.
- Ms. Kapferer asked if they would be meeting the town's tree ordinance with the 60 trees that they're planting. Mr. French said they are planting more trees than they're removing.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Chairman Bagoff said based on the board's engineer, Zayibeth Carballo's report, the 3rd and 4th paragraph on page 3, Mr. French will have to talk to her to make sure that this falls within the guidelines of the West Orange Ordinance for Stormwater Management.

NO PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- Sally Malanga at Ridge Road asked Mr. French if he would be willing to provide the tree removal and replacement plan. Mr. Fleder said the details of what's to be planted would be on the construction plans. In terms of what's being removed, they haven't quantified that, other than what Mr. French already testified to, which is that most trees are in poor conditions.
- Lawrence Cohen at Lincoln Ave, West Orange asked how big are the trees that are characterized as poor qualities and what are the replacement trees, what are the sizes, height, and width. Mr. French said they didn't do a full survey of the trees to describe the

size of the ones being removed. The ones they are proposing to plant are the deciduous trees between 2 ½ and 3 ½ caliber and the evergreens trees are between 10 and 12 foot height.

- Lawrence Cohen asked if the large trees that are characterized as poor conditions being cut down because of aesthetic reasons. Mr. French said part of it is there are in poor conditions but it's also to allow the improvements to be constructed.
- Kevin Malanga at Ridge Road asked how many square feet is the area for the new exhibit. Mr. French said the barn itself is 5,000 square foot, the exhibit area is at least 3 times that space in the yard area, so an estimate is 15,000 square feet.
- Kevin Malanga asked what is the space personally used for. Mr. French said it's a portion of the outdoor yard for the giraffe that's underutilized now.
- Kevin Malanga asked Mr. French what does he mean by underutilized. Mr. French said the zoo has put up a fence or barrier that doesn't allow the giraffes to go into that space.
- Kevin Malanga asked when was the fence installed in order to bifurcate the area. Mr. French said he is not sure about that.
- Kevin Malanga asked if the giraffe exhibit area was reduced in order to accommodate the new hoofstock exhibit. Mr. French said the giraffe outdoor yard space was already reduced and now the space that is no longer utilized by the giraffe will be used for this purpose.
- Kevin Malanga asked in order for them to utilize underground stormwater detention tanks, is it necessary for the Township of West Orange to have a stormwater mitigation plan in place. Mr. French said no, their design is in accordance with DEP stormwater management rules and they have an operation and maintenance manual that is being followed.
- Robert Rashkes at 35 Oak Crest Road, West Orange, asked who evaluates the condition of the trees to make the determination that the trees are in poor condition. Mr. French said the landscape architect has been out to the site and advised him that the trees are in poor condition.

PRESENTATION

- Lori Sciabarasi, licensed architect, entered on the record and was sworn under oath. She testified to the following:
- Ms. Sciabarasi presented the ground floor plan that has been provided to the Planning Board as part of the application.
- It is a one-story building.
- The north side of the building has a large arena space, Arena 1 and Arena 2.
- Divided gates are included to break it into smaller areas, or can be one large open space for the animals.
- There are 6 stalls, which are all connected to the arena space.
- At the bottom right corner of the plan, there is a hay storage space, a mechanical space, some enrichment storage, as well as a food prep area with a sink and a refrigerator.
- The keepers have access from the north and south sides. The animals have access out of the arena and out of the stalls, into the exhibit space, and access to the outdoor paddock areas from stall 5.
- The building is 12 feet high to the roof eaves and about 23 ½ feet tall to the ridge.
- They are looking to blend in with the African theme so they have a rustic wood-looking roof, which is asphalt shingles. The exterior siding is rustic timber siding board bat style.
- There is also a large number of windows that are operable for natural ventilation for the animals.
- It is not intended for the public to enter the building.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Vice Chairman Guarino asked if there is a fire suppression built into the system. Ms. Sciabarasi said they have a fire alarm system, other types of alarms, building security, and cameras inside and outside.
- Vice Chairman Guarino asked if there is a sprinkler system or foam system. Ms. Sciabarasi said yes, they will have it.
- Vice Chairman Guarino asked if that is shown on the architect drawing. Ms. Sciabarasi said it will be on the construction drawings which will be submitted to the building department.
- Chairman Bagoff asked how far away from the main buildings this building will be. Ms. Sciabarasi said about 200 feet.
- Chairman Bagoff asked if an AED could be put in place in the building. Ms. Sciabarasi said yes, they will take it under consideration.

NO BOARD COMMENTS

NO PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- Sally Malanga at Ridge Road asked if it's possible to have some shade on the building with trees planted nearby. Ms. Sciabarasi said they would like to have natural light coming into the building.
- Sally Malanga asked if it would not be a benefit of cooling the building with some shade trees. Ms. Sciabarasi said they have ventilation inside the building for the animals.
- Sally Malanga asked if the building takes the place of a building that exists now or is it a brand-new operation. Ms. Sciabarasi said this is a brand-new building.
- Lawrence Cohen at Lincoln Ave, West Orange asked if the building is for the giraffes. Ms. Sciabarasi said no, this is for hoofstock animals like antelope.
- Robert Rashkes at 35 Oak Crest Rd asked if the building will have central heating and central air conditioning. Ms. Sciabarasi said they will have radiant floor heating but will not have air conditioning.
- Robert Rashkes asked if it will be safe for the people who have to take care of the animals. Ms. Sciabarasi said yes, there is ventilation in the building.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Sally Malanga said she appreciates the drawings that the engineer and the architect has provided but there still seems to be a lot of vagueness in this project. Some of it related to safety, especially of the animals. The temperature inside the building is unknown and if it's adequately ventilated. Ms. Malanga feels the health of the trees being cut down are unknown as well as the sizes of the trees being planted. Ms. Malanga requests that the board get more details on everything from stormwater to the safety of the animals and the people working in that area before the zoo goes forward and builds this facility.
- Kevin Malanga said this project should not be approved because it does not comply with NJDEP regulations. Mr. Malanga said in order to utilize underground storage tanks, the Township has to have in place a stormwater mitigation plan but the Township does not have that. The applicant has to obtain a waiver from the DEP pursuant to NJAC 7:8-4.6
- Robert Rashkes said he is concerned about health and safety at the zoo. If there are going to be people working in the new building without air conditioning in the summer then there could be heat exhaustion and create a medical emergency. The West Orange Fire Department would be responsible to come out to the zoo since the zoo doesn't have its

own ambulance rescue service.

CONDITIONS

- The applicant must satisfy the DEP standards.

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Mr. Guarino

Alper: Y	Morgan: ---
Bagoff: Y	Scarpa: Y
Cardoza (Alt.2): Y	Noborine: Y
Guarino: Y	Wilkes: ---
Kapferer: Y	
Klein: ---	
Mayor McCartney: Y	

- **PB-25-03 Kantor**

Block: 166.13 Lot: 1 Zone: RC

9 Schindler Terrace

The applicant is proposing to expand an existing deck, which extends 5' from the property to a deck that extends 10' from the property.

PRESENTATION

- The applicant, Jeff Kantor, stated that this variance was applied for and approved between 2006 and 2007; however, the variance expired in 2009.
- Mike Lanzafama, licensed professional engineer, entered on the record and was sworn under oath. He testified to the following:
- Mr. Lanzafama clarified that the deck extends 5 feet from the back of the existing condo unit. They're extending it an additional 5 feet. They're more than 45 feet from the property line.
- The applicants are owners of 9 Schindler Terrace, which is in building 1. The townhouse buildings are a cluster of 6 units. There are 8 buildings in the entire project.
- In 2007, an application was made to have a number of the decks extended, and anybody that was not part of that would have to come back to the board. However, that variance has expired.
- The property is located in the RC zone, adjoining the property to the West is their 50-foot setback also known as the natural state buffer which is also 50 feet wide.
- The setback to the rear property line would be 45.25 feet if the deck were to be extended 5 feet.
- The setback area is currently occupied by brick patios that are already behind the homes and were part of the homes as part of the original construction.
- There is an extensive amount of wooded area that exists to the west of the buildings. The municipal boundary line is also there with the Township of Livingston.
- The nearest single-family residential structure to the proposed deck is over 150 feet away

in the Township of Livingston. This is a significant amount of separation.

- The variance being requested could be granted under the C2 criteria.
- The purpose of zoning is to provide adequate light, air, and open space and Mr. Lanzafama believes that this does that.
- The extension of the deck gives a proper amenity space for the applicant.
- While they have a deck now, it's at a much lower level and gets shaded in and constricted by the wooded and buffer area that exists along the west boundary line.
- Mr. Lanzafama doesn't see any significant negative impact to the Master plan or the zoning ordinance as a result of this.
- It's not visible from Schindler Terrace and not visible from the adjoining property owners to the West in the Township of Livingston.
- There are several other decks that exists in a similar circumstance in the area, such as street number 1, their deck extends out the 10 feet.
- Mr. Lanzafama doesn't see any negative impact to the public good as a result of this request.
- They received memos from the board planner dated June 28th, 2025 and from the board engineer, Matrix New World, dated June 23rd, 2025. There were no concerns by either party.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Mayor McCartney asked if there are any HOA policies that the applicant needs to adhere to. Mr. Kantor said there are no HOA policies that relate to the extension of the deck.

NO BOARD COMMENTS

NO PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

NO PUBLIC QUESTIONS

NO PUBLIC COMMENT

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Councilwoman Scarpa

Alper:	Y	Morgan:	---
Bagoff:	Y	Scarpa:	Y
Cardoza (Alt.2):	Y	Noborine:	Y
Guarino:	Y	Wilkes:	---
Kapferer:	Y		
Klein:	---		
Mayor McCartney:	Y		

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 P.M.

ADOPTED:

Jamilet Baquerizo Vite
Planning Board Secretary.

Panelist Information:

● **PB-25-08 Turtle Back Zoo/Timber Barn**

- Attorney: Mark L. Fleder, Esq., c/o Connell Foley, LLP (mfleder@connellfoley.com) Cell: (862-485-5321)
- Sanjeev Varghese, County's Director of Public Works (svarghese@essexcountynj.org) Cell: (973) 332-6817
- Andrew French, Consulting Engineer, c/o French & Parrello Associates (Andrew.French@FPAEngineers.com) Cell: (732) 255-3395
- Grimaldi Bissainthe, Senior County Engineer c/o Essex County Public Works (gbissainthe@essexcountynj.org) Cell: (973) 487—6507
- Jilian Fazio, TB Zoo Director (jfazio@parks.essexcountynj.org) Cell: (201) 341-1279
- Kate Hartwyk, County Deputy Director of Parks (khartwyk@parks.essexcountynj.org) Cell: (973) 418-5423
- Lorrie Sciarbarasi, Architect, c/o Comito and Associates (Lsciarbarasi@comitoassociates.com) Cell: (973) 476-2048
- Michael Piga, Landscape Architect c/o French & Parrello Associates (Michael.Piga@FPAengineers.com) Cell: (732) 673-0110

● **PB-25-03 Kantor**

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