



**Consulting & Municipal
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January 15, 2026

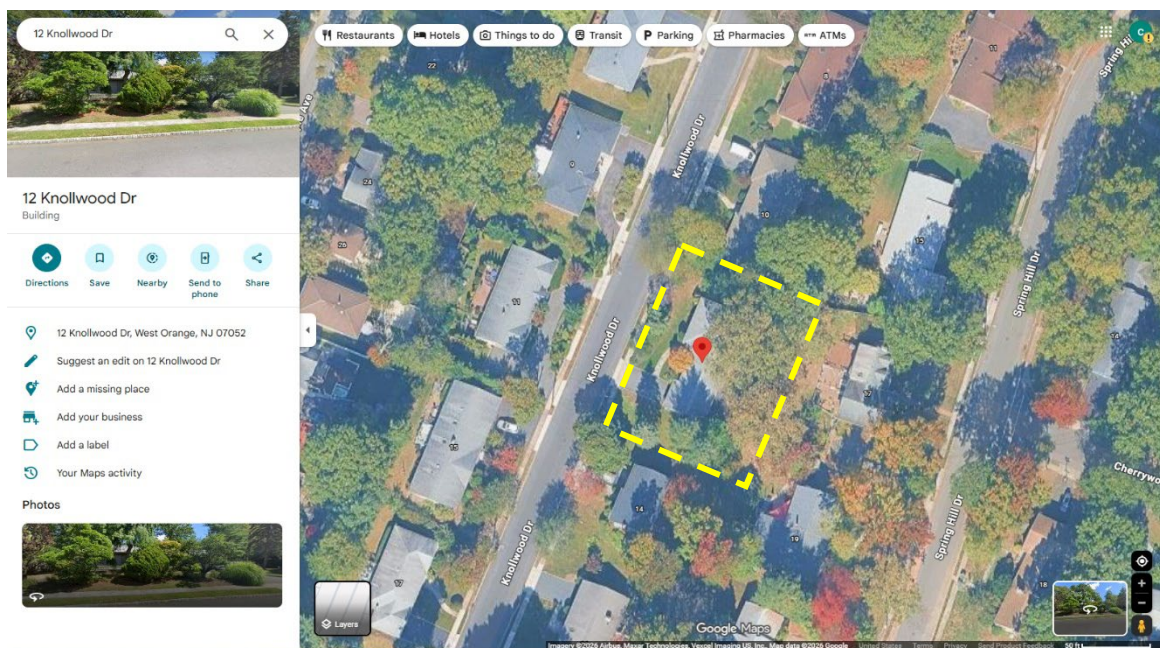
West Orange Township – Zoning Board
66 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052

**Re: John & Myra Pullman – Planning Review #1
12 Knollwood Drive
Block 161.06, Lot 21
Zone: R-4 Residential**

Dear Chairman and Board Members:

1. Summary

The property is located at 12 Knollwood Drive, surrounded by existing single family homes and near the Rock Spring Golf Club, South Mountain Reservation, and Essex County Turtle Back Zoo. The applicant proposes to construct a new reading room and deck in the rear of an existing ranch style single family home with a two-car garage. The property's existing rear yard setback does not conform to the R-4 bulk requirements. A bulk variance is required for a continuing encroachment into the required rear yard setback.



CONSULTING AND MUNICIPAL ENGINEERS LLC

NJ CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORIZATION NO. 24GA28359000

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2. Property and Project Description

The property is located at 12 Knollwood Drive, mid-block between Walker Road and Hillcrest Avenue, and near recreational amenities such as the Rock Spring Golf Club, South Mountain Reservation, and Essex County Turtle Back Zoo in the southern end of the Township. The property is approximately 95.12' x 120.57' (11,469 square feet or 0.26 acres) in area and is developed with a ranch style single family home.

Surrounding the site are other ranch style single family dwellings on similarly sized lots.

The applicant is proposing to construct a reading room (168 s.f.) and replace an existing deck (638.5 s.f.) with a deck reduced in size (440 sqft) within the rear yard of the existing home. The proposed deck includes stairs on the left side consisting of two wooden steps measuring 2 inches by 12 inches.

3. Zoning Compliance

The property is located within the R-4 Residential district of the Township. Single family dwellings are permitted as principal uses in the district.

All development in the R-4 district is subject to the following bulk requirements:

R-4 Zone Bulk Requirements			
	Required	Proposed	Variance
Minimum Lot Area	15,000 s.f.	11,469 s.f.	ENC
Minimum Lot Width	100 feet	120.57 feet	No
Minimum Front Yard	30 feet	30 feet	No
Minimum Side Yard	15 feet + 10 feet	10 feet (north/ left) / 15 feet (south/ right)	No
Minimum Rear Yard	35 feet	14 feet (existing) 18.5 feet (proposed)	ENC
Maximum Building Coverage	30%	22.57% (existing) 24.02% (proposed)	No
Maximum Impervious Coverage	40%	35.18% (existing) 34.89% (proposed)	No
Maximum Building Height	2.5 story / 35 feet	1 story / 16.8 feet	No

4. Variances & Waivers Required



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It appears that the following variances will be required of this application as proposed:

- a. **§25 Attachment 3 Minimum Lot Area** – The minimum required lot area is 15,000 square feet, where the lot area is 11,469 square feet. This is an existing non-conforming condition.
- b. **§25 Attachment 3 Minimum Rear Yard** – The minimum required rear yard setback is 35 feet. The existing rear yard setback is 14 feet, which is proposed to be increased to 18.5 feet. This represents an existing non-conforming condition that will be brought closer to conformity with the zoning requirements.

5. Master Plan

The Township's Master Plan was last re-examined in 2019. The December 2019 Reexamination Report does not specifically address decks or setbacks within the R-4 district. However, one of the Master Plan's primary goals is to preserve the Township's neighborhoods.

6. Planning Comments

- a. The applicant will require a bulk variance to permit the development of a deck that is within the required minimum rear yard setback. For any bulk or 'c' variance, the applicant must address both the positive and negative criteria:
 - i. Positive: The applicant must show that either there is a practical hardship or undue burden in complying with the requirements of the ordinance (c-1 hardship variance), or that the proposed conditions are a preferable alternative to compliance with the code, that the proposed conditions would advance one of the purposes of zoning, and that the benefits of doing so would outweigh any detrimental impacts (c-2 flexible variance).
 - ii. Negative: The applicant must demonstrate that the variance can be granted without substantial detrimental impacts on the public good – meaning that allowing the deck to encroach into the setback would have a substantial negative impact on the quality of life for nearby residents or character of the surrounding community. The applicant must also show that granting the variance would not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the zoning plan.
- b. We note that the existing property is non-conforming in terms of lot area and rear yard setback for the requirements of the R-4 district. These are both existing non-conforming conditions. The proposed application would improve compliance with the rear yard setback requirements, while the lot area will remain unchanged.
- c. It appears that the other homes on Knollwood Drive have decks within the rear yard, that may also encroach into required setbacks.



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- d. We defer any comment on grading, drainage, utilities, and stormwater management to the Board Engineer.

If you have any questions about this report, please do not hesitate to reach out to our office.

Sincerely,

CME Associates

Christopher N. Dochney – PP, AICP
Board Planner

cc: Geniece Gary-Adams – Zoning Official
Zayibeth Carballo, PE, PLS, PP, CME, CFM. – Township Engineer
Steve Warner, Esq. – Board Attorney
Alexander Fisher, Esq. – Board Attorney
John Hess, PE, PP. – Board Engineer
John & Myra Pullman – Applicant
William Figdor, AIA – Applicant's Architect



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7. Materials Submitted

The following materials have been submitted and reviewed in association with this application:

- Application form and submission checklists dated December 8, 2025;
- Three (3) sheet set of architectural drawings prepared by William Figdor, AIA, dated December 01, 2025;
- One (1) sheet property survey prepared by Richlan, Lupo, & Associates, dated March 18, 2025;
- One (1) page variance justification report prepared by William Figdor, AIA, dated December 9, 2025;