

**MINUTES
TOWNSHIP OF WEST ORANGE
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
June 24, 2026, 7:30 P.M.**

The Township of West Orange Planning Board held a special meeting on June 24, 2026, 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 Planner Board regular meeting will be held **Wednesday, July 1, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.** via Zoom.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Chairman Robert Bagoff; Mr. Jerry Guarino;
Mayor Susan McCartney; Mr. Lee Klein; Mr. John Cardoza; Mr.
Ken Alper; Mr. Christopher Morgan, Sr.

ABSENT: Mr. William Wilkes; Mr. Frank Noborine; Ms. Lori Kapferer;
Councilwoman Susan Scarpa

ALSO PRESENT: Diana P. McGovern, Esq., Planning Board Attorney;
Jamilet Baquerizo Vite, Planning Board Secretary

MINUTES & RESOLUTIONS

4-15-26-WO-PB-Draft-Minutes

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Mr. Guarino

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

Kapferer: ----	Wilkes: ---
Klein: Y	

SWEARING IN

- The Township Professionals: Mr. Ryan MacNeil (Consultant Engineer) and Ms. Apte (Consultant Planner) were sworn under oath.

APPLICATIONS

- **PB26-04, Orange Prospect LLC**
111 Prospect Avenue
Block 151 Lot 17.01 Zone B2

The applicant is requesting amended site improvements to the existing approved use, including a reconfigured parking area, circulation, landscaping, lighting, and Phase 2 construction involving additional improvements to the existing building.

PRESENTATION

- The attorney, Kenneth McPherson, appeared on behalf of Orange Prospect LLC.
- Mr. McPherson explained that the property has an approved use, most recently approved in 2025, as a restaurant and venue facility, formerly known as The Manor,
 - Will be known as The Estate in the future, while maintaining the same use as the Manor.
- Mr. McPherson states that under application PB25-02, the Planning Board memorialized its approval on June 4, 2025, granting preliminary and final major site plan approval.
- That approval included site parking, occupancy, impervious coverage, tree replacement, and related improvements.
- Mr. McPherson explains that the current application seeks amended preliminary and final site plan approval for additional renovations to the buildings on the site,
 - As well as a new configuration for the rear parking lot and related circulation, drainage, landscaping, and lighting improvements.
- Mr. McPherson states that the applicant is also seeking a soil removal permit and a tree replacement and removal permit for the additional removal of five trees, which will be replaced according to the Township's required ratio.
- The applicant is also requesting an extension of time to complete tree replacement that was required under the 2025 approval.
- Mr. McPherson says the applicant is seeking variances, to the extent they are determined to be necessary, as well as waivers.
- The potential waivers include
 - 50-foot residential buffer
 - The parking row length, because the plan includes a row of 26 spaces where 20 spaces are permitted before a landscape break is required
 - Lighting along the walkway, parking, street, and property line
 - Certain wall and fence standards
 - Certain free-standing sign standards
 - Potentially a waiver under a specific provision of the Township's stormwater retention standards.

- Mr. McPherson notes that the stormwater retention provision was discussed with the Board engineer during the SPRAB meeting held on June 9
- The architect and engineer, Mike Petry, entered on the record; he was sworn under oath. He testified to the following:
 - Mr. Petry begins his presentation with Exhibit A1 Colorized Site Plan.
 - Mr. Petry explains that the property contains a total of 8.3 acres, with approximately 1,070 feet of frontage along Prospect Avenue and another 166 feet of frontage along Woodland Avenue.
 - The subject property and the hotel parcel to its right are both located in the B2 Zone.
 - Mr. Petry explains that the properties to the rear, along Seaman Road and Deerfield Drive, are in the R6 Zone.
 - Mr. Petry emphasizes that the hotel property contains an easement providing 124 parking spaces for the exclusive use of the restaurant and catering facility.
 - o He explains that this easement was established as part of the approvals for the hotel decades ago.
 - Mr. Petry states that he has worked with the Knowles family on this property and their other properties since 1985.
 - During that time, he has prepared all of the site plans for both the restaurant and catering facility and the hotel.
 - Mr. Petry explains that he was involved in the 1993 application process when the subdivision separating the two uses was developed.
 - Mr. Petry also describes his involvement with the two-phase renovation of the Manor.
 - He developed the concept plans and final plans and worked with Harry Knowles, his sons Kurt Sr. and Wade, and two of his grandchildren, Kurt Jr. and Carrie, on the build-out of the improvements.
 - Mr. Petry explains that the first phase of the renovation, which included the installation of the first elevator serving the facility as well as the first-floor lobby and lounge areas, was approved by the Technical Review Committee in 2012.
 - Mr. Petry states that the last full Planning Board application was in 2013 for the second phase of the renovation.
 - That phase included a rooftop addition containing a small banquet room on the second floor that overlooked the gardens in front of the property, Prospect Avenue, and the reservation.
 - Mr. Petry explains that the 2013 approval also included a second phase that has not yet been implemented but was reviewed and approved by the Board.
 - o That portion involved changing part of the carriage house from residential use to serve the à la carte dining area on the first floor.
 - Mr. Petry notes that the more current approvals for the space reference a 1996 Planning Board approval, which limited the restaurant and banquet facility to a maximum occupancy of 1,404 people and provided for a total of 434 parking spaces.
 - o Of those 434 spaces, 124 spaces are part of the easement located on the hotel property.
 - Mr. Petry explains that in May 2025, the applicant appeared before the Board with the first phase of the renovation plan for the Estate.
 - That phase included renovation of the front portion of the building, generally from the entrance toward the east.
 - Mr. Petry says the 2025 work also included renovation of the front courtyard where the fountains are located, renovation of the front parking lot, and changes to the two driveways.

- Mr. Petry refers to SP3, explaining that the colorized version of that plan will be identified as A2.
- Mr. Petry explains that under the first-phase plan, the entry driveway remained generally in the same location but was changed at the entrance.
- A portico was added in front of the building as part of that approval.
- The exit driveway was realigned to create a flatter area at the top.
- Mr. Petry states that the front parking lot was reconfigured with landscape islands.
 - o Despite reducing the impervious area, the applicant actually increased the number of striped parking spaces within the lot.
- Mr. Petry recalls that the Board also approved regrading the courtyard around the fountains so that people could walk directly from the existing front portion of the facility into the patio in an ADA-accessible manner.
- Mr. Petry explains that the applicant had told the Board during the first phase that it had a second phase in mind.
 - o However, the applicant needed to move the first phase forward quickly because of issues affecting the front of the property.
 - o After receiving the Board's approval for the first phase, the applicant is now addressing the rear portion of the property.
- Mr. Petry says the second phase concerns the back half of the Manor building, the proposed restaurant building, and the renovation of Parking Lot C to accommodate the restaurant.
- Mr. Petry explains that the current application seeks to amend the approval granted the previous year.
- Rather than moving only the lobby and bar into the carriage house, as previously approved, the applicant now proposes to move the entire restaurant into the first floor of the carriage house.
- From a site perspective, Mr. Petry describes a complete overhaul of the valet parking lot.
- The redesign includes substantial landscape islands and additional handicapped parking spaces.
- Mr. Petry recalls that the Board had previously discussed a public/private garden that will wrap around the carriage house.
 - o The new plan provides handicapped parking to serve both access to the garden for people with disabilities and access to the area that has historically served as a ceremony area.
- Mr. Petry moves to the detailed layout for the rear portion of the property, identifying it as SP5.3 in the plan set and stating that the colorized version will be identified as A3.
- Mr. Petry explains that the applicant had promised the Board it would look at providing additional handicapped parking and additional EV parking.
- Under the new plan, handicapped parking spaces have been positioned so they can provide access to both the public garden and the ceremony area.
- Mr. Petry explains that the handicapped parking spaces are immediately adjacent to the structure historically used as the ceremony area.
- A handicap-accessible walkway has been created to bring users up to the level of both the garden and ceremony area.
- Mr. Petry states that the plan adds six additional EV parking spaces, resulting in an overall increase of nine parking stalls compared with the existing parking count.
- Mr. Petry says the rear parking area has also been striped for compact spaces, reflecting how those spaces have historically been used even though they were not previously striped that way.

- Mr. Petry explains that the sidewalk has been extended across the entire rear parking area up to the ceremony area.
 - This will allow patrons parking in the rear area to access the front entrance of both the restaurant and the banquet facility.
- Mr. Petry explains that the restaurant will have two additions.
 - One addition will occupy what is currently a parking court in front of the building.
 - Because the area is already impervious and has walls on both sides, the applicant proposes covering it to create an indoor dining area.
 - The second addition involves using a portion of the existing greenhouse area and extending the rear of the building with a glass enclosure, which will serve as a lounge for the restaurant.
- Mr. Petry explains that the restaurant's kitchen will be located at the existing garage level, which is situated almost at the basement level of the building.
- Mr. Petry discusses the area historically used for seating during ceremonies at the Manor.
- The lawn outside the covered ceremony structure will be replaced with turf, which he says will make the area more practical following inclement weather.
- In the garden area, Mr. Petry says the applicant has chosen to relocate the gazebo.
- He explains that the new location is intended to create a “picture-perfect opportunity” because the gazebo will be directly ahead as people walk into the area from the front of the building.
 - A large, dense landscaping berm at the rear of the property will provide a backdrop.
- Mr. Petry states that the existing fountain, which has sustained damage over time, will be replaced with a new fountain in the same general location and at the same general height and elevation.
- Mr. Petry explains that the walkways have been simplified to provide a more straightforward approach to the facility.
- Mr. Petry also explains that the walkways along the rear of the building have been combined into a raised porch area.
- The existing small open porch will be extended toward the walkway, allowing people arriving from the rear either to access the porch or proceed down toward the fountain.
 - The fountain will remain at its historic elevation.
- Mr. Petry states that the applicant has submitted a new lighting plan.
- He explains that the lighting approach is similar to what was approved for the front portion of the property during Phase 1.
- Mr. Petry explains that the Phase 1 lighting plan included 12- and 15-foot light fixtures, and the applicant has carried those same fixtures into the rear parking area, Parking Lot C.
- The same lighting has also been extended into Parking Lot D, which straddles the property line between the restaurant property and the hotel.
- Mr. Petry states that all lighting serving the facility will be entirely new and will consist of LED fixtures on 12- and 15-foot-high poles, with all fixtures being dark-sky compliant and directed downward.
- Mr. Petry emphasizes that the new lighting plan eliminates all of the existing floodlights and replaces them with an entirely new lighting system.
- Mr. Petry explains that the plan calls for the removal of five trees, located generally along the buildings.
 - Two of the trees are within the garden area
 - Three are along the existing stairs.

- The tree removal application has been submitted to the forester.
- Mr. Petry states that 10 trees will be planted as replacements.
- The purpose of the replacement trees is to screen the parking area from people entering the property through the driveway.
- Mr. Petry explains that the landscaping is intended to make the approach to the property feel more formal.
- Mr. Petry says the applicant is committed to additional landscaping throughout the facility and notes that the owner generally plants in excess of the required amount.
- The tree replacement plan includes arborvitae along the landscape island to separate and screen the parking area from people entering the property.
- Mr. Petry then addresses a question concerning whether a fire truck can turn through the site during Phase 2.
 - He explains that a similar turning template was provided for Phase 1 showing that a fire truck could enter through the entry driveway and exit through the exit driveway.
- For Phase 2, Mr. Petry says the fire truck can enter through the entry driveway, circulate through the parking area, and return to the exit driveway, completing the necessary circulation.
- Mr. Petry also explains that the applicant is seeking an extension for the balance of the planting required under Phase 1, because the applicant has had difficulty obtaining the larger trees required for the site and was running out of time to complete the planting.
 - The applicant therefore filed for an extension with the hope of obtaining and planting the trees in the fall.
- The Board engineer, Mr. McPherson, explains that the Township Code allows the Planning Board to grant the requested extension.
 - He says the requested extension would run through the next planting season, which, based on the applicant's research, could extend through the end of the fall and potentially into the spring, with the exact timing to be worked out with the Township Forester.
 - Mr. McPherson adds that even if the applicant were able to obtain all of the larger replacement trees immediately, installing them by the existing deadline could interfere with the site's construction and development and could potentially result in the trees being damaged.
- Mr. Petry explains that the trees cannot be planted until the landscape islands in which they will be placed have been constructed.
- In some areas, the islands do not yet exist because the driveway has not yet been relocated.
- Mr. Petry says the applicant has received county approval for its Phase 1 work and therefore has the ability to begin construction on the relocation of the exit driveway.
- The applicant also has soil erosion approval and can begin that work.
- Mr. McPherson notes that, as a practical matter, trees are typically installed toward the end of site development.
 - Mr. Petry agrees and explains that the islands must first be constructed, followed by the pavement, lighting conduits, and lighting fixtures, after which the trees can be planted.
- Mr. Petry identifies A100 as the architectural plan for the existing building.
- Mr. Petry explains that there is a vestibule leading into a lobby area, with the lobby being a two-story space created during the Phase 1 work.
- The elevator is located toward the rear, with lounge areas nearby.

- Mr. Petry identifies the Manor Room as the room historically used for the à la carte dining and lobster buffet.
- He explains that the lounge was used for private or public dining, with a bar also located in the area, while the Virginia Room served as a banquet room.
- Mr. Petry explains that the current proposal involves modifications to the existing spaces.
- The former Manor Room will become the Sinatra Room, and notes that the room is located directly off the kitchen.
- Mr. Petry states that structural issues previously identified in the Manor Room have been addressed as part of the proposed structural renovation.
- Mr. Petry explains that the former dining area will become more of a lounge area, while the Virginia Room and the greenery will be opened up and combined into one pre-function space.
 - o The pre-function area will be able to spill over into the Sinatra Room when necessary.
- Mr. Petry explained that the existing patio will be extended across the width of the room and will also be covered.
- The completed rear of the building will have an updated appearance while maintaining the character of the existing structure.
- Mr. Petry described the existing rear elevation, noting that it has the same type of sloped glass that was discussed on the front of the building, along with a mansard-style roof that previously accommodated second-floor office space.
- Mr. Petry explained that much of the office space has been removed, with the intention of raising the ceiling in the area and providing larger windows and a colonnade along the rear of the building.
- The proposed changes will allow people to come through the bump-out doors onto the patio, with windows opening onto the patio across the rear of the building.
- Mr. Petry explained that the existing sloped glass area at the rear will be lifted to provide a larger span of windows and bring more natural light into the space.
- The ceiling height will also be increased because multiple ceilings were found in the existing space.
 - o The work will strip the area down to a single ceiling.
- Mr. Petry noted that the roof has already been replaced as part of the work completed to date.
- The rear façade will receive a fresh look while remaining classic in its architectural integrity.
- Mr. Petry discussed the existing carriage house and its first-floor plan.
 - o He described it as a Z-shaped or S-shaped building.
- The existing first floor includes
 - o Greenhouse area off the foyer
 - o Living room
 - o Powder room near the stairs
 - o Dining room
 - o Kitchen
 - o Bedrooms in the rear
- Mr. Petry explained that this was the house that Harry Knowles moved into when he opened the property in 1956.
 - o Mr. Knowles and his wife raised their sons, Kurt and Wade, in the house.
- Mr. Petry explained that in the 1970s, the family modified the second floor.
 - o The modification included a separate kitchen and a four-bedroom space.

- The second-floor space was later used to house the chefs for both the Manor and the High Lawn Pavilion throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2020s, before the facility shut down.
- Mr. Petry emphasized that the layout and fixtures within these spaces are quite old.
- Mr. Petry explained that the second floor is accessed from the interior through the first floor, but there is also an exterior entrance.
- There are stairs on both the east and west sides of the building that lead to a balcony, with a doorway providing access to the second-floor apartment.
- Mr. Petry stated that the intention is to eliminate the residential use on the first floor and eliminate the residential use in the front portion of the second floor.
- The remaining front portion of the second floor will be used for a bathroom and locker rooms for restaurant staff.
- Mr. Petry explained that the balance of the second-floor space will remain a two-bedroom, one-study apartment and will have exterior access.
- Mr. Petry showed that the stairs come up to a porch facing the parking lot.
- There are three doors on the façade, two of which are dummy doors included only for aesthetic purposes.
- The third door is the actual entrance to the apartment.
 - o Mr. Petry explained that the door is located on an intermediate level, which he referred to as a “tweener,” rather than directly on the first or second floor.
- Mr. Petry emphasized that this is an exterior entrance that services only the apartment and does not provide access to any other portion of the building.
- Mr. Petry referred to the restaurant exhibit and explained that the same floor plan shows the stairs, the exterior entrance, and the stairs leading into the apartment.
 - o He also noted that there is a rear stair that comes up to the same area.
- Mr. Petry explained that the stairs lead to a mid-level patio facing the parking lot.
- Mr. Petry explained that the proposed plan closes up the wall separating the apartment from the staff area.
- The apartment will also contain a study overlooking the dining area, a living/dining room, and a kitchen.
- Mr. Petry clarified the proposed square footage of the second-floor uses: approximately 1,845 square feet for the two-bedroom apartment and 525 square feet for restaurant staff use.
- Mr. Petry noted that the diagram identifies the square footage of these areas, as well as the individual square footage of the rooms, so that the information is included in the record
- Mr. Petry then moved on to discuss the requested variances.
- Mr. Petry stated that the project will eliminate a long-time historic non-conformance involving impervious coverage on the property.
- He reminded the board that during Phase 1, the project reduced impervious coverage despite increasing the number of parking spaces.
 - o This was accomplished by reconfiguring the parking, adding landscape islands within the parking area, relocating the driveway, and providing additional landscape area along the driveway.
- The property will now comply with the 60% limitation, with impervious coverage reduced to 59.76%.
- Mr. Petry stated that all other existing nonconformances are unaffected by the proposed improvements.
- Mr. Petry addressed the planner's indication that a variance may be required for 26 parking spaces without an island.

- He believed those 26 spaces are located in the front and explained that those spaces, along with another 29 spaces, were all part of the Phase 1 plan.
- Mr. Petry stated that if the board determines that variances are necessary for those spaces despite their inclusion in Phase 1, he would provide proofs for the variances.
- He emphasized that the landscaping within those parking lots is being improved through the addition of landscape islands.
- Mr. Petry also discussed the parking along the common property line with the hotel.
- He identified 22 to 28 existing spaces in that area and stated that those spaces are existing, with the project only reconfiguring Lot C in that location.
 - Mr. Petry said that if the board considers those spaces to require variances, he will also provide proof for those variances.
- Mr. Petry stated that if the board is hesitant to grant the variances, the applicant will add islands and reduce the parking count.
- He reminded the board that the project is increasing parking by 15 spaces, so even if several spaces are removed to accommodate additional islands, the property would still increase its parking count by approximately 10 spaces.
- Mr. Petry then addressed the driveways and explained that the project needed to confirm their configuration.
- The northerly driveway from Prospect Avenue to the parking lot functions as an ingress driveway and is one-way into the site.
- Mr. Petry explained that from the northerly driveway to the parking lot intersection, traffic is one-way entering the property.
- From the drop-off area at the front doors of the Manor, where Lot B intersects the driveway, traffic traveling east uses an exit driveway.
 - Mr. Petry emphasized that the eastern driveway has always been one-way out and will remain one-way out.
- The purpose of the configuration is to allow people arriving for a banquet to queue without backing out onto the road.
- The configuration also allows vehicles to queue without having incoming and outgoing traffic interfere with one another, with left-turn traffic able to form one lane and right-turn traffic able to form another.
- Mr. Petry stated that this is how the property has always operated and that the project has improved the condition by increasing the flat area at the top of the driveway.
- Mr. Petry then discussed several other existing conditions and potential variances.
- He addressed a new stormwater management ordinance that was adopted in May 2025.
- Mr. Petry explained that the new ordinance requires storage for 50% of the existing stormwater runoff for the two-year storm.
- He stated that he was not certain whether the ordinance applies because the current proposal is a modification to an application that was filed before the ordinance was adopted.
- If the ordinance is applicable, Mr. Petry argued that the project is making significant improvements to stormwater runoff conditions because impervious coverage is being reduced.
- Mr. Petry emphasized that although this is a major development, the project will reduce stormwater runoff in every storm and will reduce the total volume of runoff, not simply the peak runoff.
- He explained that while detention can prevent an increase in peak runoff, this project will actually decrease both the peak and the total volume of runoff.
- Mr. Petry then discussed the gazebo as another potential variance.

- He explained that the gazebo has been relocated to a location within the 50-foot residential setback.
- Mr. Petry stated that the relocation was intentional because of the walkway leading directly toward the rear of the property.
 - o The walkway had previously been offset in order to accommodate the gazebo.
- Mr. Petry argued that, given the existing berm and evergreen trees along the berm, there is more than a sufficient buffer and the gazebo will never be visible from the properties on the rear of Deerfield.
- Mr. Petry stated that if the board disagrees, the applicant will relocate the gazebo
- Mr. Petry also discussed the request for an increase in occupancy
- He stated that if the board is uncomfortable with the requested occupancy or wants additional landscape islands in the parking lot, the applicant will find a way to work with the conditions imposed.
- Mr. Petry clarified that the occupancy would apply to both the banquet facility and the restaurant.
- Mr. Petry addressed the EV spaces and explained that the applicant expects that the EV spaces will likely all be installed at the same time, although Phase 1 and Phase 2 may be separated if permitted by code.
- Mr. Petry then addressed lighting and the variance identified for light spillage into the right-of-way.
- He stated that the lighting was designed that way intentionally and that the lighting configuration was part of Phase 1.
- If the board determines that the light spillage should be treated as a variance, Mr. Petry argued that good intersection design calls for intersections to be well lit.
- He stated that the entry and exit driveways are appropriately lit and that the two entry driveways are the only locations where there is spillage into the right-of-way.
- Mr. Petry argued that having a “splash of light” at these locations is good design because it improves visibility at the intersections.
- He acknowledged that there is also some light overlap onto the neighboring hotel property, but explained that the parking in that area is part of the facility.
 - o He therefore believes that this condition should also be appropriately granted if the board determines that a variance is required.
- Mr. Petry addressed signage.
- He explained that the intention is for the existing signs to remain and be reused at the same size and in the same locations.
- If the existing signs are considered variances despite being existing conditions, the applicant will request those variances
- Mr. Petry emphasized that the applicant is not requesting an increase in signage or a general relocation of the signage.
- He noted that the exit driveway sign stating “exit only” may be relocated into the new island of the exit driveway because the driveway itself is moving slightly.
- Mr. Petry concluded that, globally, the project can be considered under a C2 standard and that there are substantial benefits to the proposal.
- He identified the relocation of the driveways as a benefit because it creates a safer transportation route.
- He identified the increase in parking as another benefit because it creates a more effective operation.
- He also emphasized the reduction in impervious coverage as a major benefit.
- Mr. Petry stated that the project globally improves the site while providing renovations that retain its character and history.

- Mr. Petry stated that the project does not create any substantial detriment and does not affect the existing landscape buffer in the rear.
- He characterized the improvements as internal and stated that every part of the property that has been touched by the project has been improved.
- Mr. Petry specifically pointed to the decision to move the entire restaurant into the carriage house as an improvement because it brings the facility closer to conformance with the ordinance.
- Mr. Petry stated that the applicant believes it has met the standard of proof and presented an exceptional project to the board, and he asked the board for its consideration and approval.

BOARD QUESTIONS

- Chairman Bagoff asked about the latest stormwater management iteration. He asked whether documentation could be provided showing that the proposed changes, including the decrease in impervious coverage and addition of green spaces, would address residual stormwater management from the two-year flood on the site without requiring separate holding tanks. Mr. Petry stated that he believed the stormwater management report already addressed this.
- Chairman Bagoff asked how many tree islands would be required if the applicant were to install islands in both parking lots to eliminate areas with more than 20 parking spaces in a row. Mr. Petry explained that the parking row fronting Prospect Avenue, which was part of Phase 1, contains 26 spaces and would require one island. The parking area abutting the driveway in Lot B contains 29 spaces and would require another island. He then explained that the existing parking in Lot C toward the hotel side has a row of 22 spaces requiring one island, another row with 28 spaces requiring another island, and a back row with 23 compact spaces requiring a fifth island.
- Mayor McCartney asked if there are other options than the turf. She suggested considering an alternative such as porous damp concrete or another material. Mr. Petry said they could certainly look at alternatives. He stated that he was not aware of porous stamped concrete but knew that porous concrete was available.
 - Mr. McPherson stated they are willing to look into alternatives
- Mayor McCartney wondered whether the apartment might be used by guests, such as a bride or groom, similar to arrangements at Pleasantdale Chateau where a room is available for people attending an event. Mr. Petry explained that, since the last meeting, the owner or a group headed by the owner had purchased the residence property as well, meaning they now control both properties. He clarified that the apartment in question was intended purely for a staff member rather than for event guests.
- Mr. Guarino asked about the driveways and whether the project would ensure that sight lines were significantly improved so that drivers exiting the property would be able to see traffic traveling along Prospect. Mr. Petry stated that improving the sight lines had been one of his priorities. He said he had personally found the existing driveway dangerous when leaving the facility and had immediately suggested improving the exit drive to the purchaser, who agreed with him.
- Mr. Guarino asked whether sidewalks would be installed along the entire frontage of the property, connecting to Woodland Avenue. Mr. Petry confirmed that they would.
- Mr. Guarino asked how people staying at the Residence Inn would access the property now that the owner also controls the Residence Inn. Mr. Petry explained that there has historically been a walkway across the front of the Residence Inn that comes down and

connects to the walkway on this property. The applicant would continue that walkway directly to the front door.

- Mr. Guarino asked whether guests would have access to move their cars from the Residence Inn onto this property. Mr. Petry said they could, but it would not be necessary
- Mr. Guarino asked whether the site would have ADA accessibility, including appropriate crosswalks and step-downs for people with ADA needs. Mr. Petry confirmed that the site would have complete ADA accessibility.
- Mr. Guarino asked whether there would be greenery and shrubbery along the front of the property to block passersby from seeing the parked cars. Mr. Petry stated that the Phase 1 landscape plan included substantial landscaping throughout that area.
- Mr. Guarino asked whether the parking lot under discussion was employee parking only and whether it would be accessible from a separate entrance. Mr. Petry confirmed that it was employee parking and explained that the entrance was already located there and had historically been used in that configuration for as long as he had been visiting the property.
- Mr. Guarino asked whether employees would have adequate sight lines when leaving that parking area. Mr. Petry confirmed that they would
- Mr. Guarino asked whether trees could be planted along the sidewalks going down Prospect Avenue or whether that would be part of another phase. Mr. Petry confirmed that trees were already included along the Prospect Avenue sidewalk as part of Phase 1.
- Mr. Cardoza recalled that Mr. Petry had mentioned an elevator and said he could see the elevator just outside the plans. He asked whether the elevator had been discussed as part of the Phase 1 review. Mr. Petry explained that the elevator had been installed in 2012 when the manor underwent renovation. He stated that the elevator services every floor in the facility except La Dome
- Mr. Cardoza asked whether the elevator serves both as a service elevator and a guest elevator. Mr. Petry confirmed that it does and stated that it is fully ADA compliant
- Mr. Cardoza then asked about the carriage house and the architectural plans for the proposed second floor. He pointed to a balcony on the left side of the plan and said it was not clear to him how the balcony would be accessed. Mr. Petry stated that there is currently no access to that space.
- Mr. Cardoza said the lack of access seemed unusual and questioned whether leaving an inaccessible space could create concerns, such as the space collecting dust or becoming a fire hazard. Mr. Petry said they could either provide a stair to the second-level space within the area or potentially place a stair just outside of it in the new lounge area. He explained that they had not yet assigned a use to the space, so he agreed that the issue should be reviewed.

PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS

- Ms. McGovern asked whether the renovated upstairs apartment unit would be restricted to staff, since the notice describes the space as being used for staff, chef, or other employee accommodation or support purposes. She clarified whether the applicant intended to keep the apartment in-house for employees rather than rent it to anyone else. Mr. Petry confirmed that this is how the property has historically operated and stated that the applicant would accept a condition restricting occupancy of the apartment to someone who works for the facility.
 - Ms. McGovern noted that the notice adequately describes the renovation and that the proposed use fits within the definition of mixed use because a separate

entrance has been created. However, she stated that a condition should be imposed limiting the apartment's use to staff members.

- Ms. Apte asked Mr. Petry if he had reviewed the planner's reports dated June 5, 2026, and June 17, 2026. Mr. Petry confirmed that he had reviewed them.
- Ms. Apte asked for clarification regarding the parking described in the testimony. She asked whether the restaurant and banquet facility would have a combined maximum occupancy of 1,563 persons. Mr. Petry confirmed that the combined maximum occupancy of the restaurant and banquet facility would be 1,563 persons.
- Ms. Apte stated that the technical parking requirement would be 488 spaces and asked whether Mr. Petry's testimony was that the 486 spaces being proposed would be sufficient, based on his extensive experience as the architect and engineer for the site. Mr. Petry said that he believes the proposed parking is sufficient.
 - Ms. Apte recommended that the Board recognize that the zoning permits a shared parking arrangement and that the apartment is a deed-restricted unit. She stated that the maximum occupancy of the site is 1,563 and that the proposed parking would be sufficient, but she wanted the record to be clear regarding the technical parking requirement.
- Ms. Apte asked Mr. Petry whether he believed there would be sufficient lighting on the property based on the amount of lighting being proposed. Mr. Petry testified that the proposed lighting is comprehensive, appropriately scaled, and night-sky compliant. He stated that they believe it will adequately service the site, including the entry and exit serving the property.
- Mr. MacNeill asked Mr. Petry whether the EV parking spaces would be make-ready spaces or whether all of the spaces would be installed during the first year. Mr. Petry stated that they agreed to complete at least the Phase 1 EV spaces during the first year. If the Phase 2 spaces are completed at a later time, they will be installed in accordance with the applicable regulations. He noted that, depending on the vendor and financial considerations, they may decide that it makes more sense to install all of the spaces at once.
- Mr. MacNeill clarified that the applicant was essentially retaining the option to make all of the Phase 2 spaces make-ready or have them fully installed, while following the State statute governing those make-ready spaces. Mr. Petry confirmed that this was correct.

PROFESSIONAL COMMENTS

- Ms. Apte stated that she agreed with Chairman Bagoff's suggestion regarding the gazebo and recommended that, if the variance for the buffer is granted, landscaping in that area be maintained.
- Regarding signage, Ms. Apte explained that her memo only identified an existing freestanding sign. She stated that she did not have details about the sign and did not know whether a variance was required. She wanted the record to make clear that she had not identified any sign variances unless the applicant had identified them and provided that information.
- Mr. Petry testified that the intention is to maintain the existing signs in their existing locations and simply re-letter them. He stated that the signs are smaller in scale than what is typically seen for facilities of this type.
- Ms. Apte reiterated that she simply wanted to make the record clear that she was not aware of any sign variances. If the signs remain as they currently exist, they would remain as is.

- Mr. MacNeill clarified the requested relief concerning the requirement to hold one-half of the projected two-year storm retention volume. He explained to the Board that, with new development, stormwater management regulations require reductions in stormwater flow for the 2-, 10-, and 100-year storm events.
- Mr. MacNeill explained that when grass and trees are removed during new development, there is generally an increase in stormwater volume because additional areas become impervious. The regulations therefore require the applicant to hold back that additional volume.
- Mr. MacNeill stated that the Township adopted an ordinance or code that is more restrictive than the DEP code. He clarified that this requirement is specific to West Orange and is not a DEP requirement.
- Mr. MacNeill stated that, in his opinion, it makes sense to enforce this requirement for new development applications. However, in this particular case, Mr. Petry had indicated that the project is reducing impervious coverage.
- Mr. MacNeill explained that reducing impervious coverage automatically reduces the stormwater volume, which is the intent of the ordinance requirement. Based on this, he agreed with the justification for the requested stormwater relief that Mr. Petry had placed on the record.
- Mr. MacNeill stated that Mr. Petry had also confirmed that he could comply with all of the comments in Mr. MacNeill's June 4, 2026 review letter.

BOARD COMMENTS

- Chairman Bagoff stated that he would be amenable to recommending to the board that, based on the applicant providing the information Mr. MacNeill needs, the C2 variances be provided.
- Chairman Bagoff also addressed the gazebo. He stated that if the gazebo remained in its current location, he would recommend a condition requiring the owner to add evergreens or other greenery if the greenery behind it ever became sparse enough for neighboring properties to see through it.
 - Mr. Petry agreed to that condition.
- Chairman Bagoff asked whether some of the lighting in the parking lot could use solar panels.
 - Mr. Petry said they could certainly look into it.
- Chairman Bagoff stated that he had no problem with the signage because the applicant was revitalizing the existing signs rather than changing them, although the name would be changed.
- He said that if the entrance or exit sign had to be moved, he would recommend granting the variance with a condition that the zoning official approve the final location of the sign because the signs are related to safety.
- Chairman Bagoff acknowledged the requirements of the ordinance but stated that creating all of those tree islands would cause significant damage. He also questioned whether the trees planted in those islands would ever become tall enough to fulfill the intent of the ordinance.
- Chairman Bagoff recommended that there instead be one tree island in each parking lot. He suggested trees similar to those at the Target Shopping Center or Essex Green Shopping Center because they would be more consistent with what would work well at the property.

- Chairman Bagoff stated that his recommendation would avoid losing a large number of parking spaces and that the architect-engineer could determine the most appropriate locations for the islands.
 - Mr. Petry clarified that the applicant was already adding tree islands in Lot C. He pointed out that several areas shown on the plan were new islands and emphasized that the applicant had already incorporated landscaping into the parking lots.
 - Mr. Petry then explained that in Lot B they were adding several islands as well.
- Chairman Bagoff asked whether those islands would contain trees.
- Mr. Petry confirmed that trees would be planted in those islands, consistent with how they had planted them elsewhere, but indicated that he did not believe this necessarily eliminated the need for the variance.
- Chairman Bagoff stated that he would definitely agree with the C2 variance if trees were placed in the islands. In his view, that would satisfy the ordinance.
- Mr. Guarino stated from his experience artificial turf generates approximately 20% more heat than regular grass. He said there is a significant difference between running on grass and running on turf and offered that information as another consideration when looking at alternatives.
 - Mr. Petry responded that his firm had been responsible for the first cork-based turf field in New Jersey, located in Glen Ridge near the Glen Ridge-Montclair border. He stated that the cork-based turf was considerably cooler but acknowledged the concern that black rubber pellets can heat up significantly.

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

- Kathy Dent, 5 Deerfield Drive, raised a concern regarding the landscaping in the rear of the property, along her lot and the other lots on Deerfield Drive. She stated that trees had been removed and that dirt and earth had been moved, changing the landscape in the rear of the property. Ms. Dent asked whether anything further would be done on the property side along Deerfield Drive, including whether additional trees or plants would be added and whether the dirt that had been thrown down the incline into people's yards would be stabilized or otherwise addressed. Mr. Petry responded that they had received notification of an issue at that location and had looked into it. He stated that he had not personally looked into whether soil had moved down the hill, but he would make it a point to inspect the area and coordinate with the municipal Engineer's office.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

- Ms. McGovern began reviewing the proposed conditions and the requested C2 variances.
- Ms. McGovern stated that the first condition was that the apartment would be used for staff members or employees only and would be deed restricted for that purpose.
- Ms. McGovern stated that one of the requested variances was from the stormwater ordinance. In consideration of that relief, the applicant would submit the requested information and comply with all requirements and requests contained in Mr. MacNeill's report.
 - Mr. MacNeill clarified that the relevant report was dated June 4, 2026, and that the requested relief was from Section 25.29.4S2. Ms. McGovern confirmed the information and continued reviewing the conditions.

- Chairman Bagoff asked the Board whether anyone had a problem with granting the stormwater relief, provided that the applicant submitted information demonstrating that stormwater impacts had been reduced by decreasing impervious coverage.
- Mayor McCartney asked Mr. MacNeill whether there was anything else in the stormwater management plan that needed to be addressed. Mr. MacNeill stated that there were a few minor cleanup items that Mr. Petry's office had agreed to address as part of resolution compliance. He characterized them as a couple of clarification items and cleanup items, and stated that nothing major remained that would require additional testing.
- The Board then moved on to the next conditions.
- Ms. McGovern stated that, in the rear, the owner would add greenery and would replace it if it ever became sparse, maintaining it in perpetuity.
 - Chairman Bagoff clarified that this condition specifically concerned the area around the gazebo.
- Mayor McCartney asked whether maintenance of the trees across the entire site would be the owner's responsibility. Chairman Bagoff and Ms. McGovern confirmed that the owner would continue to maintain the greenery in accordance with the landscape plan, with particular attention to the area around the gazebo in the rear.
 - Chairman Bagoff explained that the gazebo area was adjacent to one-family residential homes and was less than 50 feet away.
 - The landscaping condition would therefore address that issue in connection with potentially granting the C2 variance.
- Ms. McGovern stated that the applicant would attempt to use solar panels for at least some of the parking lot lighting.
- Ms. McGovern stated that any signs for ingress and egress would be handled in coordination with the zoning official for approval of the sign locations.
- Regarding the parking lot islands, Ms. McGovern stated that a variance would be granted.
- Ms. McGovern stated that the turf area would be reviewed and that the applicant would come up with something acceptable to the Board professionals as a condition.
- Ms. McGovern stated that the applicant would comply with the planner's reports dated June 5 and June 17, 2026, as well as any information requested in those reports.
- Chairman Bagoff noted that lighting spillage onto the roadway was related to improving ingress and egress and was a safety issue, as testified to by Mr. Petry.
 - Ms. McGovern confirmed that the lighting issue would be treated as a waiver.
 - Ms. Apte clarified that there were three lighting waivers: one for the pedestrian walkway, one for the parking areas, and one for the street.
- Ms. McGovern noted that there were no sign variances identified and confirmed that the parking was sufficient subject to the technical requirement for two additional spaces.
 - Ms. Apte explained that, technically, the applicant was required to provide 488 parking spaces based on the 1,563 maximum occupancy and the employee apartment, but the applicant was providing 486 spaces.
 - Ms. McGovern stated that this would therefore constitute a variance for two parking spaces.
- Ms. McGovern also stated that the applicant would address the neighbor's concerns regarding the piles of dirt in the rear near the property at 5 Deerfield Drive.
 - Mr. McPherson confirmed that someone would go to the property the following morning to investigate the alleged piles of dirt.
- Ms. McGovern asked who would determine whether the issue had been addressed satisfactorily. Mr. McPherson stated that he would contact anyone in the Township necessary and report on the matter.

- Mr. Cardoza asked whether a condition needed to be established regarding the balcony on the carriage house, or whether the issue was too unclear to formulate a condition.
 - Ms. McGovern stated that no specific condition had been developed
 - Chairman Bagoff proposed giving Mr. Petry six months to develop a solution for the balcony issue in consultation with the Township engineer.
 - Ms. McGovern asked what would happen if the applicant did not develop a solution within six months. Chairman Bagoff stated that the applicant would then have to return to the Board, and the Board would have to find another solution
- Ms. McGovern asked who would have to approve the final solution. Chairman Bagoff stated that it would be acceptable to the code official, or the applicant would have to return to the Planning Board.
- Mr. Petry stated that he had no problem with the condition and suggested that they might simply change the roofline and put a sloped roof on the structure, which would eliminate the issue.
- Chairman Bagoff stated that, based on Mr. Petry's testimony and the requested C2 variances, the benefits of the application were beneficial and outweighed the detriments.
- He noted that the application involved the redevelopment of a long-term existing structure in the Township of West Orange and that the site was being improved.
- Chairman Bagoff recommended granting the requested C2 variances and waivers.
- Mayor McCartney asked about a condition concerning an extension for planting the larger trees in the fall or spring. Chairman Bagoff agreed that the applicant should be given one year from the date of the meeting to complete the large tree plantings described by Mr. Petry.
- Mr. McPherson agreed that one year was appropriate and stated that the client was moving forward as quickly as possible to get the site open so they would like the trees planted as soon as possible.
- Chairman Bagoff stated that if the applicant needed an extension, it would have to return to the Board.

Motion: Chairman Bagoff

Second: Mr. Guarino

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

ADOPTED:

Jamilet Baquerizo Vite
Planning Board Secretary