

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
November 12, 2024**

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Villa at 7:10 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

**ROLL CALL**

**Board Members in Attendance**

Allen  
Barton  
Becker  
Hendrickson  
Izzo  
John  
Mueller  
Panico  
Villa

**Board Members Absent**

Hindle  
Somonski

Mr. Mueller moved, and Mr. Panico seconded a motion to excuse the absence of Board member Somonski from the 10/28 and 11/12 meetings . The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Mueller moved, and Mr. Izzo seconded a motion to excuse the absence of Board member Panico from the 10/28 meeting . The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Allen moved, and Mr. Hendrickson seconded a motion to excuse the absence of Board member Hindle from the 10/28 and 11/12 meetings . The motion carried unanimously.

**Others Present**

Board Attorney Jonathan Drill, Board Planner Michael Sullivan, Board Engineer Rob O'Brien, and Board Secretary Ann Marie Lehberger.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Panico abstained.

Ms. Allen moved, and Mr. Hendrickson seconded a motion to approve the October 28, 2024, minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

**ADOPTION OF RESOLUTIONS**

There were no resolutions presented for Board consideration.

**ADJOURNMENTS OF ANY SCHEDULED HEARINGS OR MOTIONS**

There were none

**TRC UPDATE**

There was no update.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

There were no public hearings.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION**

**WHEREAS** N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (the Open Public Meeting Act) authorizes this Board to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which this Board discusses certain matters;

**WHEREAS**, the Board is about to discuss such a matter, specifically a matter falling within the attorney-client privilege where confidentiality is required for the Board Attorney to exercise his ethical duties as a lawyer with respect to attorney-client privileged legal advice he wishes to give the Board regarding the Jordan Developers balancing test.

**WHEREAS** this Board believes the public should be excluded from this discussion and advice.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, be it resolved by the Readington Township Planning Board on November 12, 2024 that this Board now go into closed session and the public be excluded and that the Board believes that the discussions conducted in the closed session may not be disclosed to the public because they will involve attorney-client privileged advice and information.

Mr. Panico moved, and Mr. Mueller seconded to adopt this resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Panico moved, and Mr. Mueller seconded a motion to come out of closed session. The motion carried unanimously.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Bellemead Development Corporation-Request for Extension of Vesting of Final Major Site Plan Approval for Halls Mill Farm Office Complex  
Block 2.01 Lots 9.01 & 11

Attorney Glenn Pantel was present on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Pantel stated that the applicant is requesting a 4.5-year extension of a final site plan approval to vest the rights embodied in the approval of its Halls Mill Farm Office Complex development to June 30, 2029. He explained that the original site plan approval was granted on August 8, 1988 for 660,000 square feet of office and a series of extensions have been granted by the Board, with the most recent being September 14, 2020 which extended the final approval to December 31, 2024. Mr. Pantel reviewed the report of the Board's planner which referenced the Jordan Developers case and the balancing test the Board must use when considering the request. He stated that the extension request should be granted in light of current economic conditions, the amount of floor area to be developed and the comprehensiveness of the project. He further noted that sufficient sewer capacity did not become available for the project until August of 2000 which was followed by over 17 years of litigation.

Mr. Pantel also noted the challenges faced by the applicant due to the COVID pandemic and the impact on commercial real estate due to the change in the demand for office space.

As conditions of approval, Mr. Pantel stated that the applicant agrees to comply with all the zoning regulations in effect up to today's date November 12, 2024 and prior to the issuance of construction permits, the applicant will return to the proper board to get amended preliminary and final site plan approvals with the updated ordinances and regulations.

Mr. Panico moved, and Mr. Mueller seconded, a motion to approve the extension of the vesting of the Final Major Site Plan for Halls Mills Farm Office Complex from December 31, 2024 through June 30, 2029 with the conditions as discussed. The roll call vote follows:

Member	Motion	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Not Eligible	Recused
Allen			X					
Barton			X					
Becker			X					
Hendrickson			X					
Izzo			X					
John			X					
Mueller		X	X					
Panico	X		X					
Villa			X					
Hindle						X		
Somonski						X		

Board Member Mueller left the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Chair Villa reviewed and provided updates on the old business as follows:

1. Municipal Climate Resilience Planning-Ongoing
2. Application Checklists-Ongoing
5. Subcommittee Updates-Ongoing

**OTHER DISCUSSIONS**

Ms. Allen requested that the Board revisit the discussion on the Route 22 Corridor proposed ordinance revisions as she still had concerns on some items that that were discussed specifically related to outdoor storage of materials, vehicles and equipment, the zoning designation east of Van Horne Road and fast food restaurants with drive thru's.

The Board discussed each of the items at length and expressed their opinions. It was decided that a straw poll be conducted to see how the majority of the Board felt on the items to provide feedback to the Township Committee.

It was noted that the answers should be: Yes, No or Don't Care.

Straw Poll Question#1- Should fast food with drive-thru be allowed in any zone in the

Township?

Results:

Izzo - Don't Care  
Becker - No  
Allen - No  
John - No  
Villa - Yes  
Panico - Don't Care  
Barton - No  
Hendrickson - No

Straw Poll Question#2- Should outdoor storage of vehicles, materials, and equipment be allowed in any zone in the Township?

Results:

Izzo - Yes  
Becker - Yes  
Allen - No  
John - No  
Villa - Yes  
Panico - Yes  
Barton - Yes  
Hendrickson - No

Straw Poll Question#3-Should the outdoor storage of vehicles, materials, and equipment be specifically defined in terms of size and mobility?

Results:

Izzo - Yes  
Becker - Yes  
Allen - Yes  
John - Yes  
Villa - Yes  
Panico - Yes  
Barton - Yes  
Hendrickson - Yes

Straw Poll Question#4- Should the zoning east of Van Horne Road be changed from HC (Highway Commercial) to HVC (Highway Village Commercial) zoning?

Results:

Izzo - No  
Becker - Yes  
Allen - Yes  
John - Yes  
Villa - Yes  
Panico - No

Barton - Yes  
Hendrickson – Yes

The Board secretary will prepare a memo on these results and forward it to the Township Committee.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Matthew McWilliams asked if the Board would consider defining outdoor storage of vehicles as over the road vehicles and trailers that do not require a commercial driver's license.

Marie Trontell asked for clarification on the ordinance process.

Rene Rao requested that data centers be removed from all zones in the Township due to negative environmental impacts. She also requested that the (HC) Highway Commercial zone be completely removed from the entire corridor and spoke in favor of rezoning to Highway (HVC) Village Commercial instead.

Susan Masinda thanked the Board for expressing their opinions on the proposed changes and inquired how the public will know when the ordinance will be scheduled for introduction by the Township Committee.

Laura Bush inquired about zoning ordinance changes for Three Bridges.

Laurie Fisher expressed concerns about data centers and fast food drive thru's. She spoke to the need to revitalize downtown Whitehouse Station and the importance of historical knowledge and diverse opinions of Board members in making decisions that affect the Township.

Laura Hartz spoke in opposition of fast food drive thru's, Highway Commercial (HC) zone east of Van Horne Road and data centers.

Kristina Garcia thanked the Board for explaining the ordinance process and expressed concerns about the effects of the proposed changes to surrounding residential properties along the corridor.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Becker moved, and Mr. Izzo seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Marie Lehberger  
Planning Board Secretary