

Florence, New Jersey 08518-2323
June 5, 2025

The Regular meeting of the Florence Township Board of Adjustment was held on the above date at the Municipal Complex, 711 Broad Street, Florence, NJ. Chairman Puccio called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. followed by a salute to the flag.

Secretary Sullivan read the following statement: "I would like to announce that this meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice has been provided to the official newspapers and posted in the main hall of the Municipal Complex."

Upon roll call the following members were found to be present:

Brett Buddenbaum	Ramesh Jayaram
Anant Patel	Dennis Puccio
Lou Sovak	Gina Sullivan
Charles Wible	

Excused:	James Fevola
Absent:	Daniel Studzinski

Also Present:	Solicitor David Frank
	Engineer Hugh Dougherty
	Planner Brett Harris

MINUTES

It was the Motion of Mr. Patel seconded by Mr. Buddenbaum to adopt the minutes from the regular Meeting of May 5, 2025. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

APPLICATIONS

- A. ZB#2025-04: Application from The Reginald Lewis Group for Bulk and Use Variances at property located at 316 West Third St Block 38, Lot 3

Mr. Jonas Singer is representing the applicant, The Reginald Lewis Group. This application is for a minor subdivision and several variances for the construction of a duplex on the property. This application was in front of the Board in December proposing two single-family homes on two separate lots. After receiving feedback from the board, the plans have since been revised to construct one duplex.

Mr. William Holly was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Holly is a managing member of the Reginald Lewis Group which owns the property. He stated that there is currently a single-family home on the property. The intentions are to keep the existing home which has been renovated and will be rented out. He confirmed that he proposes a duplex to be built adjacent to the existing home. Mr. Holly thanked the Board for the comments on the last application.

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Mr. Laurence Murphy is the engineer for this project and he was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. He prepared subdivisions and site plan documents for this project. Chairman Puccio accepted Mr. Murphy as an expert witness.

Mr. Murphy said that this property is an existing oversized lot at 15,000sf. The applicant is proposing to divide the lot into three lots, leaving the existing house. Any sheds or garages on the property will be removed. One lot will be 55'x100' which will contain the existing house and will meet the setbacks for the new lots. There will be two more lots created each at 47.5'x100'. This size was chosen to eliminate the need for a setback variance for the existing home.

The duplex homes are semi attached and have a zero-lot line, which means the property line runs through the middle of the structure. There is a zero-foot setback to the internal lot line because it provides a greater side yard setback to the existing lot to the west as well as the lot with the existing house on it. The minimum setback is 15' and now it will be 27.5'.

Each unit in the proposed structure is 20'x45'. The previous application for the single-family homes proposed each home at 24'x 50'. This has been reduced to about 900sf including the porch. Each proposed unit including the porch is setback to 20', the main home is setback 25'. The consistent setback to the existing homes on this street as well as the existing home on this property has a front yard setback of 5'.

The length of the driveways is 36' to accommodate two cars to the side of the units to avoid the street parking. The driveways will be accessed by West Third Street.

The revisions made from the previous application reduced the lot coverage from 34.4% and 36.% to 27.7% and 29.5%, which requires a variance. The house itself was reduced in size by 25%.

Each proposed dwelling unit is three bedrooms, two stories. There are two variances required for the lot area. There is also a density variance and a lot width variance needed. Relief is also needed from the middle and front yard which is required at 25', but the porch is 5' so a variance is needed. The minimum side yard setback is 15' and there is an existing non-conformity with the existing house to the east which is 12.6'. There is a 27.5' setback on the west side of the proposed home. There is a variance required for the zero-foot setback. The increase to impervious cover will be handled with either dry wells or a rain garden. There will also be two trees removed to create one of the driveways.

Engineer Dougherty said that this application would be a major subdivision, which was determined in the previous application. In addition to the bulk variances, which were discussed, there is a use variance since it is not a permitted use. A major subdivision would get filed as a plat. A condition of approval would also be an executed water and sewer agreement. That is something that the applicant is going to work on. A site plan is not relevant to this application since it does not apply to single family or residential.

Mr. Murphy confirmed that there are no garages planned for this project. Solicitor Frank said that the board might want to consider that there is a high probability that the future owners might want a garden shed for storage. As it is proposed, the property is already over the limit

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for impervious cover. If a 10x15' garden shed is added, that brings the total impervious cover to 31% to approve so that the homeowner would not have to come to the Board to install a shed.

Chairman Puccio pointed out that there is no proposed patio and adding one would also increase the impervious coverage. Once a patio is added, that brings the impervious total to 32%.

Mr. Brett Harris is the new Board Planner and he is sworn in by Solicitor Frank. He asked Mr. Murphy what the plan is for the trees which need to be removed. Mr. Murphy said that whatever the township's ordinance is, they will agree to it. Mr. Murphy said that the sidewalks will be replaced if needed at the discretion of the engineer.

Mr. Benedetto Catarinicchia is the architect for this project and was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Catarinicchia has color renderings of the proposed homes and they are marked as Exhibit A-1. He said that the home has a standard duplex design. The units are about 20'x45', with a crawl space, the homes will have three bedrooms, and two-and-a-half bathrooms and will be about 1600sf. The homes are designed similar to the other homes in the area. The front will also have a sitting porch. If the applicant decides against a basement, then there will be closet area on the first floor for the utilities.

Mr. James Miller is the Planner for the applicant. He was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Miller has reviewed the plans and has been out to the site. Mr. Miller has also reviewed the tax maps and Master Plan. He prepared an exhibit which shows the distribution of single family detached and semi-detached dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the property. The lots shaded in yellow on the exhibit contain semi-detached dwellings. Some are on one lot and some are on separate lots. These types of homes are not a permitted use so that requires a D1 variance, as well as a D5 density variance.

The area is characterized by over-development which pre-dates the zoning laws. Historically, the area was divided into 50'x100' lots, which are half the size of what the current zoning requires. This area also has some older units where there is a shallow front setback, which was characteristic of the time period when they were built. There is also a lot of irregularity with the lot sizes.

Mr. Miller explained the Municipal Land Use criteria that this falls under which are to encourage municipal action to guide the appropriate use or development of all lands in the state in a manner which will promote the public health, safety, morals and general welfare. Also to provide sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space, both public and private. Mr Miller believes this use is appropriate for this location. The proposed development is consistent with the existing development patterns.

The property is located on Block 38 which is in the center of a nine-block area. The original lot pattern consisted of 50'x100' lots and designed to be serviced by the alleys behind the lots. There are some lots that are a little larger and smaller, but the average lot size is 5,000sf. Each block is about 2.5 acres and the densities range from 5-8 units/acre. Block 38 contains 8 semi-detached units, and 10 single family detached units. The proposed 27.5' side yard setback exceeds the 15' standard. There are 6 semi-detached units on the same side of the street as the proposed homes as well as across the street. The added driveways also minimize the impact to the street parking. The driveways have a 17.5' setback from the adjoining unit.

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The project is consistent with the area and it will also be an upgrade to the property.

Engineer Dougherty pointed out that the lot sizes and the structures vary greatly on this block.

The Zoom Moderator pulled up a Google Map view of the block, which is marked Exhibit B1 which shows the types of homes in the immediate vicinity of the property. Exhibit B2 is a zoomed in map of the property which shows the semi-attached homes on the block.

Motion by Ms. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Buddenbaum to open the application to public comment. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

Tony Lee, 135 Seventh Avenue Roebling, was sworn in by Solicitor Frank. Mr. Lee has been a resident of Florence for 35 years. He has dealt with Mr. Holly and his projects in different towns and Mr. Holly does a great job with all his projects, as well as putting the community first. Mr. Lee said that it is nice to see a new home go to a family, especially with the current housing shortage.

Seeing no one else wishing to comment, a Motion was made by Ms. Sullivan, seconded by Mr. Buddenbaum to close public comments. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

A Motion was made by Mr. Buddenbaum, seconded by Mr. Wible to approve ZB#2025-04.

Upon Roll Call the Board voted as follows:

YEA: Buddenbaum, Wible, Patel, Sovak, Sullivan, Jayaram, Puccio

NO: None

CORRESPONDENCE

- A. Email from Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim re: 700 West Front Street, Variance Extension Request

This application was approved in May 2023. Chairman Puccio proposes that Mr. Ibrahim be granted the extension request through May 2026, and if the project still isn't completed, Mr. Ibrahim would be required to come back to the board with an update.

A Motion was made by Mr. Sovak, seconded by Mr. Wible to extend the variance approval through May 2026. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

- B. Email Gayla Kasprzyk requesting an extension for a variance granted in June 2024.

This application was approved in June 2024 to add a pool. At that time, Ms. Kasprzyk was unable to install the pool due to unforeseen circumstances. The Board agreed to extend the variance approval through June 2026. If the project is not complete, then she will have to appear in front of the board.

A Motion was made by Mr. Buddenbaum, seconded by Mr. Patel to approve the request for extension. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

CLOSED SESSION

Motion made by Mr. Patel and seconded by Mr. Buddenbaum to approve ZB-2025-09 to enter into Closed Session at 9:01 P.M. Motion unanimously approved by all members present

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Motion made by Mr. Patel, seconded by Mr. Buddenbaum to enter back into regular meeting at 9:19 P.M. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one from the public attending in person and the Zoom moderator confirmed that no one was being muted by us.

ADJOURNMENT

It was the Motion of Mr. Buddenbaum, seconded by Mr. Patel to adjourn the meeting at 9:19PM. Motion unanimously approved by all members present.

GS/ah

Gina Sullivan, Secretary