

MANTUA TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL LAND USE BOARD

September 16, 2025 7:00 P.M.

MINUTES

The Mantua Township Municipal Land Use Board meeting was called to order on September 16, 2025 at 7:00 P.M. The Board Secretary called the meeting to order, led the Board members in a flag salute. The open public meeting statement was read: adequate notice of this meeting has been provided in the following manner: by providing written notice to the Clerk of the Township of Mantua on January 6, 2025, by posting notice on the official bulletin board on January 6, 2025 and by notifying the South Jersey Times and Courier Post.

Roll Call:

Present: Berenato, Huston, Lukens, Moscatelli, Wilkinson, Shast, J. Moore, K. Moore

Absent: deMers, Moyer, Legge, Rainier

Minutes:

A motion was made by Mr. Wilkinson to approve the August 19, 2025 minutes, the motion was seconded by Committeewoman Lukens. Roll Call Vote: 7 yes, 0 no.

The Vice Chairman announced that a moment of silence would be observed in memory of Dr. Robert Harris, a former Land Use Board Member and longtime Chairman, who recently passed away.

Solicitor Hyatt swore in the Board Professionals.

Old Business:

Application 2024-003 Final Major Subdivision – Approved

Karen Salerno 120 Woodlawn Ave, Block 65, Lot 1, Tax Map 17, Zone R-11

Action Requested: Seeking final approval for a major subdivision of Lot 1 into 13 individual lots, consisting of twelve (12) single-family residential lots (each approximately 0.332± acres) and one (1) stormwater basin lot. Discussion of conditions related to the Tree Report and Traffic Study.

Any necessary variances or waivers that may be deemed necessary.

Thomas North, representing the applicant Karen Salerno, stated that the applicant was appearing as a continuation of the August Land Use Board meeting to address two outstanding conditions: the minimum traffic study and the modified tree plan, which had been submitted to the Land Use Secretary, the Board, and made available for public review.

Scott Brown, an engineer and surveyor with Pinchin, was sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt. Mr. Brown testified that the applicant is requesting a waiver for seven trees. Four of these are landmark trees rated in poor condition and in decline, with one land mark tree in fair condition posing as a safety hazard to pedestrians. Within the development area, there are 61 specimen trees; 1 are proposed for removal within the protection zone, along with one non-specimen tree within the disturbance zone. A total of 106 trees will be replanted or transplanted as part of the mitigation plan.

Ashton Jones, the Board's Professional Planner, reviewed the tree report prepared by Bartlett and concurred with the applicant's presentation. He noted that the requested relief for landmark trees is

not based on disease or death but rather on the likelihood of survival. Mr. Jones provided the Board with several considerations when evaluating the application. He emphasized that landmark trees should not be removed unless absolutely necessary within the development zone; in such cases, a \$1,000 fine applies, and the applicant must replant trees of comparable caliber to maintain visual character. The applicant is proposing 3-inch caliper replacement trees. Transplanted or relocated trees will not count toward the compensation requirement. Additionally, the applicant will be responsible for maintaining the new plantings under a two-year warranty period following construction.

Blake Fitzgerald, the Board's Professional Engineer, stated in the last meeting the traffic report had no impose impact.

The meeting was opened to the public following a motion made by Mr. J. Moore, which was seconded by Ms. Berenato. All board members voted in favor.

Nicola Hlushko (24 Linden Avenue) was sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt. Mr. Hlushko raised several questions regarding the 106 trees proposed for replanting, including concerns about their survival rate and whether the replacement trees would be native to the area. He also asked who would be responsible for maintaining the trees to ensure their survival. Mr. Hlushko questioned the four trees without compensation were rated in poor condition and in decline, though not dead or diseased.

Mr. Hlushko further inquired whether the stormwater management issues had been resolved and if they remained a condition of approval. He presented Exhibit P-1, an email from Eric McDermott of the NJDEP, which stated that the applicant is not registered on the Soil and Fill Recycling Hauler List.

Tatyana Lazar (24 Linden Avenue) was sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt. Ms. Lazar expressed concerns regarding the tree ordinance, the preservation of landmark trees, and the use of monetary funds related to tree removal or replacement. She also questioned whether the stormwater approval would need to return to the Board for amendment and inquired on the timeframe for the plans to be signed.

Ira Powers (129 Woodlawn Avenue) was sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt. Mr. Powers, speaking on behalf of Cold Springs and Mantua Heights, requested that all documentation previously submitted be incorporated into and recorded with this application.

Cathy Wilson (155 Woodlawn Avenue) was sworn in by solicitor Hyatt. Ms. Wilson, a resident since 1976, expressed concerns about how the proposed application would impact the quality of life and safety of children riding their bikes.

Since no one else came forward to address the board, Mr. Moscatelli made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting, and Mr. J. Moore seconded it. All board members voted in favor.

After concluding the testimony, Dr. Berenato made a motion to approve the application with the condition that the applicant satisfy the comments in the Board Engineer's letter. The motion included granting a waiver for the non-specimen tree and four landmark trees, as well as requiring

tree compensation for the removal of any landmark tree posing a hazard, to be replaced with smaller-caliber trees. The motion was seconded by Mr. J. Moore.
The Roll Call Vote: 9 yes, 0 no.

New Business:

Application 2025-018 Courtesy Presentation

Mantua Township School District, 40 McAnally Drive, Block 213, Lot 2, Tax Map 38, Zone R-11
Action Requested: A Courtesy Presentation for District Wide Bond Referendum projects for Sewell Elementary School to construct new building additions as depicted on the enclosed site plan and Building floor plan. In addition, as depicted on the enclosed site plan, a parking lot expansion, reconfiguration of an existing parking lot and removal of one playground is proposed.

Alicia Denella, Christine Trampe, Mark Brunermer, and Bruce Garrison were sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt.

Ms. Trampe spoke regarding Sewell Elementary School, noting that the building was constructed in 1912. She explained that the second story of the historic portion of the school, known as “the Castle,” is deteriorating and that the foundation is collapsing. The proposed project would relocate six preschool classrooms to Sewell Elementary School, consolidating them under one building. It would also include the installation of a new HVAC system and the renovation of four classrooms to meet ADA compliance standards.

Mr. Brunermer presented Exhibit A1, titled *Existing Aerial View*, and Exhibit A2, illustrating two proposed additions. The proposal includes the demolition of “the Castle” to create a single-story building, expansion of the school’s east side frontage along McAnally Drive, removal and reconfiguration of the existing parking area to include additional and ADA-accessible spaces, and the removal of one playground that is no longer age-appropriate.

Mr. Garrison presented Exhibit A3, the *Overall Floor Plan*, which depicts the existing layout and the proposed expansion from four to seven preschool classrooms, all located on a single floor to meet the model program facility requirements. The proposed additions will match the existing aesthetic, featuring a masonry façade and low-sloping roof, the removal of one playground, and the reconfiguration of the parking area to increase overall capacity and add additional ADA-accessible spaces. If approved, the project will evaluate the under water drainage basins.

Application 2025-016 Minor Subdivision - Approved

Antoine Tortorice, 791 Heritage Rd, Block 4, Lot 22, Tax Map 2, Zone AR

Action Requested: Approval of a Minor Subdivision for the purpose of subdividing existing Lot 22 in Block 4, into two lots: Proposed New Lot 22.01, and a Remainder Lot 22, as well as the following bulk variances: New Lot 22.01 – a variance from the minimum lot width requirements, where 250 feet is required and 105.11 ft. is proposed; and minimum street frontage of 225 feet is required and 100.15 ft is proposed. As to the remainder lot 22, on which there is an existing house, the following variances are required: minimum lot width of 250 ft. is required where 175 ft. is proposed; a minimum lot area of 3 acres is required, and 2.78 acres is proposed; and a minimum street frontage of 225 ft. is required and 175 feet is proposed. Any variances or waivers that may deemed necessary.

Dale Taylor, representing the applicant Antoine Tortorice, described the subject property and the surrounding area.

Antoine & Jennifer Tortorice were sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt. He stated that his current home is over 50 years old and that he and his wife have lived there for the past five years. Mr. Tortorice reviewed the lot survey and explained the proposed variance to allow for a greenhouse and the removal of a pre-existing building at the rear of the property. He also described plans for a new driveway to service the back portion of the property, which is located in a farmland area where homes are generally set back.

Mr. Tortorice proposed constructing a one-story, 2,000-square-foot ranch-style home behind the existing residence on a flag lot. He intends to rent the existing home to a family member. He also outlined the existing accessory structures on the property, noting that five are currently present but two will be removed. The remaining structures include the existing home (to be renovated), a three-stall barn used for equipment and tools, and a relocated greenhouse. The two sheds will be removed.

Ashton Jones, the Board's Professional Planner, reviewed his letter dated September 9, 2025. He noted that off-street parking must comply with RSIS standards, a tree removal permit may be required if applicable, and additional landscaping should be provided. Mr. Jones also discussed with the applicant the proposed relocation of the greenhouse.

Mr. Jones reviewed the requested variances, noting that the proposal would not result in any detriment to the public. He explained that the adjustments would improve both lots simultaneously. The property is oversized, with the proposed new home measuring approximately 2,000 square feet and the existing home 1,100 square feet. He further noted that portions of the property to the rear and side are protected and not buildable, and that a waiver for sidewalks would be required.

Blake Fitzgerald, the Board's Professional Engineer, reviewed his letter dated September 12, 2025. Mr. Fitzgerald recommended that the applicant update the zoning table on the survey and reviewed the maximum permitted building and impervious coverage, as well as the pre-existing side yard setback.

He advised the applicant to revise the plans to reflect the new home situated on a 3-acre lot and the existing home on a 2.77-acre lot. He also noted that the signature blocks should be updated, and a lot grading plan will be required. Mr. Fitzgerald further stated that utilities would consist of well and septic systems, and discussed the proposed electric and heating systems for new property.

The meeting was opened to the public following a motion made by Mr. J. Moore, which was seconded by Mr. Moscatelli. All board members voted in favor.

Kristin Pool (795 Heritage Road) was sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt. Ms. Pool expressed concerns regarding whether the applicant intended to keep or sell both lots, the removal of brush along the side of the property, grading for the new home, and potential stormwater runoff. She described Heritage Road as narrow and difficult to access when exiting driveways and noted that the AR Zone is designated for farmland. Ms. Pool also expressed concern that allowing this application could set a precedent for other neighbors to develop their properties, diminishing the area's farmland character.

Brandon Henkel (795 Heritage Road) was sworn in by Solicitor Hyatt. Mr. Henkel stated that he moved to the area in 2015 to farm his 5.6-acre property and currently farms approximately 400 acres and open space. He explained that he begins work early in the morning, often in complete darkness, to feed his cattle and chickens, and expressed concern that the addition of a new home and exterior lighting would impact his daily routine and alter the rural character of the area.

Since no one else came forward to address the board, Mr. J. Moore made a motion to close the public portion of the meeting, and Mr. Moscatelli seconded it. All board members voted in favor.

Upon conclusion of the testimony, Mr. J. Moore made a motion to approve Application 2025-016 with the condition that the zoning table on the survey be updated. The motion was seconded by Dr. Berenato.

The Roll Call Vote: 8 yes, 0 no.

Correspondence: None

Public Portion:

Resolutions:

Resolution 2025-26, memorializing Joseph Villari, 419 Mantua Blvd was motioned by Ms. Berenato, seconded by Mr. J. Moore.

Roll Call Vote: 7 yes, 0 no.

With no further business, a motion was made by Mr. K. Moore to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Moscatelli. All Board Members were in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Taylor
Land Use Board Secretary

Adopted on: 10-21-25