

STRATFORD JOINT LAND USE BOARD
MINUTES

June 26, 2025

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul McGovern at 6:35 pm and the public statement was read that the meeting was advertised in the Courier Post, the Collingswood Retrospect and a notice was posted on the bulletin board at the Borough Hall stating the time and place.

The Chairman led the board in the pledge of allegiance and a prayer.

ROLL CALL:

Present

P. McGovern, Chairman Class IV
K. Walton, Vice-Chairman Class IV
K. Campbell Class IV
T. Hall Class IV
J. Keenan Class I
T. Kozeniewski Class IV
R. Morello Class II
R. St. Maur Class IV

Absent

T. Lomanno Class III

M. Chicalo, Alternate I

M. DiGiacomo, Alternate II

A. Costa, Solicitor

S. Bach, Engineer, Bach Associates

S. McCart, Secretary

MINUTES: Motion by Mr. St. Maur and seconded by Mr. Walton to approve minutes of March 27, 2025. All Ayes.

Mr. McGovern made an announcement that anyone that was present for 103 Vassar Avenue, the applicant was taken off the agenda and will re-notice a new date.

Mr. Costa stated we started a few minutes late. There was an emergency at the Justice Facility and the meeting had to be moved to the Senior Center. This will give anyone arriving time to walk over to this building. We started at 6:36 pm to start the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: Joel Valentin, 101 Jefferson Avenue, Block 39, Lot 9 Seeking a variance to build a garage on a non-conforming use and needs a D2 variance. The applicant will seek a variance for a front yard setback of 20 feet where 25 feet is required and a variance for a rear yard set back of 5 feet where 10 feet is required.

Mr. Valentin, 201 Burlington Avenue, Voorhees, NJ, was sworn in by Mr. Costa.

Mr. Costa asked Mr. Valentin stated the reason why he needs a variance for setback is the property is a corner lot so it has two fronts.

Mr. Costa asked if there was a garage there now? Mr. Valentin stated no.

Mr. Costa asked what would be the size of the garage.

Mr. Valentin stated it is a three-car garage and it is 25 feet by 40 feet.

Mr. Costa asked if it could be moved?

Mr. Valentin stated he had obtained building and zoning permits from the borough and already has the foundation in placed based on his original zoning application.

Mr. Costa asked how long the apartment has been there. Mr. Valentin stated he purchase it in November as a three-family home. Mr. Valentin stated it was his understanding at least thirty years. Paul stated we are talking about the garage not that there are three apartments in the house.

Mr. Costa explained that the reason he needs the use D2 variance is because it is a non-conforming use and whenever you expand the property in anyway a variance is required.

Mr. McGovern asked if the garage would be for tenant use? Mr. Valentin stated part is for storage, extra appliances, equipment for lawn, part personal. Mr. McGovern asked if it was for a business? Mr. Valentin stated it was not for a business. I am a contractor and will be moving some of my tools to the garage. I pay for storage and since I have the space why pay for storage. There is limited parking for the house. A driveway was created for the rear apartment. The driveway will provide some parking for tenants and it will be stone.

Mr. Walton stated technically it is not a garage. It is a storage place. Mr. Valentin stated correct in the sense that there will not be a car parked in the garage. Mr. Walton stated you came for a variance for a garage and it is not a garage. You will be storing materials in it for your business. Mr. Valentin stated it would not be for my business; it would be for myself. Mr. Morello asked why ask for a garage. Mr. Valentin stated it has garage doors. Mr. Morello stated the tenant cannot park there. Mr. Valentin stated the tenant can park in front of the garage.

Mr. Bach was sworn in by Mr. Costa. Mr. Bach stated we have application and materials that were submitted as part of this application for the garage and the driveway in front of the garage. There is now a stone driveway. Mr. Bach asked when was it installed? It was not there during review process. That might change the calculation of maximum occupied. Mr. Bach's main concern is that you list it as a three-car garage for the purpose of the existing triplex. It was nowhere in the application that the garage was not to be used for cars. This now seems to be an off-site use. The variance goes with the property. That means if approved by this board as an off-site use that would be transferred to the next owner. There is no off-site parking for this property. The garage provided two parking spaces. One in the garage and on in the driveway for each of the three units. Mr. Costa stated this may be a D1 variance to be a permitted use.

Mr. Bach suggested the applicant amend the application and renote the use structure as for storage and not to be used by the tenants and notice for a D1 variance. Mr. Costa stated the is a difference proof for a D1 variance. He suggested the application be tabled to amend application as to what you want to do.

Mr. Valentin stated he wants to do things the way they should be done. He stated he wanted to table the application and readdress it at another meeting. Mr. Costa stated in any application there is a time limit. He asked are you agreeing that there will not be an automatic approval for the board not acting on this application tonight. Mr. Valentine agreed.

Motion by Mr. St. Maur and seconded by Mr. Walton to have a continuance until next month. If not next month, he will have to renote. Roll call vote: Mr. Walton, yes, Ms. Campbell, yes, Mr. Hall, yes, Mr. Keenan, yes, Mr. Kozeniewski, yes, Mr. Morello, yes, Mr. St. Maur, yes, Mr. Chicalo, yes, Mr. McGovern, yes.

BOARD ACTION: Public Hearing on the Stratford Borough Housing Element and Fair Share Plan.

Leah Furey Bruder was sworn in by Mr. Costa. Ms. Bruder listed her credentials and they were accepted by Mr. Costa as an expert witness.

Ms. Bruder reviewed the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, fourth round. This is an Element of the Master Plan. The Master Plan is a planning board document. It is a policy that is in your jurisdiction. Once adopted, it is adopted. Implementation of the recommendation relies on

Borough council. This document addresses the fourth round of affordable housing which is effective July 1, 2025. I have met with Council and how to address the fourth round. The third round still has issues surrounding those developments. Mr. Bruder reviewed the background for the affordable housing in New Jersey. It responds to the Fair Share Housing. Stratford is in planning area one. Share Plan starts on Page 36 of the document. The DCA's calculation for Stratford is 25. Twenty-five for new construction and ten for rehabilitation. Stratford had until January 31st to accept the number which Stratford did. This has to be adopted by June 30, 2025. We participate in the program voluntarily to avoid builders potentially saying the town hasn't complied. I have a piece of property and I am going to build 600 apartments. The Borough started participating in the early 2000's. There is a shortage of vacant land and all we are trying to do is meet the need. We never get quite all the way there.

Mr. Chicalo asked how does homes with renters fit into the overall number. Ms. Bruder stated it doesn't count for anything unless it is deed restricted. For units to count for affordable housing obligation they have to be deed restricted for an extended period of time. If the property owner were willing to enter into a deed restriction to say he would rent to low- and moderate-income housing for this 30-year period, then you could count it as a credit. Most owners not willing to do that willingly or for free. There have been some attempts to reach out to apartment owners. It is very difficult to implement. In theory the obligation already takes into consideration the people that live here.

Ms. Bruder reviewed the vacant land adjustment. This analyzes the amount of available and building vacant land. In the Fourth round of the Housing Element and Fair Share Plan, if you have a vacant land you have to make available at least 25% of building for affordable housing. Mr. McGovern asked if Bradlees and Laurel Mills are tied to the third Round? Ms. Bruder stated in the third round we didn't really have regulations. Fair share housing knows that you have agreed to that. So, if you want the ability to change it, you have to replace it with something else. In Stratford, some other opportunities have arisen that were not anticipated. In the fourth round, it is required that we see how we are doing with the Third round. It requires that we look back and see if those opportunities are still realistic and replace any sites that are not. When Laurel Mills was approved the borough ended up with 16 affordable units which was only planned for 12. The Borough has 1 Colby which is 20 units. The Christian Academy (Creekside) 8 of those assistant living will be affordable. As we move forward, keep in mind that we have come up with other ideas. The Borough has clearly made some efforts to meet affordable development come to fruition. Mr. McGovern asked if as an example, Laurel Mills, doesn't come around and sells the property to another developer, are our hands tied because we have to have 16 affordable housing units there? Ms. Bruder stated yes or if the Borough goes back to Fair Share Housing and renegotiates the third round. We would have to convince them that we made up for it somewhere else.

The fourth round is calculated on three factors: the nonresidential valuation factor, the income capacity factor and the land capacity factor. NJDCA calculated Stratford's Fourth Round number to be 25. The proposal is to do redevelopment on Laurel Road. You have already designated it as an area in need of redevelopment. We have to put in a redevelopment plan. There are potential bonus credits available.

Mr. McGovern asked when we do these approvals at this board, they can't force a developer to do something. Mr. Bach stated it just gives a realistic opportunity. When you have a redevelopment plan, the borough gets to choose the developer.

Ms. Bruder stated in terms of Round 4, there will be a midpoint review, which is five years from now, we will see how it is going. Is it working? Do we need to change something? Round 4 has to file by tomorrow, June 27, 2025. There will be two months to see if any challenges.

Mr. Bach stated these are all realistic opportunities for affordable housing, Laurel Mills, Christian Academy, 1 Colby, Bradlees and the potential for E. Laure Road for redevelopment.

Motion by Mr. Walton and seconded by Mr. Chicalo to open to the public. Hearing none.
Motion by Mr. Walton and seconded by Mr. St. Maur to close public portion.

Motion by Mr. Morello and seconded by Mr. St. Maur to approve Housing Element and Fair Share Plan as prepared by Leah Furey Bruder Roll call vote: Mr. Walton, yes, Ms. Campbell, yes, Mr. Hall, yes, Mr. Keenan, yes, Mr. Kozeniewski, yes, Mr. Morello, yes, Mr. St. Maur, yes, Mr. Chicalo, yes, Mr. McGovern, yes.

OLD BUSINESS: None

MEMORIALIZATION OF RESOLUTIONS: Resolution 2025:08 James Heiser, 23 Evergreen Avenue, Block 96, Lot 5. Motion by Mr. St. Maur and seconded by Mr. Walton to memorialize Resolution 2025:08. Roll call vote: Mr. Walton, yes, Mr. Hall, yes, Mr. Keenan, yes, Mr. Kozeniewski, yes, Mr. Morello, yes, Mr. St. Maur, yes, Mr. DiGiacomo, yes, Mr. McGovern, yes.

Resolution 2025:09 Adopting a Fourth Round Housing Element and Fair Share Plan. Motion by Mr. Hall and seconded by Mr. St. Maur. Roll Call vote: Mr. Walton, yes, Ms. Campbell, yes, Mr. Hall, yes, Mr. Keenan, yes, Mr. Kozeniewski, yes, Mr. Morello, yes, Mr. St. Maur, yes, Mr. Chicalo, yes, Mr. McGovern, yes.

BOARD COMMENT: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: Motion by Mr. St. Maur and seconded by Mr. Walton to open for public comment. Hearing none. Motion by Mr. St. Maur and seconded by Mr. Walton to close the public portion. All ayes

COMMUNICATION/ORGANIZATION: Next meeting is July 24, 2025 at 6:30 pm

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Mr. Chicalo and seconded by Mr. Keenan to adjourn. All ayes.