

Pitman Planning & Zoning Board

Combined Meeting – December 15, 2025

Minutes

Call to Order and Open Public Meetings Act

The meeting of the Borough of Pitman Planning and Zoning Board was called to order pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, with notice of the time and date published in the South Jersey Times and the Courier Post, posted on the Borough Hall bulletin board, and advertised on the Borough of Pitman website.

Attendance

The secretary called the roll for the combined Planning & Zoning Board meeting.

- Chairman Aspras – Present
- Councilman Fitzpatrick – Present
- Barry Owen – Present
- Chuck Romick – Present
- Barbara Steck – Present
- Jack Franchi – Present
- Kevin Austin – Present
- Paul Bially – Present
- Jen Evans – Present
- Solicitor Aimino
- Borough Engineer Tim Kernan
- Secretary Sherry Bohl

Members Absent

- Ron Fijalkowski

- Patti Kelley
- Mayor Razze
- Tom Slenkamp

Approval of Minutes

October 20, 2025 Meeting Minutes

- Board members confirmed they had copies of the October minutes and were asked for any comments or questions; none were raised on the record.
- A motion to approve the October 2025 minutes was made by Chuck Romick
- The motion was seconded by Chairman Aspras

Roll Call Vote – October 20th 2025 Minutes

- Chairman Aspras – Yes.
- Councilman Fitzpatrick – Yes.
- Barry Owen – Yes.
- Chuck Romick – Yes.
- Barbara Stech – Abstain.
- Jack Franchi – Yes.
- Kevin Austin – Yes.
- Paul Bially – Yes.
- Jen Evans – Yes.

The October 20, 2025 minutes were approved with one abstention.

November 17, 2025 Meeting Minutes

- The Chair then moved to approval of the November 17, 2025 meeting minutes.
- Board members were asked for questions or comments; none were raised.
- A motion to approve the November 17, 2025 minutes was made by Chairman Aspras
- The motion was seconded by Jack Franchi

Roll Call Vote – November 17, 2025 Minutes

- Chairman Aspras – Yes.
- Councilman Fitzpatrick – Yes.
- Barry Owen – Yes.
- Chuck Romick – Yes.
- Barbara Stech – Yes.
- Jack Franchi – Yes.
- Kevin Austin – Yes.
- Paul Bially – Yes.
- Jen Evans – Abstain.

The November 17, 2025 minutes were approved with one abstention.

Historic Preservation / Carried Applications

- The Chair noted that Mr. Asbury was expected to appear regarding a proposed change in color to a previously reviewed historic application; this matter was held until later in the meeting to allow time for his arrival.

Public Comment (Items Not on the Agenda)

- The Chair opened the floor for public comments on items not listed on the agenda, clarifying that individuals present for the Fazzio redevelopment matter or murals would have separate opportunities to speak during those applications.
- No members of the public came forward to speak on off-agenda items.
- The Chair closed the public comment portion on items not on the agenda.

Fazzio Redevelopment Area Investigation

Introduction by Redevelopment Counsel

- The Chair introduced Emily Givens, redevelopment counsel for the Borough, and Tim Kernan, the planning consultant, and turned the floor over to them for the Fazzio/Elwood area redevelopment investigation.
- Ms. Givens stated she serves as redevelopment counsel for the Borough and explained that the discussion concerned an “area in need of redevelopment” determination, specifically a non-condemnation designation (no eminent domain), not the adoption of a full redevelopment plan at this time.

Description of Study and Legal Framework

- Ms. Givens explained that Mr. Kernan had prepared a preliminary investigation report titled “Elwood Area Determination of Needs Study – Scattered Sites in the vicinity of Elwood Avenue, Esplanade Avenue, and Muriel Avenue, Borough of Pitman, Gloucester County, New Jersey.”
- She stated that the report and supporting documentation had been made available to Board members and were on file with the Borough, detailing the parcels investigated, statutory criteria under the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, and the evidence supporting an “in need of redevelopment” finding.
- Ms. Givens emphasized that under the statute, not every individual parcel within a proposed redevelopment area must independently satisfy a specific criterion; some parcels may be included because they are integral to a larger redevelopment concept (e.g., centrally located, undersized, or necessary for functional design) pursuant to Section 3 of the law.

Swearing in of Planner

- At Ms. Givens’s request, the Board’s professional/Chair had Tim Kernan sworn in as a witness.
- Mr. Kernan affirmed that his testimony and his written report were true and accurate to the best of his knowledge, information, and belief, then stated his name for the record as Tim Kernan.

Overview of Study Area (Mr. Tim Kernan)

- Mr. Kernan addressed the Board, using a map to illustrate the study area, with the Board confirming that a visual aid would be helpful.

- He explained that the study area comprises 16 parcels totaling just under 15 acres, all located generally in the northeastern quadrant of the Borough, divided into an “east” area (around Elwood, Muriel, Clinton) and a “west” area (around Esplanade and Edgemoor, adjacent to the railroad tracks).
- He noted that the parcels span four zoning districts: R-3 Residential, C-2 Commercial, PI (Planned Industrial), and TRO (Transitional Residential Office).

Authorization and Data Collection

- Mr. Kernan recounted that his firm had been authorized by the Board approximately two years earlier (December 2023) and that the study area was later expanded to include three additional parcels near Esplanade and the railroad tracks.
- He described site visits conducted on January 9, 2024 and July 22, 2025, stating that photographs in the report were taken during these visits.
- He outlined the types of data reviewed, including historic aerial images, tax maps, zoning maps, ordinances, Google Maps/Earth/Street View, Nearmap aerial imagery, environmental records, code and fire violations, building permits, police records, tax cards, tax appeals, unpaid taxes, tax liens, and easements.
- Additional information came from New Jersey DEP DataMiner, GIS datasets, and other state records concerning floodplains, wetlands, contaminated sites, and habitat.

Statutory Criteria Explained

- Mr. Kernan explained that under the Local Redevelopment and Housing Law, there are eight statutory criteria, and satisfying any one is sufficient for a parcel to be designated as in need of redevelopment.
- For this study, he found that three criteria were applicable, along with Section 3 for some parcels.
- He summarized the applicable criteria:
 - Criterion A – Deterioration: Substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated, obsolescent buildings or conditions conducive to unwholesome living or working conditions.

- Criterion C – Public or Vacant Land: Publicly owned or long-vacant land (10+ years) unlikely to be developed through private capital due to location, access, topography, or soil conditions.
- Criterion D – Obsolete Layout and Design: Areas with buildings or improvements whose dilapidation, obsolescence, overcrowding, faulty design, excessive coverage, or deleterious land uses are detrimental to public health, safety, morals, or welfare.
- He also described Section 3, which allows inclusion of parcels not individually detrimental if their inclusion is necessary for effective overall redevelopment of the area.

Zoning and Physical Context

- Using the map, Mr. Kernan identified:
 - The R-3 lot as a large rectangular parcel between Elwood and Locust Avenues used largely for vehicles/employee parking.
 - The C-2 district as containing most Fazzio plant-related parcels between Elwood and Muriel.
 - Planned Industrial (PI) parcels along Esplanade/Edgemoor and a triangular lot on Muriel at the bend.
 - A TRO (Transitional Residential Office) lot on the north side of Muriel.
- He noted surrounding public-school properties, ball fields, and other public/exempt lands, with study parcels outlined in blue on his map.
- Mr. Kernan reported that DEP mapping showed floodplains and wetlands nearby but not on the study parcels, and that no parcels appeared on the state Known Contaminated Sites list.

Parcel-by-Parcel Findings and Conclusions

- Mr. Kernan summarized that detailed parcel evaluations are contained in pages ~35–52 of his written report, including block/lot, addresses, uses, ownership, observed conditions, and photographs.
- He then presented the conclusion section, summarizing which parcels met which criteria:
 - Block 97, Lots 1, 2, 3 (Esplanade/Edgemoor/railroad area – western section): Found to satisfy Criterion D (obsolete layout/design).

- Block 140, Lot 11 (north of Muriel at the bend): Found to meet Criterion D.
 - Block 140, Lot 12 (adjacent lot north of Muriel at the bend): Found to meet Criterion C (public/vacant land).
 - Block 141, Lot 501 and Block 142, Lots 401, 5, 6, 7, 701, 8 (Fazzio plant area and surroundings): Found to meet Criterion D, except for Lot 7, which met Section 3 only (inclusion beneficial for effective redevelopment despite not meeting a specific criterion).
 - Block 143, Lot 5 (rectangular lot on Elwood further east): Found to meet Criteria A and D (deterioration and obsolete layout).
 - Block 143, Lot 701 (Clinton Avenue): Found to meet Criterion D.
 - Block 144, Lot 2 (square lot between Elwood and Locust used for vehicle parking): Found to meet Criterion D and/or Section 3.
- Mr. Kernan stated that 15 of the 16 parcels met at least one criterion or Section 3.

Parcel Not Meeting Redevelopment Criteria

- Block 143, Lot 1 (northeast corner of Clinton and Elwood, single-family home) did not meet any of the statutory redevelopment criteria based on his analysis.
- He noted that, due to its age, the property could be considered within an area in need of rehabilitation, but the entire Borough had already been designated in need of rehabilitation in 2010 because more than half its properties were over 50 years old, making a separate designation unnecessary at this time.

Board Questions: Benefits and Process

- A Board member asked Mr. Kernan and Ms. Givens to discuss the advantages of a redevelopment designation for both the Borough and property owners/developer, particularly the Fazzio family.

Response – Planning Advantages (Tim Kernan)

- Mr. Kernan noted that Fazzio has operated on the subject properties for decades, but the current zoning pattern is fragmented, with four different districts overlaying their holdings, creating friction between existing use and zoning.

- He commented that there had been violations and possibly litigation over the years, and that a redevelopment designation would allow the Borough and Fazzio to collaboratively craft a redevelopment plan tailored to existing conditions instead of trying to force the site into underlying zoning that “never really matched up.”
- Such a plan could set custom standards and conditions that better satisfy Borough goals, Fazzio’s operational needs, and neighbor concerns.

Response – Incentives and Tax Benefits (Emily Givens)

- Ms. Givens added that once an area in need of redevelopment is designated and a redevelopment plan is adopted, the Borough can consider long-term tax exemptions or abatements (up to 30 years) for qualified projects, which can significantly benefit current owners (such as the Fazzio family) or future developers.
- She contrasted this with the existing Borough-wide rehabilitation designation, which supports five-year tax abatements tied to substantial property improvements, intended to ease transition to higher assessed values after improvements.
- The redevelopment designation provides a longer-term tool that can apply whether Fazzio continues operations with improvements, changes uses on-site, or sells to a new developer, with any owner able to work with the Borough within the adopted plan framework.
- Ms. Givens also noted that redevelopment status can enhance the Borough’s ability to coordinate infrastructure, easements, and road work in partnership with a developer, depending on the nature of the project.

Redevelopment Plan vs. Traditional Variance Process

- A Board member asked whether, under a redevelopment plan, certain variances could effectively be addressed up front, rather than requiring numerous variance applications for each project.
- Ms. Givens replied that in the redevelopment context, if the Borough Council supports a concept plan, specific deviations (e.g., height exceeding a 35-foot limit, front/side yard setbacks, or parking requirements) can be built into the redevelopment plan as permitted standards, eliminating the need for repeated D variances for those items.

- She emphasized that the redevelopment plan can be flexible in shaping bulk standards when the project is beneficial to both the Borough and the developer.
 - Mr. Kernan indicated that the current hearing represents the third step in the redevelopment process:
 - a. Governing body authorizes the Board to conduct a study.
 - b. The Board engages its professionals to prepare the investigation.
 - c. The Board holds a public hearing on the findings and makes a recommendation to the governing body.
 - Following the Board's action (not shown in this excerpt), the Governing Body would decide whether to formally designate the described parcels (with the identified exception) as an area in need of redevelopment.
-

- **Redevelopment Area Discussion**

- **Appeal Process and Redevelopment Framework**

- The planner explained that site plans within a redevelopment area are still reviewed under the Municipal Land Use Law, including normal appeal rights.
- A variance-free application under an adopted redevelopment plan is essentially a by-right application, making any appeal of an approval difficult to win and providing more certainty for development.

- **Tax Abatement and Non-Condemnation Status**

- A potential 30-year tax abatement would only be considered when a specific redevelopment proposal is brought to Borough Council, after the designation is in place.
- The area under discussion is proposed as a **non-condemnation** redevelopment area, meaning the borough is not granting itself eminent domain authority and cannot force owners to sell or redevelop.

- **Prior Redevelopment Examples**

- Prior borough redevelopment plans include the Pitman Hotel, Merriman's, and the Sony site, which have been generally successful in guiding desired development.
-

- **Comments from Property Owners and Counsel**

- **Fazzio Group Position**

- Attorney Amanda Moscillo stated on the record that the Fazzio group supports the redevelopment designation to reconcile current uses with zoning, address past violations, and prepare for future expansion.
- The Fazzio group owns most of the properties in the proposed area, with only two parcels identified as not under their ownership.

- **Public Comment – Gary E. Schenkel**

- Mr. Schenkel(owner of Block 142, Lots 7 and 701 at Elwood and Clinton) expressed concern about how the plan may affect his apartment and commercial building and whether the borough was trying to displace existing businesses.
- The planner and board representatives clarified:
- The board is considering an “area in need of redevelopment” designation, not a zoning change at this time.
- Mr. Schenkel property can continue its current, legal use; he cannot be forced to sell, and, absent violations, he may continue to operate as he has.
- If zoning is changed in the future, his use would be treated as a lawful pre-existing non-conforming use, and a new owner could step into that use if the property is sold.

- **Clarification on Condemnation and Sony Example**

- The Sony property was initially designated non-condemnation, but after many years of vacancy, violations, and failed private sales, the borough pursued a condemnation-eligible designation to facilitate reuse.
- Board members and counsel emphasized that the current study area is non-condemnation, that the borough has no intention to condemn the active Fazzio properties, and that any future move to condemnation would require a new process with notice and hearings.

- **Statement by Richard Fazzio**

- Mr. Fazzio explained that his family has operated in the borough for many years and wishes to remain, work cooperatively with the borough, and use the plan to make the property compliant and potentially expand.

- **Motion and Board Action – Redevelopment Designation**

- **Motion**

- Solicitor Aimino stated that the appropriate motion was to adopt the redevelopment report and its findings and recommend to the Mayor and Council that the study area, excluding Block 143, Lot 1, be declared a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment. The motion was properly made by Chairman Aspras and Second by Councilperson Fitzpatrick.

- **Roll Call Vote – Redevelopment Recommendation**

- Chairman Aspras – Yes
- Councilman Fitzpatrick – Yes
- Barry Owen– Yes
- Chuck Romick– Yes
- Barbara Stech– Yes
- Jack Franchi– Yes
- Kevin Austin– Yes
- Paul Bially – Yes
- Jen Evans – Yes

The motion carried, and counsel will prepare a formal resolution for consideration at the next month's meeting.

- **Historic Review – 28 S Broadway (Exterior Color)**

- **Applicant Discussion**

- Louise and Anthony Asbury appeared regarding the exterior color of their building in the historic district.
- The board sought confirmation that the proposed green color differed from the green on an adjacent building; the applicants confirmed they selected a darker green.

- **Motion and Vote – Color Approval**

- A motion was made to approve the dark green color as proposed by Chairperson Aspras and was seconded by Barry Owen

Roll call:

- Chairman Aspras – Yes
- Councilman Fitzpatrick – Abstain
- Barry Owen– Yes
- Chuck Romick– Yes
- Barbara Stech– Yes
- Jack Franchi– Yes
- Kevin Austin– Yes
- Paul Bially– Yes
- Jen Evans – Yes

The historic color application was approved.

Mural Discussion in Historic District

- **Existing Murals and Lack of Regulation**
- The board discussed several murals already installed in town, including one behind Chole's Cream Puff business (not visible from main traffic) and murals on Fahrenheit and a nearby Endgrain coffee shop. Also, concerns were raised regarding scenes to be painted at Peter Lumber.
- Members noted that there are no explicit regulations for murals in the historic ordinance, even though sign design (fonts, size, colors) is heavily regulated.
- Mr. Walt Madison was sworn in and gave testimony regarding colors and the Historic District.

- **Key Issues Raised**

Questions were raised about:

- Whether murals are signs or a separate category of treatment.

- Whether murals should be allowed in the historic district, and if so, under what standards.
- How to distinguish between a purely artistic mural and a commercial sign (e.g., including business names or advertising).

Direction to Counsel and Future Actions

- Members suggested that murals should at least require permits and be subject to historic color and design review, similar to building paint.
 - Legal counsel noted the need to research case law, especially regarding content-based regulation, and to explore how murals can be addressed within the existing historic and sign ordinances.
 - Several members emphasized the aesthetic and community benefits of murals, while acknowledging that regulation must be carefully crafted because views of what constitutes acceptable art differ.
-

Committee Reports

- **Zoning Officer, Kristine D’Amico:**
 - Councilman Fitzpatrick questioned the Music Museum Progress. Ms D’Amico responded that she is maintaining and keeping the file up to date and will remain vigilant regarding the issues.
 - Mr Aspras questioned the status of Milkweed. Ms. D’Amico reported that there was a very positive inperson meeting with the property owner and they will be submitting proposals early 2026.
 - Ms. D’Amico reported that she attended the League of Municipalities and attended a class named “Is it a Sign or is it Art” that was very informative and may request a copy of the presentation.
 - She also thanked the Board for their direction and guidance in her first completed year.
- **Site Plan Committee, Mr. Ronald Fijalkowski:** Absent no report.
- **Subdivision/Variance Committee,** Absent no report.
- **Environmental Commission, Mr. Thomas Slenkamp:** Emailed report:
 - The Env. Commission organized and managed a Community Hike on Dec. 6th to celebrate the opening of the new Hollywood Dell Trail. About 50 people turned out in a cool drizzle to participate in the 2.5 mile hike.

- Francesca Mundrick of the PEC, who led the Community Hike efforts, was selected to join the Board of Trustees at the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC). She begins her duties there in Jan, 2026.
- SOLitude Lake Management completed the initial phase of their assessment at Alcyon Lake, primarily a bathymetric survey. They will conduct further sampling in the Spring and then produce a report with recommendations for lake management.
- **Master Plan Committee**, Mr. Chuck Romick:
 - Master Plan is Due in 2027
- **Economic Development Committee**, Mr. Barry Owen:
 - Gathering Disc Golf Sponsorships signs for pledges in 2026 and
 - Awaiting NJ Film & TV Commission for acceptance and
 - The Winter Archway was erected.
- **Council Report**, Councilman Fitzpatrick.
 - The Armory Property was discussed briefly already and are still working on an agreement of sale. The Council was hoping to name a conditional redeveloper but no agreement was reached. Christmas in Pitman is underway with the Trolley and Santa every Friday and Saturday from 6-8pm.
 - He announced that this will be his final meeting. He has served on the committee for the past 6 years and remarked what a dedicated and professional group and it was a pleasure to serve with.
 - Chairman Aspras thanked Mr. Fitzpatrick for his 6 years of professionalism that he brought to the board.

Key Decisions and Actions

- Recommended to Mayor and Council that the identified study area (excluding Block 143, Lot 1) be designated a non-condemnation area in need of redevelopment; resolution to be drafted for the next meeting.
- Approved the dark green exterior color for the Asbury historic property.
- Directed the solicitor to research legal and ordinance options for regulating murals, including the distinction between murals and signs and appropriate procedures for review in the historic district.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Barbara Stech and seconded by Chairman Aspras. Ayes all

Respectfully submitted,

