

**Township of Manalapan**  
120 Route 522 & Taylors Mills Road  
Manalapan, NJ 07726

**Planning Board Minutes**  
**Public Meeting**  
**September 25, 2025**

Chairwoman Kathryn Kwaak called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm with the reading of the Open Public Meetings Act. The salute to the flag followed.

Mr. Castronovo read the TV Disclosure Statement and took the Roll Call of the Board.

In attendance at the meeting:       Barry Fisher, Todd Brown, John Castronovo, Barry Jacobson  
Chairwoman Kwaak, Jack McNaboe, Steve Kastell, Nunzio  
Pollifrone, Pat Givelekian

Absent from the meeting:           Chief Hogan, Mayor Eric Nelson

Also present:                       Richard Brigliadoro Esq, Planning Board Attorney  
Jennifer Beahm PE, PP Board Planner  
Jordan Rizzo, PE Planning Board Engineer  
Nancy McGrath, Recording Secretary

**Minutes for Review and Approval**

A Motion was made by Mr. Jacobson and Seconded by Mr. Brown to approve the minutes from the **September 11, 2025** meeting as written.

Yes:                       Brown, Castronovo, Jacobson, Kwaak, McNaboe, Pollifrone, Givelekian,  
Pollifrone

No:                       None

Absent:               Nelson

Abstain:               None

Not Eligible:       Fisher, Hogan, Kastell

**Resolution to Re-adopt Farmland Preservation**

**Amendment to the Farmland Preservation Plan**

A Motion was made by Mr. Kastell and Seconded by Mr. Fisher to approve the Resolution for the Amendment to the Farmland Preservation Plan.

Yes:                       Fisher, Brown, Castronovo, Jacobson, Kwaak, McNaboe, Kastell,

No:                       None

Absent:               Hogan, Nelson

Abstain:               None

Not Eligible:       Pollifrone, Givelekian

**Archaeologist Appointment Resolution**

At the September 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Board approved the appointment of E2 Project Management as the Planning Board Archaeologist. At this meeting, the Board had to approve and adopt the resolution.

Chairwoman Kwaak asked for a motion to adopt the E2 Project Management Resolution officially appointing them as the as the archaeologist for the Planning Board.

A Motion was made by Mr. McNaboe and Seconded by Mr. Jacobson to adopt the resolution appointing the firm of E2 Project Management in Rockaway, NJ.

Yes:                       Brown, Castronovo, Jacobson, Kwaak, McNaboe, Pollifrone, Givelekian

No:                       None

Absent:               Nelson

Abstain:               None

Not Eligible:       Fisher, Hogan, Kastell

**Application**

**PBE2510** - Manalapan Market, Inc.  
Minor Site Plan  
Convert to a 51-seat Restaurant  
299 HWY 9 – Block 10, Lot 21

Mr. Kenneth Pape, the attorney representing Manalapan Market, Inc., gave a brief overview of application. This is an application for site plan review and bulk variance relief most of which are variances that were approved from prior applications. The property, formerly known as Pauline's and later Vitamin World also had use variances for a U-Haul facility and an ambulance service. Those uses have been discontinued on the property, and the current owner, Mr. Michael Tarantul, now has an opportunity to lease the space to a new tenant for a restaurant, which is the focus of the application.

Before presenting testimony, Mr. Pape asked if the legal notices that were submitted prior to the hearing were received, reviewed, and if the Board has jurisdiction. Mr. Briigliodoro, the Board Attorney, confirmed that the Board does have jurisdiction to proceed with the application tonight.

Mr. Pape introduced the applicant, Mr. Durim Bytyqi, and he was sworn in by Mr. Briigliodoro. Mr. Bytyqi stated he has been managing restaurants for several years and is looking to bring a fine dining experience in an intimate setting to Manalapan. This will be a sit-down restaurant and some takeout service. Mr. Bytyqi expects 5-10% of the revenue will be takeout. The plan is to have 51 seats with eight employees including himself. Mr. Rizzo, the Board Engineer, stated the application said seven employees and that was the basis for the parking calculation keeping it a minor site plan. After some discussion, Mr. Bytyqi said that the restaurant could operate with seven employees, including himself, allowing the application to proceed under the minor site plan criteria

Mr. Rizzo explained to the Board why this was significant. The application is for a minor site plan and the criteria is you can't exceed the current parking requirement by 5 spaces. The restaurant category derives parking from number of employees and number of seats. There are three classifications of restaurants in the ordinance. Category 1 is a sit-down traditional style, Category 3 is a full-blown restaurant including take-out, delivery and maybe a drive-through. Category 2, is somewhere in between. The applicant is proposing a Category 1, if it becomes a Category 2 restaurant, then that increases the parking requirement and then it becomes a major site plan.

Ms. Beahm asked how the applicant plans to ensure that takeout operations remain within the 5–10% threshold, noting that exceeding this limit could shift the restaurant's classification and affect whether the application is considered minor or major. Mr. Pape responded that the 5–10% figure is an estimate based on the applicant's prior experience—particularly at Istanbul Bay in Marlboro. He also stated the ordinance does not explicitly require adherence to a specific percentage. If the township opts to conduct regular monitoring or if the restaurant cannot manage the takeout demand within the two designated carry-out parking spaces, the applicant would either abandon the takeout service or return to the Board.

As the discussion on takeout continued, Mr. Pape asked the Board to consider projected takeout volume is estimated at 5–10%. He emphasized that the establishment is primarily a sit-down restaurant, offering full service comparable to other fine-dining venues in the area. While takeout is offered as a convenience, it represents only a minor aspect of the overall operation. He reiterated that under the ordinance, a Category 1 restaurant is defined as one that does not engage in substantial carry-out service.

Mr. Rizzo requested clarification regarding the rear building on the property. Mr. Pape explained that the site includes two buildings: the front building previously housed a vitamin store, while the rear building had served as office space for both a U-Haul and the ambulance service. Mr. Bytyqi stated that the rear building will be used only for storage purposes and that no restaurant activities will occur in that space.

Mr. Rizzo proposed a condition of approval stipulating that the rear building be designated for restaurant-related storage only, with no allowance for private party events. In response to Mr. McNaboe's question regarding outdoor storage, Mr. Bytyqi clarified that all items not requiring refrigeration or immediate consumption would be stored within the rear building, and nothing will be stored outside.

Mr. Pape also mentioned that a refrigeration unit for food storage has been installed on the front building, with all necessary approvals and permits in place. Mr. Bytyqi noted the restaurant will operate daily from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. with the possibility of extending service by 20 to 30 minutes on Fridays and Saturdays. There will be an online ordering option and the restaurant will be BYOB.

Mr. Bytyqi explained that the restaurant will have a trash removal contract that allows for flexible scheduling—either daily pickups or service on an as-needed basis. For instance, if business is unusually busy and the trash reaches capacity, a next-day pickup can be arranged. The existing 10x10 enclosure is adequate for waste management, with gates that will remain closed. Within the enclosure, there are two three-yard containers designated for garbage and recycling. Recycling pickups will be scheduled based on the operational needs of the restaurant.

Multiple Board members questioned why the applicant did not opt for a major site plan to begin with. The Board Professionals responded that the decision rests with the applicant. Mr. Rizzo explained that the main difference are the fees and checklist requirements, and ultimately the language in the resolution. The number of parking spaces is also a factor in determining whether it is a major or a minor.

Mr. Pape again stated that if takeout is much more than anticipated, there is always an option to return to the Board. While the restaurant building itself is small in size, if it becomes so successful and additional parking is needed, the applicant can come back to request approval to pave part of the large stone area in the back and add a stormwater management system.

The Board asked for no idling signs in the two designated parking spots for carryout. There are no plans for roof-mounted solar and there will be an EV charging station.

Questions were raised regarding the procedures for take-out pickup and payment at the front of the restaurant. Mr. Bytyqi explained that most customers either pay online in advance or use wireless payment devices upon arrival. To minimize disruption to seated diners, take-out orders will be prepared and staged near the entrance for quick retrieval. Additionally, the applicant will offer curbside pickup for those who prefer not to enter the restaurant. At this time, there are no plans for outdoor dining and no valet parking.

The Board continued to raise questions regarding the restaurant's classification as either Category 1 or Category 2, noting that the site plan includes two dedicated parking spaces for takeout service which makes it lean towards a Category 2. Mr. Rizzo explained the parking breakdown: 27 spaces total, 2 are takeout, 4 for employees, 2 are ADA and 1 is an EV charger so the usable customer spaces are impacted and will be addressed during traffic testimony. There were questions as to why there are two dedicated take-out spots in the first place. Mr. Pape mentioned it came up during discussions with either Mr. Boccanfuso or Mr. Rizzo but not sure of the exact conversations. Either way, there was no objection if the dedicated spots were removed and just kept as general parking.

Ms. Beahm expressed that she did not understand the applicant's reluctance to classify the restaurant as Category 2 rather than Category 1, especially given that the municipality has no mechanism to enforce the level of takeout service associated with either category.

Mr. Pape responded that the legal notice for the application did not specify a restaurant category. It simply requested site plan approval with bulk variance relief and described the restaurant by its size, number of seats, and physical characteristics of the property. He noted that he had not anticipated such an in-depth discussion regarding classification and stated that the applicant would defer to the Board's judgment in determining the appropriate category. Mr. Pape reiterated the applicant's proposal - the restaurant is designed with 51 seats, intended for wait service, and includes provisions for limited takeout - in line with current industry practices.

Mr. Brigliadoro stated that the definition of a Category 1 restaurant in the ordinance specifies it operates without substantial carryout service, yet the term "substantial" is not clearly defined. In contrast, Category 2 allows for a restaurant to be intentionally designed with carryout service, highlighting that there is flexibility within both classifications.

Peter W. Strong, with Crest Engineering of Millstone, was introduced as the design engineer to the Board and briefly shared his professional background. He has BS in Civil Engineering and is a licensed Professional Engineer and a licensed Professional Planner. All licenses are currently in good standing. Chairwoman Kwaak deemed his credentials sufficient.

Mr. Strong presented two exhibits:

- **Exhibit A-1:** Aerial Site Display dated September 24, 2025
- **Exhibit A-2:** Site Rendering Display, also dated September 24, 2025 – which was the site plan submitted to the Board for consideration.

The property is located on Block 10, Lot 21, along the west side of Route 9, north of Taylors Mills Road. The property includes:

- A 3,300 sq. ft. front building formerly occupied by Pauline's Health Foods
- A 1,500 sq. ft. rear building previously used by U-Haul
- 23 existing paved parking spaces
- A stone-surfaced area in the rear approved for trailer and vehicle storage

The property is located within the C-2 zoning district and encompasses 2.7 acres. It includes several previously approved nonconforming conditions, none of which are being modified under the current application

- Lot size below the required 4 acres
- Frontage of approximately 185 feet (200 feet required)
- Front setback of 20 feet and side yard setback of 31 feet (50 feet required)
- Parking spaces within 18 feet of the property line (20 feet required)

Proposed Restaurant Conversion - The application proposes converting the former health food store into a 51-seat restaurant. Site features include:

- The former U-Haul office repurposed as restaurant storage
- Circulation paths and paved walkways connecting building and parking area
- Two ADA-compliant parking spaces are proposed, meeting the requirement for sites with 26–50 spaces
- A dumpster is located in the rear left corner for easy access
- Four additional parking spaces are proposed in the stone area for employee parking will be paved to meet parking requirements.
- No curbing in the stone area but there is a gate and a sign posted for employee parking only.
- Landscaping will be refurbished to match the previously approved plan; Shari Spiro inspected the site earlier that day
- Lighting will be checked and maintained to ensure full operation
- Stormwater systems, including rain gardens installed during the U-Haul development, will be reviewed to confirm proper functionality

Mr. Strong confirmed that pedestrian access from the parking area to the restaurant entrance was discussed with the Board Professionals and will be addressed in the site design to ensure safe and efficient movement.

There is a landscaped area immediately adjacent to the front of the building. A four-foot-wide sidewalk is proposed with some type metal fencing to prevent customers from inadvertently walking into the travel lane. The travel lane is 12-foot-wide one-way drive aisle. As far as sidewalks, the applicant would contribute to the sidewalk fund rather than installing a sidewalk on Route 9 frontage since it would need DOT approval which could be a lengthy process. Mr. Pape noted that one compliant sign was proposed for the building, along with a new face for the existing pylon sign, both of which received administrative approval from Zoning.

No new DEP verifications or Letters of Interpretation (LOIs) were secured for this application. Mr. Strong explained that with the original U-Haul application they obtained wetlands delineation and buffer zones, as well as the stream corridor along Milford Brook were established. Mr. Rizzo recommended a condition of approval that no disturbance beyond the existing disturbance line without first returning to this Board and obtaining all proper verifications.

Mr. Rizzo asked for the status of the monitoring well that is on site. Mr. Strong stated that his recollection that the monitoring wells were installed by the owner of the adjacent property. They placed the wells around their own site to monitor an environmental issue they were dealing with—not one affecting this property directly. He could not confirm if those wells were still in use since there was no involvement from his team. Ms. Beahm stated the Board needs some type of sign-off to confirm there are no groundwater- related issues.

Ms. Beahm recommended curbing the entire perimeter of the gravel lot in the rear given the environment constraints and to prevent expansion or “creep.” She wants a physical boundary so that gravel area does not expand over time.

Mr. Pape stated that the stone area has remained unchanged for the past 14 years. The applicant is proposing to pave only four parking stalls, with no intention of utilizing the remainder of the stone area. He noted that the entire stone section is enclosed by a fence and expressed concern that additional paving would introduce unnecessary costs and alter the existing stormwater flow across the site.

Following recommendations from the Board, the applicant has agreed to pave and stripe three additional parking stalls within the gravel area for employee use, helping to free up more spaces for customers. This area is already equipped with an existing light fixture to support employee parking.

No architectural modifications are planned for the building; however, the owner will apply stucco to the side façade to match the front, ensuring a cohesive appearance where the refrigerated area was added.

Mr. Pape introduced Mr. John Rea the traffic engineer for the applicant. Mr. Rea was sworn in and shared his background, noting that he is a licensed professional engineer in the state of New Jersey. His area of expertise is traffic engineering, which includes parking analyses. He also mentioned that he has appeared before this board on numerous occasions and his license is currently in good standing. The Chair acknowledged his credentials and approved him to testify as an expert in his field.

Mr. Rea explained they do not need an NJDOT permit and can qualify for a Letter of No Interest, as long as the driveways remain unchanged, no work is done in the state right-of-way, and no more than 100+ additional peak-hour trips. Based on his calculations, the proposed restaurant will not meet that threshold and then reviewed the trip generation table that was included in the traffic statement.

With regards to parking and circulation—starting with parking. Based on the town’s requirements, one parking space for every three seats. With 51 seats, that equates to 17 spaces. Adding one space for each of the seven employees brings the total to 24. We also need one additional space for the rear building, which will be used for storage. That brings the total required parking to 25 spaces. This consists of 23 spaces located in the front, plus one additional space credited for the EV charging station, bringing the total to 24. In addition, four more spaces were initially proposed in the rear, but that number is now being expanded to seven to ensure there is one designated parking space for each employee within the gated area. With these adjustments, the parking requirement will be fully satisfied.

Mr. Rea reviewed the proposed circulation plan and found no concerns. The design features a bifurcated layout, with an entrance located at the north end of the site and an exit at the south end. Given the existing pavement in front of the building - between the Route 9 curb and the building, there was an opportunity to utilize that space as a loop road, allowing vehicles to circulate efficiently around the building.

To support pedestrian access, they will be striping a 4-foot-wide crosshatched area along the north side of the building. This will provide a clear and safe pathway for individuals walking toward the front door of the restaurant.

Additionally, as discussed earlier, a 3- to 4-foot Jerith-style fence to separate the pedestrian walkway from the adjacent 12-foot-wide circulation aisle that runs parallel to Route 9. This barrier will help protect pedestrians from vehicles traveling northbound along the one-way aisle, which will operate at a low speed.

To reinforce the one-way traffic pattern, the pavement will be striped with directional arrows and include clear markings such as “One-Way” and “Do Not Enter.” This should help prevent vehicles from entering from Route 9 and mistakenly driving southbound toward the rear parking area.

The handicapped parking spaces will be relocated to the right side of the entrance, making them the first two spaces accessible from Route 9. Furthermore, the blue crosshatched area between these spaces will be extended across the travel aisle to connect with the parking spaces on the

north side. This will create a clearly delineated walkway for people to cross through the parking lot.

The Board raised concerns about vehicles being able to exit onto Route 9, particularly during the afternoon and evening when traffic is heaviest. Mr. Rea responded that the site is not anticipated to be a significant traffic generator compared to other businesses along the corridor, and that vehicles should be able to exit with patience, even during peak hours.

Another issue discussed was the lack of direct drop-off access at the building's entrance during inclement weather. Mr. Rea explained that due to the circulation pattern, patrons would need to pull to the right side of the building to drop off passengers.

Parking adequacy was also questioned, given the ordinance requirement of one space per three seats. A Board member mentioned from experience with fine-dining settings, that it is common for two couples to arrive in separate vehicles, which can significantly increase parking demand. Mr. Rea performed quick calculations based on that scenario and concluded that the proposed plan would still nearly meet the parking demand. Noting that not every table will correspond to one car with two people, there could be three or four people in one car. Even though there is more room for additional tables, the applicant believes the current parking is sufficient.

A follow-up question was asked to confirm the traffic circulation pattern around the building. It was clarified that circulation will be counterclockwise, including movement along the front of the building. This means that if a driver enters the lot and finds no available parking, they won't need to exit back onto Route 9 and loop around via Taylor Mills Road. Instead, they can continue around the building within the site's circulation loop. When asked about a clockwise circulation plan was considered, Mr Rea explained the current circulation has been in place for quite some time, and changing it would require approval from the Department of Transportation (DOT). While it could improve passenger drop-off convenience, concerns were raised about safety and congestion, particularly due to sharp turns and potential backups onto Route 9. Changing the established circulation would also require DOT approval. Ultimately, it was agreed that a clockwise flow could create more issues than it resolves

Another question was raised about the possibility of using angled parking. Mr. Rea explained that this configuration would lead to the loss of one parking space per aisle and no gains for the applicant. Regarding parking space dimensions, it was confirmed that the current stalls are 10 feet wide. Reducing them to 9 feet could potentially add one additional space, but only in the northern row of parking, which has more than 10 stalls. This change would also require Board approval for a variance.

Mr. Pape said the applicant's direct presentation for the Board's consideration is complete. Before going to the Board for voting, there was a lot of discussion surrounding how the stoned area will be utilized.

It was determined that, the seven stalls will be paved for employee parking now. A concept design will be developed to allow for up to 15 additional spaces. The applicant can decide whether all of those spaces will be needed. Once the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is issued, the clock will start, and the applicant will have 12 months to expand the parking lot if necessary. The applicant will have the flexibility to build only what is needed. Any remaining stone-area will be removed and restored to lawn to prevent vehicles from parking on the gravel.

Chairwoman Kwaak, opened the application to the public. No one from the public came forward to question or comment and the public portion of the agenda was closed.

The Board Professionals outlined the conditions and then Chairwoman Kwaak asked for a motion.

- The application is now classified as a preliminary and final major site plan and simply call it a restaurant so the applicant is not limited by a category 1 designation
- Back building will be storage only
- No outside storage
- Trash hauler once a day
- Applicant is limited to 51 seats and 7 employees until the parking is constructed
- The applicant will submit a plan to build-out the parking lot for review and approval
- All landscape and lighting to be operational per the 2011 plan
- The rain gardens function as originally designed and certified by engineer
- Monitoring well shall be investigated and determine if they can be removed

- No further disturbance beyond the existing disturbance line (gravel) as it relates to all the environmental constraints.

Mr. Castonovo made the Motion and it was Seconded by Mr. Fisher to approve the application with all the conditions discussed during testimony.

Yes: Fisher, Brown, Castronovo, Jacobson, Kwaak, McNaboe, Kastell, Pollifrone, Givelekian  
No: None  
Absent: Nelson, Hogan  
Abstain: None  
Not Eligible: None

**Ordinance Review/Zoning Amendment**

**ORDINANCE NO. 2025-20**

Land Use Ordinance No. 2025-20 introduced by the Manalapan Township Committee on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025 with a public hearing date of October 29, 2025.

An Ordinance of The Township of Manalapan, in the County of Monmouth, New Jersey, Amending and Supplementing Chapter 95, “Development Regulations”, of the Code of the Township of Manalapan, Exhibit 5-3 And 5-4 Pertaining to Permitted Uses in Residential, Commercial, Industrial and Office Districts and Curbs and Sidewalks on Vacant Lots

**Planning Review**

Ms. Jennifer Beahm, Planning Board Planner, presented a brief overview of a proposed ordinance amendment aimed at refining and clarifying the permitted use list. The changes include cleaning up vague language, redefining certain uses, and adding new ones such as indoor recreation. These updates are designed to align with the Master Plan’s goals of promoting economic development and maintaining current standards. The amendment also involves tightening definitions and evaluating bulk standards to ensure consistency with present-day needs. Ms. Beahm recommended the Board approve the amendment as it is consistent with the Master Plan.

The Board members had no questions, and no members of the public came forward to ask questions or comment.

A Motion was made by Mr. Jacobson and Seconded by Mr. Castronovo, that Ordinance 2025-20 is substantially consistent with the Master Plan.

Yes: Fisher, Brown, Castronovo, Jacobson, Kwaak, McNaboe, Kastell, Pollifrone, Givelekian  
No: None  
Absent: Nelson, Hogan  
Not Eligible: None

No members of the public came forward to speak on non-agenda items so Chairwoman Kwaak closed the public portion of the meeting.

Chairwoman Kwaak announced that the next Planning Board meeting will be October 9th at 7:30 PM. Mr. Kastell made the motion to adjourn at approximately 9:50pm.

Nancy McGrath  
Recording Secretary