

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

**Planning Board Minutes**  
**Public Meeting**  
**February 12, 2026**

Chairwoman Kathryn Kwaak called the meeting to order at 7:02 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: John Castronovo, Todd Brown, Barry Jacobson, Chairwoman Kwaak, Jack McNaboe, \*Chief Hogan, Steve Kastell, Nunzio Pollifrone, Pat Givelekian

Absent from the meeting: Barry Fisher, Eric Nelson

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

**Minutes:**

A Motion was made by Mr. Castronovo and Seconded by Mr. Kastell to approve the Minutes of January 08, 2026 as written.

Yes: Brown, Castronovo, Jacobson, Kwaak, McNaboe, Kastell, Pollifrone, Givelekian  
No: None  
Absent: Nelson, Fisher, \*Hogan (arrived 7:05PM)  
Abstain: None  
Not Eligible: None

**Ordinance Review – 2026-01**

An ordinance amending Chapter 96, “Gaitway Redevelopment Area,” of the Code of the Township of Manalapan, Section 96-2, “Adoption of Redevelopment Plan,” to adopt an amended and supplemented Gaitway Redevelopment Plan.

Ms. Jennifer Beahm, PP, explained the redevelopment plan was previously approved and is now being amended. The proposed amendment introduces several additional permitted uses for the front portion of the site, where the ice rink is planned, and provides greater flexibility in the range of allowable uses.

Ms. Beahm recommended that the Board determine that this amendment, although minor, is consistent with the Township’s Master Plan, particularly with respect to the economic development objectives along the State Highway 33 corridor.

The Board asked if there was any additional land included in the proposal that was different from the previous redevelopment plan. Ms. Beahm stated that no additional land is included just more permitted uses. There were no further questions or comments from the Board, and no members of the public came forward to speak.

A Motion was made by Mr. Jacobson and Seconded by Mr. Brown, that Ordinance 2026-01 is substantially consistent with the Master Plan.

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

### **Application**

**PBE2528 - Village at St. James  
Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan**  
Lewis Street - Block 48.01 Lot 8.04  
Multi-Family Affordable Housing  
10 Units – Townhouses  
Carried from 11/13/25 mtg

Mr. Steven H. Merman of the law firm of Javerbaum & Wurgaft, the attorney representing the applicant, stated the team made plan revisions based on prior comments from both the professionals, Board members, and the public.

Mr. Merman summarized some of the issues/concerns raised at the previous hearing before introducing his first witness.

- Since the project is a rental development, the applicant does not intend to install recreational improvements due to associated liability concerns. He noted, however, that the site will include some open space.
- He also reported that, according to correspondence received from the school district, any school-aged children residing in the development would utilize the existing bus stops on Wood Avenue, or a new stop would be established there if necessary. The buses will not turn down Lewis Street. (Later marked as Exhibit A4)
- The applicant did make contact with the neighbor on the corner of Wood and Lewis and the most recent feedback is that he wished to review the updated plans once they are submitted to the Township.

Mr. Oliver Franklin, the project's architect of record, was recalled as the next witness. He remained under oath from the prior hearing, and his professional license was confirmed to be current.

Mr. Merman indicated he did away with his standard opening statement because the project description contained in the planner's report accurately reflects the nature and status of the application. He is going to rely on Item A of the planner's report as the opening description of the project.

Mr. Franklin's five-page handout was distributed to the Board, which was marked as Exhibit A-3 (dated February 11, 2026).

Mr. Merman asked Mr. Franklin to review the architectural changes that were made as a result of the comments and recommendations from the Board at the November 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

- The first page rendering is consistent with what was shown at the last meeting.
- Page two (overall floor plan of all the units) - the only change is the relocation of the patios on units 9 and 10 from the front to the rear of the units. The bedroom counts did not change; only the door moved.
- Page three was changed to show crash-resistant planters between the drive and the building.
- The next page, ADA accessibility – the plans do meet the federal and state standards and the municipality's requirements. The first-floor powder room has been revised to an adaptable bathroom that can be converted to a fully accessible bathroom in the future, including space for a tub and wall supports for grab bars. The open area on the first floor was also modified so it could function as a bedroom if needed, consistent with township codes. These changes apply only to the first-floor layout
- The common dumpster area was eliminated so each unit will have a trash room in the kitchen near the kitchen in the corridor.

In response to Board questions/comments to the architect:

- Mr. Merman confirmed that there will be no trash stored outside. Also, the architect will make sure the renderings/elevations/plans match and will add a feature to the blank wall on Unit 10 to improve the look of the façade.
- All units are adaptable (Type A) and they all have bathrooms that are adaptable. Entrances will be level going into them.
- The applicant will revisit the trash room proposal in the home since it is not ideal leaving garbage and cans in the house until the weekly garbage pickup.
- Recreational amenity - the applicant agreed to re-examine adding a small playground area especially since there is room now that the dumpster area has been removed. Since this is an affordable rental project, it is unlikely that the residents will be allowed to install their own.

Mr. Robert Curley, the project planner and engineer, was called as the next witness. Mr. Brigliadoro confirmed that Mr. Curley had previously testified, remained under oath, and that his professional license continues to be valid and in full force.

Mr. Curley was able to contact the owner of Lot 11 and shared an exhibit similar to the one presented at the hearing. The only difference between the neighbor's version and the current exhibit is the addition of the sight-lines requested by the county. Mr. Curley confirmed that no other changes were shown to the neighbor, though the sight-line additions do represent changes from the plans previously reviewed by the Board.

Mr. Curley explained the modifications to the plans before the Board since the previous meeting.

- Lewis Street will be widened to 30 feet along its entire length.
- Sidewalk extended to Wood Avenue and is entirely in the right-of-way. Two small trees and a hedgerow that runs parallel with Lewis Street will need to be removed.
- Curb radii at the intersection will be expanded, creating a wider, safer intersection.
- Elimination of the trash storage area (dumpster)
- Switching the patios from the fronts of Units 9 and 10 to the rear of those units.
- None of the changes to the plan affected the stormwater management on the site.

Since there was discussion earlier about a recreation area, Mr. Curley said a small tot-lot could possibly be placed beyond the turnaround on the property but needs to make sure there is adequate room for playground safety setbacks.

Mr. Merman asked Mr. Curley to comment on the trash storage after hearing the Board's comments tonight.

- Trash storage can be placed in front of each unit instead of the trash room inside.
- Or revert back to the single dumpster enclosure previously shown at the end of Lewis Street.
- If they go back to a dumpster, they should still be able to accommodate some sort of recreational space.

Mr. Curley testified that there is not enough space to create a conforming cul-de-sac which is why they are not changing the hammerhead design at the end of the street.

Mr. Merman asked Mr. Curley to address the concerned raised about the sufficiency of the parking, noting that the project does meet RSI standards.

- The ordinance requires 25 parking stalls, and the project provides 27. With the EV credit, the total effectively increases by three additional stalls, resulting in five more spaces than required.
- With the widening of Lewis Street, the street will be able to accommodate approximately 12 parallel parking spaces without reducing any existing homeowner parking. These on-street spaces are in addition to the parking provided on the applicant's property.

Mr. Merman asked Mr. Curley to review the professional comments with regards to planning.

- The project meets the parking requirement.
- Fence detail proposes a four-foot split-rail fence with wire mesh which complies with the six-foot height limited.
- A waiver is needed for the Wood Avenue curb and sidewalk requirement, as previously testified, and the applicant would contribute to the Township's sidewalk fund.
- Proofs for the C variance for the right-of-way width is justified because the design exceeds RSI standards and poses no detriment to the zone or public good.

Ms. Beahm noted that she takes no exceptions to any of the relief being requested. She also asked for confirmation that the area past the bump-out, by the turnaround, will not be dedicated to the town. Mr. Curley confirmed that a dedication to the town is no longer considered.

Mr. Rizzo's reviewed his engineering comments/questions with Mr. Curley.

- Parking layout at Unit 10 – The driveway had originally been placed to the side because the prior layout had the patio in the front. With the patio now relocated to the rear, the driveway could be shifted which would allow all the parking stalls be banked together. Mr. Curley agreed that he can change the parking stall locations at Unit 10.
- Road will be paved from edge-of-pavement to edge-of-pavement
- Belgian block curb would run the full length of the subject side of the street from Wood Avenue all the way to turnaround.
- The curb will stop at the edge of the turnaround, and everything south of that point will remain edge-of-pavement as it exists today. The plan is to straighten that edge, remove any extra pavement, and restore the area to lawn for a clean, uniform line.
- Stop sign and stop bar will be provided at the end of the road.
- The curb ramp currently leads nowhere within county right-of-way and that county input is needed. Mr. Curley reported that the county has requested a meeting with the board's professionals to review the intersection layout, and the question about the handicap ramp can be addressed at that meeting.
- Extending the sidewalk to Wood Avenue involves no utility conflicts, only removal of landscaping which is in the right-of-way. An apron will be provided for the property owner's driveway as well.
- The intersection reconfiguration and the widened curb radii will require the relocation of an existing utility pole, which will need to be coordinated with the power company.
- Since the patios will be relocated on Units 9 and 10, additional inlets will be added for drainage.
- A car-turning template showing cars parked on the southeast side and a vehicle backing out of the driveway to show that maneuver works.

Mr. McNaboe asked about responsibility for snow removal, lawn care, and basin maintenance. Mr. Merman confirmed that the owner will hire a property maintenance company to handle landscaping and maintenance.

Mr. McNaboe also mentioned how garbage handling will need a different approach since there was an objection to the single dumpster option. He suggested that, regardless of the final garbage solution, the landscaping and maintenance contractor's responsibilities could include routine debris cleanup.

Mr. Kastell asked about owners' responsibility for snow removal. Mr. Merman said since these are rental units, there will be rules and regulations the tenants will need to follow with regards to the driveways in front of the houses.

Mr. Pollifrone asked for some form of illumination around the basin with the fence for safety reasons. The applicant agreed to install motion-sensor lights at either end of the basin as well as four-foot-high post and rail fence with anti-climbing mesh.

Mr. Brown asked the applicant to consider shifting Units 9 and 10 forward, since the patios were moved to the rear so this way the patios could be larger than the 6'x12' wide being proposed on those units.

Mr. Franklin was recalled for additional questions and comments. He stated he could shift Units 9 and 10 forward which would then involve shifting the driveway. He also stated the condenser units will be in the back near the patios and there will be no exterior utility closets.

Chief Hogan asked the architect to address how the fire-sprinkler system would be accommodated within the units, noting that a small utility room is typically required for the fire main unless an alternative design is used. Mr. Franklin said the layout can be adjusted utilizing the kitchen trash rooms. That will be worked out once the final design comes in for review and approval. Mr. Franklin also agreed to revisit the layout on the first floor Unit 1C to show how adaptability will be accommodated.

There was earlier discussion about the large blank wall on Unit 10. Mr. Franklin was reminded the goal is to break up the space on both floors to maintain uniformity and consistency with the rest of the building. The Board discussed flipping the kitchen and utility room to allow installation real windows as well as two windows on the second floor, and Mr. Franklin agreed this reconfiguration is feasible.

Chairwoman Kwaak opened the meeting to the public, and the following members of the public came forward. Each member of the public was sworn in prior to making comments.

**Mr. Thomas Schwerthoffer of 9 McBride Road, Manalapan, NJ:**

- Questioned lack of curbing and parking
  - o No curbing on the opposite side of the street may cause damage to existing homeowner's lawns especially with delivery trucks driving on lawns or people turning around on the street.
  - o He thought the additional parking demand from the project will worsen this problem and that curbing is needed to protect properties.

Mr. Merman explained that adding curbing would require a substantial redesign of the stormwater system and would impose a hardship on the applicant, noting that the condition already exists and that the redevelopment plan does not obligate the applicant to address off-site conditions.

- **Recreation area location:** Mr. Curley explained the recreation area would be at the terminus of Lewis Street in the small triangular area near the hammerhead.
- **Opposition to a dumpster:** He reiterated strong objections to dumpster service due to noise, increased garbage truck traffic, and trash blowing around, noting their neighborhood currently uses individual cans.

Mr. Schwerthoffer also asked if the applicant reached out to the church. Mr. Curley explained his team did not reach out to the church but any potential sewer access can be done independently from this project.

**Eric Sparks – 106 Wood Avenue (Lot 11), Manalapan, NJ:**

Mr. Sparks read a letter he prepared in order to ask the questions to the applicant's team. He asked how much of his property would be affected by the proposed sidewalk and whether his driveway would be reduced, expressing concern about where his family and visitors would be able to park.

Mr. Merman explained that the proposed sidewalk and roadway improvements do not encroach on the resident's property and that any loss of space would occur only within the municipal right-of-way. The driveway apron will be reconstructed to work with the new sidewalk. Regarding parking, he said that widening Lewis Street will create space for roughly 12 on-street parking spaces opposite the project, resulting in more available parking than exists today.

Mr. Sparks also mentioned that the basin might attract geese along with the geese dropping and the potential for geese to get hit by a car. Mr. Merman said he could not address the geese issue and deferred it to the town.

**Brenda Wilson – 8 Lewis Street, Manalapan, NJ**

Ms. Wilson expressed concern about how parking and garbage collection would function once the development is built. She explained that garbage trucks currently must back down the dead-end street, and she worried they would be unable to maneuver if cars were parked along the roadway.

Mr. Merman responded that a hammerhead turnaround has been designed and turning templates show the garbage truck will be able to turn around. He also noted that the entire road will be slightly widened. Ms. Wilson then asked where the development's entrance would be, and it was clarified that there is no single entrance—each unit will have its own driveway connecting directly to Lewis Street, with each driveway accommodating two cars.

**Demond Sparks– 88 Wood Avenue, Manalapan, NJ**

Mr. Sparks asked whether the proposed sidewalk and related improvements would affect his mother's property. Mr. Merman explained that all work—including the sidewalk—would occur entirely within the township's right-of-way, not on private property. He said the county may still want to address any sight-line issues for the intersection.

Mr. Curley explained that required intersection sight-distance lines—based on roadway speed and AASHTO standards—extend across the frontage of Lot 11 and also across the frontage of the property on the opposite side of the intersection (the east side of Lot 10, Block 40). These

sight-line requirements dictate the clear-view area needed for safe left- and right-turn movements at the intersection. Mr. Merman stated at this time t no decisions have yet been made by the county regarding potential sight-line improvements along Wood Avenue, and any such requirements would fall entirely under county jurisdiction, not the municipality or the applicant. The only confirmed improvement at this time is the sidewalk along the applicant's frontage on Lewis Street, which remains fully within the municipal roadway.

He also mentioned a meeting with the county is expected next week to discuss sight-line requirements and intersection geometry. Mr. Sparks asked that the next time the county or the engineer is on site, he would like to be included in the discussions to get a visual of what exactly is happening regarding the sight-lines.

Mr. Curley presented sheet 10 (landscaping plan) to show Mr. Sparks where and what type of plantings would be utilized. The current proposal is an evergreen hedge at 3-feet in height and grow to about 10 feet. Mr. Sparks requested a fence for increase privacy with the landscaping.

**Gregory Hodge, 100 Wood Avenue, Manalapan, NJ.**

Mr. Hodge expressed concern about stormwater potentially running under his house again after he fixed the issue himself. Mr. Merman explained that, according to engineering testimony, the stormwater displaced by the project will be directed into the existing detention basin and should not alter the current flow patterns across his property. Also, the project should not affect the water table or cause flooding. He added that if unexpected changes occur, that would need to be addressed. Mr. Rizzo further explained that the existing grading does drain towards Mr. Hodge's property, but once the road is repaved, a new stormwater inlet on the project side will capture runoff and direct it towards the basin. This should, in theory, reduce the amount of water directed towards his house and improve overall drainage conditions. Mr. Hodge's reiterated that he hopes this doesn't cause more problems with water running through his property.

**Leonard Iarossi, 6 Lewis Street, Manalapan, NJ.**

Mr. Iarossi asked whether the utility pole across from his property would be relocated as part of the project. Mr. Curley confirmed that the utility poles will indeed be moved and repositioned between the new curb and the proposed sidewalk. He also mentioned that church events routinely create parking overflow on Lewis Street. With parking removed on the development side, overflow parking would shift to his side, which is why he supports Mr. Schwerthoffer's comments about curbing along his frontage to prevent vehicles from encroaching onto his property.

No one else from the public came forward, so Chairwoman Kwaak closed public.

Mr. Castronovo asked who would be responsible for the cost of any improvements required to meet county sight-line standards due to increased traffic from the proposed development. Mr. Merman clarified that such costs would not fall on the homeowner; they would be borne by the municipality or the county. Mr Merman further stated that while the property itself is not taken, once the sight-line work is completed, any future plantings or obstructions placed by the homeowner that interfere with the required sight line would become the homeowner's responsibility to address.

Mr. McNaboe commented that once the road is repaved, a five-year moratorium will prohibit any excavation, which is why he urged coordination with the church now if they intend to connect to water or sewer. Mr. Merman added that the church's reverend was present at the meeting and noted that construction is still at least six months away, providing ample time to coordinate with the church regarding any potential connection. Mr. McNaboe also encouraged the applicant's team to explore individual trash enclosure options rather than dumpsters and Mr. Merman agreed.

Mr. Merman closed by asking the Board to consider granting preliminary approval in order to gain traction with their funding sources since it will demonstrate the project is moving forward towards construction. The original intent was to request both preliminary and final approval, but several items still need to be resolved, including the location of the tot lot, the basin lighting, the fence requested by the adjacent homeowner, and finalizing a solution for the trash. Mr. Merman felt that he satisfied the burden of proof for the variances and demonstrated consistency with redevelopment plan so asked the Board to vote favorably.

Mr. Rizzo recapped the conditions discussed at tonight's meeting before going to the Board for a vote:

- Trash solution – the last option discussed was placing it in the front

- Crash-resistant planters in the front, but that would mean trash would be somewhere else
- Fence around the basin will be four feet tall with posts and wire mesh
- The tot lot will be located in the northeast corner – subject to approval by the board engineer
- Two additional windows on Unit 10's front elevation
- Relocate the driveway in front of Unit 10 so it aligns with the other driveways, and all parking stalls will be banked.
- Provide a six-foot vinyl fence between Unit 1 and Lot 11
- Widen the road to 30 feet on the southeast side and any pavement removed will be restored to lawn.
- Provide a concrete apron on Block 48, Lot 11 for the existing driveway.
- Review accessibility of the first-floor room option, specifically for Unit 9.
- Will place AC units in the rear
- A car-turning templat showing a vehicle backing out of the driveways with street parking on the opposite side of the road.
- Two motion-sensor lights will be installed at the basin
- Move Unit 9 and 10 forward if feasible

A Motion was made by Mr. Hogan and Seconded by Mr. Jacobson, to give preliminary site plan approval to the Village of St. James.

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

Chairwoman Kwaak opened the meeting to public comment on non-agenda items. No members of the public come forward, so she closed public.

Ms. McGrath read the resolution authorizing an executive session. Chief Hogan made the motion for executive session and seconded by Chairwoman Kwaak. All were in favor, none were opposed.

Chief Hogan made the motion to adjourn after Executive Session.

Nancy McGrath  
Recording Secretary