



# BASS RIVER TOWNSHIP

## (Burlington County)

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### Bass River Township Planning Board Meeting September 21, 2022

The regular meeting of the Bass River Township Planning board was held on September 21, 2022 in-person only, Zoom call-in was not available. It was called to order at 7:01 PM. The meeting was opened with the flag salute. In accordance with the Sunshine Law, notice of the meeting was posted in The Beacon and the Atlantic City Press.

Planning Board members present were: Mrs. Cope, Mrs. Adams, Mr. Bien, Mr. Neuweiler, and Mrs. Ruffo and Mr. Steele. Mr. Louis Bourguignon was present, representing Mr. Capriglione.

Mr. Christopher Norman attended as legal representative. Mr. Joe Gray attended as engineering representative.

The minutes of the reorganization meeting and regular meeting of August 17, 2022 were available for the board and the public.

Mrs. Ruffo made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Neuweiler seconded the motion. The members were in favor with Mrs. Cope and Mr. Bourguignon abstaining, and the motion was passed.

Correspondence List was read by Mr. Bien.

#### New Business:

Resolution for Application # 2022-03 Variance – Stephen and Megan Kraus for Pole Barn at 17 South Maple Avenue (Block 8.1 Lot 14) was briefed by Mr. Bien. Mr. Neuweiler moved to Memorialize the Resolution, and it was seconded by Mrs. Ruffo.

The votes were:

Mrs. Cope = Abstain

Mrs. Adams = Yes

Mr. Bien = Yes

Mr. Neuweiler = Yes

Mrs. Ruffo = Yes

Mr. Steele = Abstain

Mr. Bourguignon = Abstain

#### Old Business:

- Board discussion for zoning changes – Engineers update.  
Mr. Gray said we are still waiting for the Pinelands Commission to respond.

### **Informal Business:**

Tom Sherwood of Sherwood Family Limited Partnership, owns seven properties colloquially known as Tom's Retreat: Block 37, Lots 13.C, 13.C QFARM, 13.E QFARM, 13.F QFARM, 13.D, 55 & 55 QFARM. Mr. Sherwood wants to procure a building free of charge from Brigantine, have it moved to store on his property, then build a foundation, a septic system and run utilities to the house, to become a residence for one or more homeless veterans. The organization that moves the houses requires a letter from Bass River Township approving storage of the house on Mr. Sherwood's property.

Mr. Bien noted that the building, septic and utility permits will need to be submitted to Little Egg Harbor Construction Office. Mr. Norman clarified that it doesn't matter who would be living in the house, it all falls under the ordinances for building a house on the property. He asked if it was planned to be a group home, and Mr. Sherwood said it is a 1400 square foot building with 3 bedrooms and one bath. It would be moved onto the property and hung on a crane over where the foundation will be built, then lowered onto the foundation. The company that hangs the house will start charging \$300 per day if it is not lowered onto the foundation within 90 days. He said it will be used as temporary housing for veterans who have a signed contract to purchase a home elsewhere, and their current house is sold, so they need a place to stay in-between. He will ensure a contract is valid before he allows them to live in the house.

Mr. Gray noted that some lots on Mr. Sherwood's property are landlocked, and he asked what access would be made to the building? Mr. Sherwood stated that the only access road would be built on his own land.

Mr. Gray noted that an application for a use variance to put a campground on the property in 2019 was denied for two principal uses on one lot. Mr. Norman said if another house goes on the lot, the lot will need to be subdivided. Mr. Bien noted that Sherwood Family Limited owns seven lots, five of them with a border on Route 9. By current ordinance, they need to be a minimum of 15 acres to build a house, but the frontage on Route 9 should be 200' and the lots show 165' or less. So either change the lot sizes and lines or submit a variance request to build on 165'. Mr. Gray suggested this may also be submitted as a Minor Subdivision. Either way, the Planning Board will not issue a letter of permission to move the building to Mr. Sherwood's property without variances submitted and approved in advance.

Mr. Sherwood thanked the Board members for their consideration of his request, and he left the meeting.

**7:32 PM** A motion to open the meeting to the public was made by Mr. Bourguignon and was seconded by Mrs. Ruffo. All were in favor and the motion was passed.

Barbara Dillon of 5856 Route 9 stated that there are already two buildings on the Sherwood property, and that there was a large private party on the grounds of the property with loud music, noise and lights flashing until 12:45am. She said there is an

ordinance for quiet after 11:00pm, and even after police were called, the noise did not subside.

Mrs. Dillon went on record to state that she is adamantly opposed to Bass River Township's plan to change Forest Zone property along Route 9 to Highway-Commercial Zone. She believes it is premature to expand the Commercial zone when there are already unused Commercial properties in the Village of New Gretna. She also asked if there have been any changes to the environmental factors since the zone was originally coded for protections that would justify changing from 3.2 acre buildable lots to 1 acre for buildable?

Mrs. Cope replied that the zoning change is due to property owners who have owned property for many years and have not been able to build on it. They had requested the change, and the Zoning Board has been working back and forth with the Pinelands Commission for four years to facilitate zoning changes that satisfy Pinelands Commission requests and suggestions, as well as opening up possibility for development to property owners.

William Van Orden of 5881 Route 9 voiced his concern that Mr. Sherwood has purchased large tracts of forest land that go beyond his current property, over 200 acres, which is currently secluded and protected for deer and other animals. He wants to know if Mr. Sherwood has submitted any applications to develop that land?

Planning & Zoning Board members and advisors have not received any such applications, nor heard of them.

Mr. Van Orden also wished to address the parties on Mr. Sherwood's property. He says they are "Swinger Fests" for which Mr. Sherwood charges a fee, and he calls it a "camping event" even though his application for a campground was denied. Another member of the public (possibly Glen Azzolino of 5859 Route 9, which abuts Mr. Sherwood's property) said he took video on his phone of the party, in which there is visible nudity and things his children should not have to see from the windows of their home. He offered to show the video to the board, but the offer was declined.

Roger Dillon of 5856 Route 9 lives across the street from the Sherwood properties, and he is concerned about having a bar in the Sherwood garage with a living space above the garage.

Another neighbor who lives on Deckert Lane (possibly Mr. Van Orden) said that Mr. Sherwood sometimes drives through his front yard, and when he complains, Mr. Sherwood says, "I have an easement."

Mr. Bourguignon said that a previous owner, Harry Sims, also had TWO bars on the property. They are private bars on private property. He said that at that time, there was a legal easement to get to a back gate of the property that was on a 99-year lease.

Someone stated that the 99-year lease for the easement would have ended when the property was purchased by a new owner. Not sure if this was addressed. Lots of talking over one another and multiple conversations around the room.

Mr. Van Orden asked why Bass River would change from 15 acres of protected Forest to Highway Commercial?

Mrs. Cope stated that as of right now, owners still have to follow the 15 acres ordinance, because the zoning change to 3.2 acres has not yet been approved. She said we had originally requested the whole town to be removed from Pinelands Commission oversight. Pinelands noticed that we had been working off of 1980's maps that we thought had been updated, but they hadn't, so we had to resubmit map change requests. Since we submitted the map change requests, it has been a back and forth process for another two years, and still in-work.

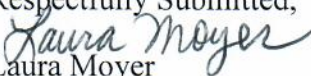
Mrs. Dillon asked if the majority of the public does not want the change to Highway Commercial, how can we change it back to Forest? Mr. Neuweiler reminded the audience that it was members of the public who came to the Board in the first place to request the changes. Mr. Norman said we will have public meetings and both sides of the issue will be discussed about what is best for the township. We have not held public meetings about the changes yet, because we don't have anything that is an actual product between Bass River and the Pinelands Commission to discuss. At this point, it is all theoretical.

Someone asked about the Commercial Businesses that have been agreed to. Can anyone just say, "I live in the commercial zone, so I can have my own business, anything I want." Mrs. Ruffo said there is a list of 15 types of businesses that have been determined to be aligned with the current small town and forest protective traditions of the residents, and we will have that list available at the next Planning Board Meeting.

Donald Gant requested an Application for Permit to run electric to his property at Block 49, Lot 13:06 as a first step in constructing a home there. Mr. Gray took Mr. Gant's sketch of the plans for the property. We provided a Zoning Permit Application for Mr. Gant to fill out, and told him that we will start reviewing the plan once payment of the application fee is received.

**8:29 PM** A motion to close the meeting to the public was made by Mr. Bourguignon, and it was seconded by Mrs. Ruffo. All were in favor and the motion was passed.

**8:30 PM** Being no other business at this time, a motion was made by Mr. Neuweiler to adjourn the meeting, and it was seconded by Mr. Bourguignon. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,  
  
Laura Moyer  
Planning Board Secretary