



**Borough of Stockton
County of Hunterdon
Planning Board Minutes**



September 2, 2025 Meeting Minutes

The Stockton Borough Planning Board Regular Meeting was held via Zoom and called to order on September 2, 2025 at 7:01pm by Chair Bonanni who read the following statement: Adequate notice of this meeting has been provided by a notice mailed to the Hunterdon County Democrat and The Trenton Times posted on the Borough Website, on the window of Borough Hall, and filed with the Borough Clerk as required by law.

Mr. Bonanni read the following: The Board's General Policy is to end the presentation of testimony on applications and Board discussions by 9:00 PM and to conclude all Board business by 9:30 PM. When necessary, the Chair may permit a reasonable extension of those time limits. This meeting is being held via Zoom, a cloud-based web conferencing program. This meeting is being conducted pursuant to guidance from the Division of Local Government Services ("DLGS"). <https://www.nj.gov/govconnect/news/general/#8>. All members of the public participating in this meeting will be muted during the meeting. Please keep yourself muted until instructed to unmute yourself in order to prevent unnecessary disruptions. If you have a question or comment during the designated public comment period, please click "raise your hand"; at the bottom of your screen. You will need to have the "participants" window visible in order to see the "raise your hand"; button. You will be instructed to unmute yourself and turn on your camera (if able). If you have called into the meeting, please press *9 to raise your hand. The moderator will call on you and will need to press *6 to unmute yourself when it is your turn to speak. Please be advised that if you called into the meeting, you will be identified by your telephone number. The moderator will, if needed, acknowledge you by the last 4 digits of your telephone number. Your telephone number will be visible to all participants in the meeting and will be visible to anyone that watches a recording of this meeting. Before you begin your comment, please state your name and address for the record. If you are having technical issues, please use the chat function to alert the moderator. Please do not use the chat function for any other purpose during the meeting. Public comments and questions will not be accepted via the chat function.

Roll Call and Attendance

Present: Bassett, Brown, Bonanni, Lipsen, Martino, Miller, Gallagher, Wallace

Absent: Meltzer, Harrison, Onuskanich

Also present: Attorney Tara St. Angelo, Planner Joanna Slagle, Engineer Adam Wisniewski

Flag salute done by all.

Open to the Public – Agenda Items

Chair Bonanni opened the meeting for Public Comment. Ms. St. Angelo noted that any comments for the Housing Plan Element and Fair Share Plan should be held for the Public Hearing portion later in the meeting.

Seeing no comments, Chair Bonanni closed this portion of the meeting

Public Hearing – Application PB25-01

PB25-01 Ian Dorko & Brett Opdyke – site plan waiver, use variance, and bulk variance

Block 4 Lot 8 Zone: CR 6 Risler St

Quorum of minimum 5 members, not including Class I and Class III members, was confirmed by Board Secretary Ms. Orlando.



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Ms. Slagle reviewed how a public hearing works.

Mr. Wisniewski reviewed the completeness memo he issued on this application. He recommended the application be deemed complete. Motion by Mr. Gallagher to deem the application complete. Second by Mr. Wallace.

Ayes: Bassett, Brown, Martino, Miller, Wallace, Gallagher, Bonanni

Nays: none

Absent: Harrison, Onuskanich

Recused: Lipsen, Meltzer (A)

Ms. St. Angelo confirmed the public notice by the applicant was reviewed and approved.

Ms. St. Angelo swore in Tom Stearns, planner for the applicant and Ian Dorko, applicant, for the hearing.

Applicant Attorney, Richard Mongelli, gave an overview of the application. The applicants are applying for a C variance, D variance, and site plan waiver. Mr. Mongelli asked applicant Mr. Dorko to speak on the application.

Mr. Dorko described 6 Risler Street as currently a single family, 3 level unit, with an apartment on the third level. The walkout basement currently has a kitchen, utility room, and full bathroom, and the second floor currently has 2 living rooms, 1 full bathroom and 1 bedroom. The apartment has its own entrance and 1 apartment with 1 full bathroom, 1 kitchen, and 2 bedrooms.

Proposed improvements include adding a kitchen and an addition to the second level to have 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms. The walkout basement would become a 1-bedroom apartment with the already existing kitchen and full bathroom. No proposed change to the third-floor apartment which currently has 2 bedrooms and 1 bathroom. The footprint is not being extended. The units will be annual rental units. There are no proposed changes to parking, drainage, grading. The current walkway will be improved after all work is complete on the property. There are no proposed changes to landscaping, lighting, or buffers. There are 3 parking spaces on Route 29 (Risler St). Parking would be located on Route 29 and on Old Prallsville Rd. There are 6 spaces available on the property for additional parking.

Mr. Wisniewski asked for clarification if this is currently a 2-unit apartment. Mr. Mongelli stated it is a single-family home with an apartment - of which one is currently occupied, and one is vacant, but both are rentals.

Chair Bonanni asked for clarification if there are 3 parking spaces on property, Mr. Mongelli confirmed that is correct.

Ms. Brown asked about the width of the parking. Mr. Mongelli stated he believes it to be 24 feet across but would defer to Mr. Stearns for that information.

Ms. St. Angelo asked for confirmation on the current and proposed number of bathrooms. Mr. Dorko stated it's currently 3 and 4 are proposed, adding only 1 new bathroom.



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Ms. Slagle asked for clarification on number of bedrooms and bathrooms proposed. Mr. Dorko confirmed the following: 3rd floor apartment with existing 2 bedrooms and 1 full bathroom, no changes, second floor proposed 2 full bathrooms and 2 bedrooms, and walkout will be 1 bedroom 1 full bathroom.

Ms. Brown asked about access to the third floor. Mr. Dorko stated there is an existing entrance from Old Prallsville Rd and there is no change proposed.

Mr. Bonanni asked if there is any plan to change the address, Mr. Mongelli said that nothing is proposed by the applicant, but he can't speak for the tax assessor.

Mr. Miller asked if the applicants reside at the location. Mr. Mongelli stated they do not. Mr. Miller stated that in a CR zone, if the unit is not owner occupied then it is not a single-family home. He would refer to it as 2 apartment buildings. Mr. Mongelli stated single-family does not need to be owner occupied to be single-family, and he does not believe this is relevant to the application.

Ms. St. Angelo asked if this application is approved, if there will be discussion with the water/sewer departments on the impact from adding a bathroom. Mr. Mongelli stated he would get any approvals that are included as part of the conditions of approval.

Mr. Wisniewski stated that he wasn't clear on who handles water/sewer connections in the borough, but in accordance with state sanitary code, there would need to be confirmation on the impact of the additional bathroom on the sanitary sewer system. This will be reviewed as a condition of approval. He also confirmed allocation is determined by the number of bedrooms not bathrooms so there may be no change in calculation. Mr. Mongelli stated he has no objection as a condition of approval.

Ms. Slagle asked about the impact on the water moratorium, and who would review that. Mr. Wisniewski stated he wasn't sure and that is something he is working through with Mayor Lipsen. There is one existing water connection, not a new service, and any new plumbing would be internal. He believes there would be no impact. Mr. Mongelli agreed.

Seeing no further Board questions, Mr. Mongelli introduced Mr. Tom Stearns, planner for the applicant, as an expert witness. Mr. Mongelli asked Mr. Stearns to give his credentials. Mr. Stearns confirmed he has been a planner for over 30 years. The Board accepted him as an expert witness.

Mr. Stearns gave testimony regarding the following:

D1 use variance - 3 family dwelling versus 2 family dwelling.

C1 bulk variance - curb cut 25% lot width permitted and 31% of lot width exists

C1 bulk variance - rear yard set setback 15 feet required, and 9.4 feet is existing

Site plan waiver – conversion of 2 family to 3 family per the ordinance typically triggers site plan requirement. A waiver is requested as there is no site work being done. The applicant is only building an addition on the existing footprint.



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Mr. Stearns shared the following:

Exhibit 1 – Aerial photo of the site

Exhibit 2 – NJ Geo web map of site

Exhibit 3 – tax map of the site

Exhibit 4 – site survey

Chair Bonnani asked for dimensions of paved parking area. Mr. Stearns said approximately 24 feet by 20 feet. Ms. Brown asked for standards. Mr. Wisniewski confirmed its 9 feet by 18 feet. Mr. Stearns said based on that it would fit 3 parking spaces, including the planters. Ms. Bassett stated this appears to be very narrow parking and asked if there are considerations to use the planter area as park of the paved parking. Mr. Mongelli stated that it is feasible, but most tenants park on Old Prallsville Rd. and he believes this is more than adequate.

Ms. Brown asked how many spaces are available on the lot width. Mr. Mongelli stated Mr. Dorko stated there are 6 parking spaces on the lot width available, and they are rarely used by other properties on the road. Ms. Bassett stated there is only 1 occupied unit currently, and the impact of 2 more occupied units means more parking would be needed. Mr. Stearns stated the current Borough Ordinance only requires 1 space per unit which is provided in the paved area on site, plus the 6 parallel parking spaces on Old Prallsville Rd.

Chair Bonanni asked if those 6 spaces are dedicated to the property. Mr. Stearns confirmed they are not, but the road dead ends. Mr. Mongelli confirmed they are not exclusive to the property. Ms. Slagle said it would be helpful to determine if a parking variance is required. The ordinance discussed 1 and 2 family dwellings. Then jumped to townhome and multi family dwelling, so this proposed 3 family does not fit in any existing categories. Mr. Wisniewski stated that considering this a single-family home, the property falls under the 3 parking spaces requirement. He stated under the NJ Resident Site Improvement Standards (RSIS), this would fall under garden apartment which would require 6 spaces. The onsite parking, in addition to 6 parking spaces available on Old Prallsville Rd. would satisfy this requirement. This is not uncommon in densely developed areas of any borough of municipality. On street parking can be considered for parking for the unit. Mr. Mongelli stated the applicant would have no objection to removing or moving the planters on site for more parking.

Ms. Brown shared her concerns about the narrowness of the Old Prallsville Rd.

Ms. St. Angelo stated in single family zones and commercial residential (article 6) 1 private garage shall be provided for each dwelling unit. This would need to be added to the bulk variance, as this is an existing structure that does not have garage. A dwelling unit is being added, so this should be added to the approval. The ordinance also states that off street parking shall not be nearer to the street line than the building line or set back line. The current spaces are close to the road, so that is likely an existing condition of the property that should be added to the approval. Ms. St. Angelo stated the Board could decide if a parking variance is needed for this application. Chair Bonanni asked if there are any requirements for parking for rental units in Borough ordinances. Ms. St. Angelo stated all parking ordinances refer to on site parking. There is no provision for considering off-site parking, which in the past has been addressed by parking variance. Chair Bonnani asked if it's fair to summarize that RSIS standards would require 5.8 spaces. Ms. Slagle stated that it is fair to say, but there is a disconnect between RSIS and Borough ordinances in terms of variance relief. There is no ordinance specific to 3 family dwellings.



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Ms. Brown asked if the onsite parking spaces would be assigned to tenants. Mr. Dorko stated the walkout basement would have access to the spaces on Risler St. and the other 2 apartments would utilize Old Prallsville Rd. for parking that provides space for 6 parking spaces. Mr. Mongelli stated there would be no objection to assigning on-site parking to the units.

Ms. St. Angelo stated the Board needs to decide which parking standard applies, and if a parking variance is needed. Ms. Slagle stated the higher standard to go by would be garden apartment/town home which requires 2 parking spots per dwelling. Mr. Miller stated the RSIS standards would be best to address this parking issue – 6 spaces. Ms. St. Angelo asked Mr. Stearns to speak to the parking variance to address the on site 3 spaces when 6 are required. Mr. Mongelli asked Mr. Stearns to include this in the C1 variance.

Mr. Stearns spoke to the ample car parking in front of the property on Old Prallsville Rd. Ms. Brown stated she would like to see the onsite parking spaces be 9 feet instead of 7 feet each. Mr. Mongelli stated no objection. Mr. Stearns stated there is ample parking to justify this variance. Chair Bonanni stated parking continues to be an chronic issue in the Borough and is a constant discussion at the Planning Board.

Mr. Stearns presented Exhibit 6 – google street view parking spaces on site Risler St and Exhibit 7 – another google street view that includes the planters that can be moved to make parking spaces bigger. Exhibit 8 in front of pool and stone hedge. Exhibit 9 – google street view of the property from Old Prallsville Rd. and the entrances to the third and second floors. Exhibit 10 - google street view Southeast view down Old Prallsville Rd. Mr. Stearns testified that it shows ample parking and an area to do a K turn to leave. Exhibit 11 google street view Northwest view of Old Prallsville Rd.

Ms. Brown asked for clarification if Old Prallsville Rd. is one or two ways. It is a two-way street that does not dead end.

Exhibit 5 – zone map shown.

Exhibit 12 –the proposed first and second floor additions were shown. The second floor one story addition is 16 ft x 27 ft approximate 432 square feet on top of the existing floor plan. Entrances were shown.

Exhibit 13 – third floor plan shown with changes from second floor addition changes shown.

Exhibit 14 – proposed building elevation shown with addition.

Ms. St. Angelo confirmed these are the same plans sent with application. Mr. Stearns stated they are, he just added the red lines for presentation purposes.

Mr. Stearns stated the property is in Zone X FEMA maps for the floodplain zones. There are steep slopes in the back of the site, but nothing will be disturbed as they are building on existing footprint. There is no site disturbance and no increase in impervious surfaces. This is an efficient use of land and addresses housing needs in the Borough. Matching materials and form are being used.



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Ms. Slagle stated she didn't hear any testimony regarding the hardship for a parking variance. Mr. Stearns stated that the hardship is there are 3 existing spaces as an existing condition, and they are not expanding or disturbing the site. He stated he sees no negative impact.

Ms. Slagle explained to the Board that a C2 variance is that the proof is more that the variance requested would advance good planning rather than focusing on negative impacts.

Ms. Slagle asked about any impact of the addition on the property owner of Lot 7 regarding light. Mr. Stearns stated no impact that he could see other than maybe morning sunrise.

Mr. Martino stated that Old Prallsville Rd. is very tight, and if there are cars parked on one side it would be tight for cars driving by. Chair Bonanni expressed safety and accessibility concerns. Mr. Mongelli stated he doesn't believe this will have a big impact on parking. Mr. Martino expressed concerns that drivers may have to back down the street to be able to get out, and this is a safety concern. Ms. Brown expressed concerns about more vehicles parking on the two-way street, though not a high-volume street, it would be an issue. Mr. Martino and Ms. Brown stated that if the street was one way it would be less of an issue. Mr. Mongelli stated that drivers would have to take turns letting each other through as good neighbors. Parking is permitted, and he does not believe this is going to be a big issue.

Ms. St. Angelo clarified that the existing conditions of the curb cuts and rear yard setbacks are C1 bulk variances, and parking is a C2 variance, which is saying the benefit of granting parking outweighs any detriment.

Ms. Bassett said cleaning up the shoulder on the north side of Old Prallsville Rd and making it one-way. Ms. St. Angelo stated that is not in the purview of this application or Planning Board to decide. Ms. Bassett stated she understood but further opined this would be good for the future. Ms. St. Angelo stated this would could be discussed in the future and suggested to the Borough Council.

Seeing no further Board questions or comments, this portion of the meeting for comments from the Public.

Seeing no comments from the Public, this portion was closed to the Public.

Mr. Mongelli gave a closing statement asking for support for the application.

Ms. St. Angelo explained each variance requested.

D1 use variance – to create a multi-family dwelling unit in a single-family zone

Site plan waiver

C1 variances – existing conditions curb cut and rear yard setback

C2 variance for parking spaces 3 provided and 6 required



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Ms. St. Angelo stated the following conditions of approval to be included in resolution of approval:

1. Outside agency approvals
2. Issue of increased water/sewer demand will be reviewed by Borough Engineer and water/sewer departments
3. Payment of all outstanding escrow and taxes
4. Moving of planters to create 9 ft wide parking spaces.
5. New property boundary to be reviewed by Board Engineer/Planner
6. Work with Board Engineer to delineate spaces provided

Mr. Miller asked if it should be included to reach out to the Fire Department to make sure trucks are able to fit down the street. Ms. St. Angelo stated it is a standard condition of approvals.

Motion by Ms. Brown to approve the D1 use variance. Second by Ms. Bassett.

Ayes: Bassett, Brown, Miller, Wallace, Gallagher, Bonanni

Nays: Martino

Absent: Harrison, Onuskanich

Recused: Lipsen, Meltzer (A)

Motion by Ms. Brown to approve the Site Plan Waiver. Second by Ms. Bassett.

Ayes: Bassett, Brown, Martino, Miller, Wallace, Gallagher

Nays: Bonanni

Absent: Harrison, Onuskanich

Recused: Lipsen, Meltzer (A)

Motion by Mr. Wallace to approve the C1 Bulk Variances for existing curb cuts and rear yard setbacks. Second by Chair Bonanni.

Ayes: Bassett, Brown, Martino, Miller, Wallace, Gallagher, Bonanni

Nays: none

Absent: Harrison, Onuskanich

Recused: Lipsen, Meltzer (A)

Motion by Ms. Brown to approve the C2 Bulk Variance for parking. Second by Mr. Wallace.

Ayes: Bassett, Brown, Miller, Wallace, Gallagher

Nays: Martino, Bonanni

Absent: Harrison, Onuskanich

Recused: Lipsen, Meltzer (A)

Ms. St. Angelo stated the resolution memorializing the approval will be on the October 7, 2025 meeting agenda.

New Business

Seeing none, Chair Bonanni closed this portion of the meeting

Old Business

Seeing none, Chair Bonanni closed this portion of the meeting



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Open to the Public

Chair Bonanni opened the meeting for Public Comment.

Seeing no comments, Chair Bonanni closed this portion of the meeting

Ms. Orlando reminded the Planning Board members that only those present who voted to approve the application can vote on the resolution, and if they are unable to attend the meeting October 7th to let her or Chair Bonanni know.

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Gallagher to adjourn. Second by Ms. Bassett. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Monica Orlando
Planning Board Secretary