

**MINUTES OF THE HARDYSTON TOWNSHIP JOINT LAND USE BOARD MEETING
HELD JULY 13, 2026**

CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER: Chairman Hickerson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., read the Statement of Compliance, and led the Flag salute.

STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE: Pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, adequate notice as defined in section 3D of Chapter 21 P.L. 1975, has been made to the New Jersey Herald and is also posted on the bulletin board at the Hardyston Township Municipal Building.

ROLL CALL:

Brian Kaminski – Absent	Joshua Raff – Present
Carl Miller – Absent	William Hickerson – Present
Jim Homa – Present	Vally Cicerales – Absent
Sally Goodson – Present	Ed Zinck – Present
James Caiazzo – Present	Savas Savidis – Present
Carl Paladino – Present	Michael Davina – Present

BOARD CONSULTANTS PRESENT: Richard L. Schneider, Esq., and Michael G. Vreeland, P.E, P.P.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *Minutes of the Hardyston Township Joint Land Use Board Meeting Held June 8, 2026* – A motion to approve was made by Ed Zinck and seconded by James Caiazzo. Roll Call: Jim Homa – yes, Sally Goodson – yes, James Caiazzo – yes, Carl Paladino – yes, Ed Zinck – yes, Bill Hickerson – yes. The motion carried.

RESOLUTIONS: LB-5-26-3, Church of the Immaculate Conception, Minor Subdivision-Immaculate Conception Cemetery, Block 62 Lot 19: A motion to approve was made by Sally Goodson and seconded by Jim Homa. Roll Call: Jim Homa – yes, Sally Goodson – yes, Ed Zinck – yes, James Caiazzo – yes, Carl Paladino – yes, Bill Hickerson – yes. The motion carried.

LB-5-26-1, Aqua New Jersey, Inc., Wallkill Well #4, Water Treatment Facility Improvements, Amended Preliminary and Final Site Plan, “D” Variance, “c” Variance, Block 67.18 Lot 1.01: The matter was carried to the September 14, 2026, meeting.

HEARINGS: LB-5-26-2, Lake Stockholm Country Club and Community Association, Interpretation, Block 57 Lot 14: William Haggerty, Esq., appeared on behalf of the Applicant. He confirmed that he was not asking for relief from conditions of the prior approval regarding the gazebo and that he was not looking for anything for the gazebo. He stated there was no proposed expansion of use and the purpose of the request for electric service at the site was for holiday displays not located in the gazebo.

Joeseeph Butto, Construction Official, informed the Board of the history of the illegal electrical service installed and subsequently removed from the site. Following discussion, the Board concluded that the matter was not an interpretation pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55d-70d(2). Mr. Schneider stated the construction of an electric service would not violate the approval if there were no illumination of the gazebo or sound produced.

Chairman Hickerson opened the meeting to the public. Michelle Van Allen stated she was familiar with the site and saw no problem with the proposal. No other members of the public addressed the Board on the matter. The meeting was closed to the public.

Via motion made by Jim Homa and seconded by Sally Goodson, the Board unanimously authorized Mr. Schneider to draft a letter to the Hardyston Township Construction Department stating that the provision of electric service to the site is not in conflict with the conditions of approval provided that the utility is not used to provide sound or to or illuminate the gazebo. Further, the Lake Stockholm HOA would determine conditions specific to the holiday displays, and all conditions of approval would remain in effect.

LB-6-26-2, Wits End Associates, LLC. Preliminary Site Plan, "D" Variance, "c" Variances, Block 67.19 Lots 1.01 & 2.02: The Agenda was amended to include a Final Site Plan review. Gary Goodman, Esq., appeared on behalf of the Applicant and provided an overview of the application. He identified the Applicant as a contract purchaser. He explained the proposal for a three-story self-storage facility that requires a "D" Variance for the non-permitted use and a "c" variance for height that exceeds the ordinance threshold by less than ten percent.

Board members discussed the Applicant's waiver requests and *Completeness and Technical Review No. 1* dated July 9, 2026, prepared by Michael G. Vreeland, P.E, P.P. There were no administrative or technical objections to the granting of waivers for completeness only. A motion to deem the application complete was made by Jim Homa and seconded by Sally Goodson. Roll Call: Joshua Raff – yes, Jim Homa – yes, Sally Goodson – yes, Ed Zinck – yes, James Caiazzo – yes, Michael Davina – yes, Bill Hickerson – yes. The motion carried.

Natalie Gallerano, Principal, was sworn, qualified, and a motion was made to accept her as an expert witness. Mr. Goodman noted she was a fact witness. Ms. Gallerano stated she is the listing realtor that has heavily marketed the property for five years utilizing signage, networking, and the MLS without success. Ms. Gallerano noted she reached out to Mc Donalds, Burger King, Urgent Cares, and Dunkin Donuts. She presented a potential buyer was interested in developing a Dunkin Donuts but the Dunkin corporate office would not accept the site. She submitted an exhibit packet identified as follows: Exhibit A-1, *Aerial Exhibit- 3333 Route 94, Lots 20.01 & 20.02, Block 67.17, Hardyston Township, NJ* dated July 13, 2026, prepared by Harbor Consultants, Inc; Exhibit A-2, *Site Exhibit- 3333 Route 94, Lots 20.01 & 20.02, Block 67.17, Hardyston Township, NJ* dated July 13, 2026, prepared by Harbor Consultants, Inc; Exhibit A-3, *Building Elevations Exhibit-3333 Route 94*; Exhibit A-4, a photo rendering of the proposed unit, and Exhibit A-5, *Truck Turning Exhibit- 3333 Route 94, Lots 20.01 & 20.02, Block 67.17, Hardyston Township, NJ* dated July 13, 2026, prepared by Harbor Consultants, Inc.

Ms. Gallerano stated Phase II of the original phased project was approved for retail in 2009. She noted the owner has had difficulty renting out the units in Phase I and has been renting two of the three retail spaces for his own businesses. Ms. Gallerano opined that with local apartment complexes, self-storage is a needed use that would work better than a retail use.

Anthony G. Gallerano, P.E., P.P., was sworn, qualified, and accepted as an expert witness. Mr. Gallerano provided an overview of the project noting he was the engineer on the original application. He noted the proposed development would be built on the same footprint as the original 2009 plan. He confirmed that .85 acres is useable after flood hazard area and environmental constraints are considered. Referencing the exhibits, he discussed existing conditions noting the limit of disturbance, layout, stormwater management, preexisting signage, and landscape design were not changed for the subject proposal. He agreed to provide O & Manuals as required. Further, Mr. Gallerano stated a modification to the loading area was made; and he explained that other approvals, less NJDEP permitting, had expired. He noted that the NJDEP approval would expire in August of 2027 and he would like to start the project while applying for NJDOT review. He stated variances for the parking lot size and setback to accessory structures were granted in the original approval together with a provision for a shared dumpster. He agreed to bank parking should additional parking be needed.

With regard to the building, Mr. Gallerano discussed the design and the height variance request. He explained how the height was calculated and Michael G. Vreeland, P.E, P.P., confirmed that decorative cornices are not computed. Referencing Exhibit A-4, Mr. Gallerano stated the roof, bump-outs, and cornices soften the look and add character to the building. He confirmed the elevator would not go through the roof. Mr. Gallerano confirmed the height as 32 ft where 30 ft is required. He presented he was amenable to changing the design to a flat roof to accomplish height conformance if the Board preferred. Mr. Gallerano stated the three-story design with 175 units makes economic sense. He noted units are 5 x 5 and up to 10 x 20 in size with most units being mid-sized. He stated the proposed building is sprinklered and climate controlled, the owner has agreed to provide an easement for utilities, and the exterior mechanical equipment is anticipated to be on the ground behind the building. Mr. Gallerano identified 11 parking spaces and one ADA parking spot on the plan. He noted all but five units are accessed from the interior of the building. The excluded five units have a loading area in front of the building. He noted that the building would have security cameras inside and out, and patrons would access the building with an access code. Mr. Gallerano noted the site has high visibility and lighting would conform throughout the site. He stated he would like 24/7 access for patrons.

Regarding traffic, Mr. Gallerano presented that the traffic count would decrease from the count considered for the original approval. He stated the proposed facility is considered a small unit with 175

units proposed and the traffic counts are based on the size and number of proposed units. He stated that both evening and am peak counts are less than those approved for retail uses referencing ITE standards. Specifically, he noted that p.m. trips would decrease by 45 less trips for permitted uses.

Referencing Exhibit A-5, *Truck Turning Exhibit- 3333 Route 94*, Mr. Gallerano further discussed site circulation concerns referencing ASHTO standards. He stated that both moving vans and a ladder truck could access the site from Witts End Road or Route 94 applying ASHTO standards he described as very conservative. He stated most customers would access the site using cars or vans. He noted larger moving van access would be scheduled by appointment.

Regarding commentary submitted by the Hardyston Township Fire Department, Mr. Gallerano stated he had no issues with the commentary with the exception of providing 360° access around the building. He stated the topography and environmental restraints made that impossible to attain. He noted that it is not required by code. He agreed to add an egress to the structure and adjust the loading area. He also agreed to locate fire hydrants wherever wanted. Regarding operations, Mr. Gallerano stated that “no flammables” allowed could be put in a lease agreement. Board members expressed concern about the difficulty of fighting fires in units where the contents are unknown. Mr. Gallerano also noted that most renters of self-storage units are homeowners. Board members discussed water access in the event of an emergency. Mr. Vreeland presented there is an emergency interconnect for water in the event of an emergency.

Board members reviewed landscaping and concern was expressed about the flammability of proposed pine trees. A recommendation for cedar trees was made. The Applicant agreed to comply and the Applicant also to work out landscaping with the Board engineer. Mr. Gallerano stated he would add further landscaping if needed.

Mr. Gallerano acknowledged the zone has not changed since 2009 and presented his view that the site is particularly suited for the use. He stated the site is in a commercial zone with direct access to Route 94. He stated the proposed use is less intense, is passive, and would generate less traffic than a retail use. He noted the site would produce no noise, odors, or other nuisances. He stated the facility would have an office and he expects there to be one employee on staff. Mr. Gallerano confirmed the nearest townhouse is 330ft away.

With regard to special reasons for granting the variance, Mr. Gallerano stated the reasons exist and the granting of the variance would not be a detriment to the zone plan or ordinance. He opined that there has been a change in the retail environment since the original approval and that online business has changed the way we do things as a society. Mr. Gallerano stated retail demand is shrinking. He confirmed he did not obtain occupancy numbers from other self-storage companies in the area. He stated a Master Plan is a fluid document and the latest Hardyston Township 2019 Master Plan Rexam made no specific recommendations for the B-1 Zone. He concluded that an approval would have no negative impact on the Hardyston Township Master Plan and an approval would not be a detriment to the public good. He stated the proposal is desirable in the immediate area. Board members expressed concern about the use and why the Township did not permit it in the zone.

Chairman Hickerson opened the meeting to the public. Joe Ionata, Hardyston Township Fire Chief, addressed the Board. He stated that no access to the back or around the building would not work. Michelle Van Allen expressed concern about her view of the building and asked about the removal of trees and lighting. Mr. Gallarano presented that parking is in front of the building and lighting in the rear would be operated by motion sensors. Ms. Van Allen asked about noise and climate-controlled facilities. She commented that AC is noisy. She asked about tax revenue and the occupancy of other self-storage units in the area. She opined that there are enough self-storage units in the area. She stated the dumpsters will be overflowing. She also expressed concern about traffic and noted there are many crashes in the area. Rich Dekmar asked if the Applicant was the owner and how the property was marketed. Thomas Manzi questioned the height of the retaining wall and the type of elevator that would be installed. He asked why the Applicant wanted to develop the project. No other members of the public addressed the Board, and Chairman Hickerson closed the meeting to the public for questions. Chairman Hickerson opened the meeting for public comments. Brian Tobachnick stated that he believed the use is not in accord with the Master Plan and the variance should not be granted. He acknowledged the Fire Department’s concerns and stated he believed the facility would be too dangerous in a densely populated residential area. He stated the use does not belong in a business zone and it would not draw people to neighboring facilities. Toni Manzi expressed concern about potentially setting precedent by granting the variance. She stated she was angry that someone from out of town would say what is needed in town. She asked if the town wanted to look like Essex or Bergen County. June Ionta stated concern about 175 units and stated no one reached out to residents in the surrounding

developments. Michelle Van Allen stated the units would not be inspected as renters of the units are not required to have them inspected. She stated she has a right to be safe. She expressed her view that a fire could spread to her own area. No other members of the public addressed the Board.

Mr. Goodman declined the opportunity to make a closing statement. Mr. Schneider reviewed the “D” Variance criteria and recommended a separate vote for the use be taken first.

A motion to deny the application was made by Jim Homa and seconded by James Caiazzo. Roll Call: Joshua Raff – yes, Jim Homa – yes, Sally Goodson – yes, Ed Zinck – yes, James Caiazzo – yes, Michael Davina – yes, Bill Hickerson – yes. The motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Chairman Hickerson opened the meeting to the public. Brian Tobachnik, Joe Ionta, June Ionta, Tony Manzi, Tom Manzi, and Michelle Van Allen thanked the Board for their action in the matter of LB-6-26-2, Wits End Associates, LLC. Ms. Manzi stated that the town needs small shops and businesses that attract tourists. Speakers expressed their concern about fire safety in the neighborhood business zone. No other members of the public addressed the Board and the meeting was closed to the public.

OLD BUSINESS: There were no comments.

NEW BUSINESS: There was no discussion.

DISCUSSION: There was no discussion.

BILLS: A motion to pay the bills was made by Jim Homa. All were in favor. The motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: A motion to adjourn was made by Jim Homa. All were in favor. The meeting concluded at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne-Marie Wilhelm
Anne-Marie Wilhelm
Land Use Administrator