

**BOROUGH OF WEST WILDWOOD  
PLANNING / ZONING BOARD  
REGULAR MEETING – January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Robert Belasco solicitor called the regular meeting of the Borough of West Wildwood Planning/Zoning Board to order at 6:00 PM. Solicitor read the Open Public Meeting Act of 1975 and led all present to the flag salute. This meeting was adjourned at 8:08 P.M.

**OPENING:** Regular Meeting January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026, was given adequate notice by the Board Secretary of the date, time, and place given to the Cape May County Herald. There were no objections.

**ROLL CALL:**

**MEMBERS:**

Mayor Matthew Ksiazek – Absent  
Commissioner Jane DiMattia– Present  
Margaret Cantwell– Present  
Ronald McGowan, Jr. – Present  
Joe Kline – Present  
Mark Zeszut – Absent  
Matt Steich – Present  
Michael Bader – Present  
Edward Bradley – Absent  
Noreen Hickman - Absent

Also, Present:

Patricia Cullen – Board Secretary  
Robert Belasco - Board Solicitor  
John Fearheller – Board Engineer

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**MINUTES:**

**Motion:** To Approve Minutes of December 18th, 2025

**Motion :** Joe Kline

**Second:** Ronald McGowan

**Those in Favor:** All Present

**Those Opposed:** None

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Appointment of Board Members**

**Motion:** to appoint Margaret Cantwell as Chairperson of the Board

**Motion:** Ronald McGowan

**Second:** Commissioner Di Mattia

Through roll call all present approved to appoint Margaret Cantwell as Chairperson of the Board.

**Motion:** To appoint Edward Bradley as Vice Chairman of the Board

**Motion:** Ronald McGowan

**Second:** Margaret Cantwell

Through roll call all present approved to appoint Edward Bradley as Vice Chairman of the Board.

**Motion:** To appoint Patricia Cullen as Board Secretary.

**Motion:** Ronald McGowan

**Second:** Commissioner Di Mattia

Through roll call all present approved to appoint Patricia Cullen as Board Secretary.

**Motion:** To appoint Robert T. Belasco, Esquire from **THE BELASCO LAW FIRM, LLC**

**Motion:** Ronald McGowan

**Second:** Michael Bader

Through roll call all present approved to appoint Robert T. Belasco from **THE BELASCO LAW FIRM, LLC**

**Motion:** To Establish the Herald as Official Newspaper.

**Motion:** Ronald McGowan

**Second:** Margaret Cantwell

Through roll call all present approved to establish The Herald as the official newspaper.

**Motion:** To Establish that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month for regular meetings dates at 6:00 P.M.

**Motion:** Margaret Cantwell

**Second:** Ronald McGowan

Through roll call all present approved to establish the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month for regular meetings

**Motion:** To appoint John Fearheller as Engineer/Planner.

**Motion:** Ronald McGowan

**Second:** Michael Bader

Through roll call all present approved John Fearheller as Board Engineer/Planner

**New Business**

John Fearheller provided all board members with a hand out for a potential ordinance for grading and garage floor elevation. There was a discussion. Action was then passed to governing body.

The variance application from 636-638 West 26<sup>th</sup> the attorney requested an adjournment until the next planning board meeting which is on February 19th, 2026.

**Memorialize Resolution 2025-12 625-627 West Poplar Ave**

**Motion:** Margaret Cantwell

**Second:** Joe Klein

Through roll call all present approved Resolution 2025-12

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The floor was opened for public comment. Seeing no comments the floor was closed.

**Motion:** To Pay Bills

**Motion:** Margaret Cantwell

**Second:** Joe Klein

Through roll call it was unanimously approved to pay bills

Motion: To go into closed session

Motion: Commissioner DiMattia

Second: Matt Steich

The board unanimously approved a closed session to discuss the pending litigation.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 P.M. unanimously approved.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Patricia Cullen  
Board Secretary



**BOROUGH OF WEST WILDWOOD  
PLANNING/ZONING BOARD  
COUNTY OF CAPE MAY, STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**RESOLUTION # 2025-12**

**WHEREAS**, the Borough of West Wildwood Planning/Zoning Board conducted a regular meeting on December 18, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, at that meeting the Borough of West Wildwood Planning/Zoning Board (the “Board”) heard and considered the Application of Bernadette Licata (the “Applicant”), the owner of the property located at 625-627 W. Poplar Avenue, a/k/a Block 106, Lot(s) 13 & 14 (the “Subject Property”), seeking ‘C’ variance relief in relation to minimum lot depth (80ft. is required whereas 75ft. is existing and proposed), and maximum curb cut width (a maximum curb cut width of 20ft. is permitted whereas 38ft. is proposed), in order to demolish an existing one-story single-family dwelling to construct a new, three-story two-family dwelling; and

**WHEREAS**, the Applicant has complied with all the requirements of the Municipal Land Use Act and the Borough of West Wildwood Planning/Zoning Board’s procedural requirements to prosecute this application; and

**WHEREAS**, at the December 18, 2025 meeting, the Borough of West Wildwood Planning/Zoning Board carefully considered the application submitted as well as the following testimony and evidence:

1. Jeffrey Barnes, Esquire, appeared on behalf of the Applicant and provided an overview of the application and the relief requested.
2. In connection with this Application, the Board received the following plans, which are incorporated herein as fact:
  - a. A Variance Plot Plan, prepared by Ian A. Burton, P.E. of MidAtlantic

Engineering Partners, consisting of one (1) sheet, dated October 30, 2025, and last revised November 12, 2025.

b. Architectural Plans entitled, prepared by Robert S. Larsen, P.A., P.P. of MidAtlantic Architecture and Design, consisting of three (3) sheets, dated June 13, 2025, and last revised October 30, 2025.

3. The subject property is located at 625-627 W. Poplar Avenue, a/k/a Block 106, Lot(s) 13 and 14, in the Borough's R (Residential) zoning district.
4. Mr. Barnes advised the Board that the Subject Property is an existing 80ft. x 175ft. lot containing a total of 6,000SF.
5. He indicated that the Subject Property is currently developed with a one-story single-family dwelling.
6. The Applicant is proposing to remove all existing improvements to construct a new, three-story two-family dwelling (duplex).
7. Mr. Barnes reviewed the variance and confirmed the variance relief sought in connection with the Applicant's proposal.
8. He indicated that the proposed two-family dwelling was designed as a side-by-side duplex with patios and outdoor showers on the ground level.
9. Scott Hempel, an Architectural Designer and Project Manager with MidAtlantic Architecture and Design appeared on behalf of the Applicant. Mr. Hempel was placed under oath and provided testimony in connection with the proposed architectural plans and variances required to permit the proposed development.
10. Mr. Hempel reviewed and confirmed the existing site conditions for the benefit of the Board.

11. Mr. Hempel noted that the Subject Property consists of two (2) lots, lot 13 contains the existing single-family dwelling, and lot 14 is vacant.
12. Mr. Hempel testified that there are two (2) additional, significantly undersized lots located behind the Subject Property adjacent to the back bay which are owned by a neighboring property.
13. Mr. Hempel testified that the existing single-family dwelling is proposed to be demolished and a new, three-story duplex is proposed to be constructed on site.
14. Mr. Hempel testified that the proposed duplex meets all applicable bulk requirements of the R zone.
15. He testified that the Applicant will submit revised plans depicting that the proposed garages are recessed to provide compliant off-street parking spaces eliminating the need for undersized parking space dimension variance relief.
16. Mr. Hempel testified that each unit will have two (2) exterior off-street parking spaces.
17. He noted that additional off-street parking spaces are available within the proposed garages; however, he acknowledged that interior off-street parking spaces cannot be counted towards off-street parking requirements pursuant to the Borough's Ordinance. Nevertheless, compliant off-street parking is provided for each unit.
18. Mr. Hempel testified that the existing structure is located below the applicable base flood elevation and the proposed structure will conform to the base flood elevation and required finished floor elevation.
19. Mr. Hempel further testified that the garage areas will be flood proofed.
20. Mr. Hempel presented proposed architectural elevations for the Board's review.

21. He indicated that the proposed duplex has two defined entrances for each unit. The left unit has two garage doors, and the right unit will have one garage door.
22. Mr. Hempel testified that there are two (2) curb cuts proposed, with one curb cut measuring 20ft. and the other 18ft.
23. He confirmed that the proposed structure does not exceed maximum permitted building height as 40ft. is permitted whereas the proposed structure measures 38ft.
24. Mr. Hempel advised the Board that the ground floor of each unit will be utilized for parking and storage, the second floors will contain living space, and the third floor will contain bedrooms.
25. He reviewed the exterior materials and confirmed they are consistent with dwellings in the surrounding area.
26. Mr. Hempel testified that the proposed duplex will reduce overall impervious and building coverage.
27. A maximum building coverage of 55% is permitted whereas 40% is proposed, and a maximum impervious coverage of 65% is permitted whereas 60% is proposed.
28. Mr. Hempel opined that the compliant impervious and building coverages clearly show that the Applicant's proposal does not amount to an overdevelopment of the site.
29. He testified that the rear portion of the Subject Property is not adjacent to a bulkhead, as there are two (2) undersized lots between the Subject Property and the bulkhead which are owned by the owner of Lot 15.
30. Bernadette Licata, the owner of the Subject Property, appeared and she was placed under oath to testify.

31. Ms. Licata testified that the two (2) adjacent rear lots were sold to her neighbor prior to purchasing the Subject Property.
32. She testified that she attempted to purchase these undersized lots from her neighbor; however, her efforts were unsuccessful.
33. Mr. Hempel testified that existing lot depth is unique and creates practical difficulties in meeting the bulk requirements of the Ordinance, thereby establishing a hardship to the Applicant, which supports granting the requested variance relief.
34. He opined that the shallowness of the lot prevents compliance with the ordinance requirements.
35. Mr. Hempel further opined that the Application advances the purposes of zoning, outlined in N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2, which supports the requested variance relief sought by the Applicant as it:
  - c. Provide adequate light, air and open space as the proposed duplex meets applicable setbacks and is below the maximum building height allowed in the zone;
  - e. Promotes the establishment of appropriate population densities and concentrations that will contribute to the well-being of persons, neighborhoods, communities and regions and preservation of the environment;
  - g. Provides sufficient space in appropriate locations for a variety of agricultural, residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses and open space, both public and private, according to their respective environmental requirements in order to meet the needs of all New Jersey citizens;

- i. Promotes a desirable visual environment through creative development techniques and good civic design and arrangement; and
  - m. Encourages coordination of the various public and private procedures and activities shaping land development with a view of lessening the cost of such development and to the more efficient use of land.
36. Mr. Hempel testified that the application can be granted as there are no substantial detriments to the public good and the application does not impair the intent or purpose of the zone plan and zoning ordinance.
37. As a condition of approval, the Applicant must record a Deed of Consolidation which must be reviewed and approved by the Board Solicitor prior to recording with the Cape May County Clerk's Office.
38. The Board was in receipt of a review memorandum prepared by Board Engineer John A. Fairheller, Jr., P.P., P.E., C.F.M., dated October 15, 2025, which was received by the Board, and which is incorporated herein as fact.
39. The Board Engineer reviewed and confirmed the relief sought by the Applicant for the benefit of the Board. As a condition of approval, the Applicant must comply with the comments and conditions outlined within the Board Engineer's Report.
40. The Meeting was opened to the public for comment.
41. No members of the public addressed the Board in connection with this Application.
- Accordingly, the public portion of this application was closed.

**WHEREAS**, the Board, after hearing the testimony and reviewing the application and evidence submitted, made the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

1. The Applicant is the owner of the Subject Property and has standing to come before

the Board.

2. The taxes are current on the subject property and the notice requirements have been satisfied by the Applicant.
3. The Applicant was represented by Jeffrey Barnes, Esquire.
4. The subject property is developed with a single-family dwelling.
5. The Applicant is proposing to demolish the existing single-family home to construct a three-story, two-family dwelling (duplex).
6. In connection with this Application, the Board received the following exhibits, which are incorporated herein as fact:
  - a. A Variance Plot Plan, prepared by Ian A. Burton, P.E. of MidAtlantic Engineering Partners, consisting of one (1) sheet, dated October 30, 2025, and last revised November 12, 2025.
  - b. Architectural Plans entitled, prepared by Robert S. Larsen, P.A., P.P. of MidAtlantic Architecture and Design, consisting of three (3) sheets, dated June 13, 2025, and last revised October 30, 2025.
7. The subject property is located at 625-627 W. Poplar Avenue, a/k/a Block 106, Lots 13 and 14, in the Borough's R (Residential) zoning district.
8. The Subject Property is an existing 80ft. x 75ft. lot containing a total of 6,000SF.
9. The Subject Property is currently developed with a one-story single-family dwelling.
10. The existing dwelling is proposed to be demolished and a new three-story duplex is proposed to be developed.
11. The Applicant requires variance relief in connection with minimum lot depth and to permit a maximum curb cut width of 38ft. whereas 20ft. is permitted.

12. The lot complies with the minimum required lot area; however, the lot depth is deficient.
13. The Board received testimony from Scott Hempel, a project manager with MidAtlantic Architecture and Design.
14. The proposed duplex will have a maximum height of 38ft. whereas 40ft. is permitted.
15. Mr. Hempel reviewed and confirmed the variance relief sought by the Applicant.
16. There are two (2) existing, undersized lots located to the rear of the Subject Property which are owned by a neighboring property owner.
17. There is no available land that the Applicant can acquire to bring the existing lot depth into conformity with the requirements of the Ordinance.
18. He provided testimony under both the C1 and C2 standards to justify the requested variance relief. He further opined that the lot depth deficiency is de minimis and that the Applicant's proposal presents no substantial detriments.
19. The Board found the testimony from Mr. Hempel to be credible and persuasive.
20. At the conclusion of the Applicant's presentation the Board opened the Application up for deliberations.
21. The Board determined that the configuration, depth, and surrounding lot pattern are existing conditions not created by the Applicant.
22. The Board finds that the Subject Property is constrained by its shallow lot depth and the existence of separate, undersized lots located to the rear of the property, which are not under the Applicant's control. These conditions limit the ability to strictly comply with the area and bulk requirements of the Ordinance.
23. The Board finds that the proposed two-family dwelling is a permitted residential use

within the R zoning district and that the overall scale, height, massing, and architectural design of the proposed structure are compatible with other residential dwellings in the surrounding neighborhood.

24. The Board finds that the proposed structure complies with all applicable bulk requirements of the R zone.
25. The Board finds that the proposed development provides adequate off-street parking in compliance with the Ordinance through exterior parking spaces, and that the Applicant's agreement to revise the plans to recess the garages further ensures compliance with applicable parking dimensional standards.
26. The Board concludes that the benefits of granting the variance relief sought by the Applicant will substantially outweigh any detriments.
27. The Board further concludes that the variances can be granted without substantial detriment to the public good, and that granting the variances will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the Borough's Master Plan or Zoning Ordinance
28. The Board found that the purposes of zoning identified by the Applicant would be advanced in connection with this proposal and supports granting the relief requested by the Applicant.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the West Wildwood Planning Board that the application of Bernadette Licata, the owner of the property located at 625-627 W. Poplar Avenue, a/k/a Block 106, Lot(s) 13 & 14, seeking 'C' variance relief in relation to minimum lot depth (80ft. is required whereas 75ft. is existing and proposed), and maximum curb cut width (a maximum curb cut width of 20ft. is permitted whereas 38ft. is proposed), in order to demolish an existing one-story single-family dwelling to construct a new, three-story two-family dwelling, is

hereby approved, subject to the following conditions;

1. Compliance with, and approval by, any and all governmental authorities having jurisdiction over this proposal including, but not limited to, local, county, state and federal entities.
2. Compliance with all zoning, building, and construction ordinances and codes.
3. Compliance with all conditions of approval set forth above. More specifically:
  - a. The Applicant must comply with the comments and conditions outlined within the Board Engineer's Report.
  - b. The Applicant must record a Deed of Consolidation which must be reviewed and approved by the Board Solicitor prior to recording with the Cape May County Clerk's Office.
4. A copy of this Resolution shall be supplied to the Applicant and filed with the Borough Clerk.
5. A notice of this decision shall be published in the official newspaper of the Borough by the Board Secretary.
6. The proper Board officials are authorized to take all actions necessary to effectuate this approval.
7. This Resolution shall take effect immediately subject to Applicant's compliance with the aforesaid conditions.

ON MOTION OF:

SECONDED BY:

ROLL CALL VOTE

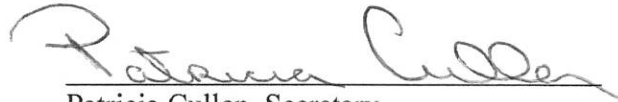
Those in Favor:

Those Opposed: none

Abstentions:

Absent:

The foregoing Memorializing Resolution was passed by the Planning Board of the Borough of West Wildwood at a meeting held on January 15, 2026. It memorializes a decision the Board reached on December 18, 2025.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patricia Cullen". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Patricia Cullen, Secretary  
West Wildwood Planning Board