

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MEETING
January 21, 2026

The public hearing began at 7:00 P.M.

Members present were:

Terry Andrus
Albert Fisher
Andrew Groetsch
Eric Hernandez
Joseph Repice
Joseph Stefano
George LoBiondo

Members absent: Ryan Flaim, Rudolph Luisi

Others Present were:

Michael Malinsky, Zoning Board Solicitor
Yasmin Perez, Zoning Board Secretary
Pat Finley, Zoning Officer
Ryan Headley, Zoning Board Engineer/Planner
Elizabeth Jambor, Assistant Planner

Mr. Malinsky opened the pre-meeting to reorganize for the year.

Mr. Stefano made a motion to nominate George LoBiondo as Chairman.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Repice made a motion to nominate Joseph Stefano as Vice Chairman.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to nominate Michael Malinsky as Solicitor.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to nominate Kristopher Facenda as Conflict Solicitor.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to nominate Yasmin Perez as Secretary.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to nominate Alena Broshchan as Substitute Secretary.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to nominate Ryan Headley as Board Planner/Engineer.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to nominate Ryan Headley as alternate to sign plans.

Roll Call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Malinsky went over revisions to the agenda.

The Chairman entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the December 17, 2025, meeting.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

The Chairman entertained a motion to approve the resolutions from the December 17, 2025, meeting.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes
Albert Fisher: Yes
Andrew Groetsch: Yes
Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

AMR, LLC/AUTO FINDERS UNLIMITED, 2044 S. Delsea Drive, Block 5601, Lots 72 & 73, Zones B-3/R-5, preliminary/final major site plan approval, in conjunction with a "d" variance/conditional use, to construct a 4,999± square foot used vehicle dealership and a general repair garage along with associated site improvements.

The applicant was represented by Matthew Robinson, Esq. The dealership has operated successfully as a community business despite challenging market conditions, and the applicant is seeking to expand its existing operations. The application is primarily for site plan approval and does not involve bulk variances, aside from impervious coverage. However, a use variance is required due to a technical condition. While the car dealership is a permitted use within the B-3 Zone, the subject property is split-zoned, with the rear portion located in the R-3 Residential Zone. The proposed stormwater management basin, required under updated regulations and larger design standards, extends into the residentially zoned portion of the property. The use variance relates solely to the location of the stormwater management and not to the dealership operations.

Igor Pristop, Managing Member, testified on behalf of AMR, LLC. He testified that he has operated the dealership at the Delsea Drive location for approximately eight years. He explained that the expansion is intended to improve customer and employee comfort, increase vehicle display capacity, enhance safety, and improve the

overall appearance of the property. The application involves two existing lots, which are proposed to be consolidated if approved.

Teal Jeffers, Professional Engineer, testified on behalf of the applicant. Exhibits marked were Applicant's Exhibits A-1 (aerial photograph with the property outlined) and A-2 (color-rendered site plan). He described the subject property as consisting of two lots totaling approximately 4.3 acres. The property is split-zoned, with the eastern portion located in the B-3 Zone and the western portion, which is largely wooded and unimproved, located in the R-3 Residential Zone. Existing stormwater runoff drains west toward a drainage ditch and wooded area. Under the proposal, the existing sales building would be demolished and replaced with a new approximately 4,992-square-foot, two-story building containing sales offices, interior display areas, and service bays intended solely for inventory preparation and customer-related service associated with dealership sales. Proposed site improvements include reconfiguration and expansion of parking areas, conversion of the existing driveway to one-way ingress, construction of a new one-way egress driveway, improved internal circulation, ADA-compliant parking, designated employee, customer, and display parking, and electric vehicle charging stations. The designated trash and recycling enclosure is proposed in the rear corner of the parking area. With respect to parking, the existing unstriped lot currently accommodates approximately 20–30 vehicles, the ordinance requires 36 spaces when considering both office and service components. The proposed plan provides a total of 96 striped parking spaces, including 24 spaces for employees and customers and 72 spaces for display and inventory vehicles. The project qualifies as a major development under stormwater regulations. He explained that a small portion of the basin extends approximately 60 feet into the R-3 Residential Zone, while remaining over 300 feet from adjacent residential property lines, which necessitates the requested use variance. Landscaping improvements include street trees, building and interior plantings, perimeter buffering, and screening around the basin. Most of the existing wooded areas will remain to serve as a residential buffer. Existing lighting will be replaced with full cut-off LED fixtures designed to meet ordinance standards. There is a variance required for maximum impervious coverage within the B-3 Zone, where 50% is permitted and approximately 66% is proposed within the B-3 portion. The total impervious coverage across the entire property will be approximately 29.3%, consistent with both the B-3 and R-3 zones. The existing northern driveway will be replaced and converted to one-way ingress due to utility constraints. A new one-way egress driveway with appropriate turning radii will be installed at the southern end of the property. A design waiver was requested for driveway width, based on improved maneuverability. He also noted that no new fencing or additional signage is proposed.

Mr. Stefano asked if the applicant would install fencing around the stormwater basin. Mr. Jeffers indicated that the applicant would be amenable to a four-foot split-rail fence with mesh or other standard fencing if required as a condition of approval. He expressed a preference to avoid additional costs where fencing is not mandated by ordinance. Mr. Robinson stated that the applicant would accept any reasonable conditions imposed by the Board.

Chairman made a motion to close the public hearing.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes

Albert Fisher: Yes

Andrew Groetsch: Yes

Eric Hernandez: Yes

Joseph Repice: Yes

Joseph Stefano: Yes

George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to approve the application.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes

Albert Fisher: Yes

Andrew Groetsch: Yes

Eric Hernandez: Yes
Joseph Repice: Yes
Joseph Stefano: Yes
George LoBiondo: Yes

Application granted.

PARADISE CITY, LLC, 1366 E. Oak Road, Block 1802, Lots 11-13, Zones R-3/R-5, use variance for an expansion of a cold storage facility which is a pre-existing non-conforming use.

The applicant was represented by Michael Peacock, Esq. The proposal includes approximately 30,000 square feet of additional building area, consisting of roughly 5,500 square feet at the front of the site, a previously approved 14,400-square-foot expansion authorized by the Board in 2021, and an additional 23,000-square-foot expansion at the rear. The property is located in both the R-5 and R-3 Zones, with the existing facility located entirely within the R-5 Zone and the rear portion of the proposed expansion extending into the R-3 Zone. He explained that the application was bifurcated, with only use variance approval being sought at this time, and that preliminary and final major site plan approval would follow if the variance were granted.

Witnesses were sworn, including Jeffrey DiMattio, Executive Vice President of Council Family Farms Fresh Wave, Cory Gaskell of Fralinger Engineering, a licensed professional engineer and surveyor, and Lance Landgraf, licensed planner, all accepted by the Board as experts.

Cory Gaskell, Professional Engineer, testified on behalf of the applicant. He testified that his firm prepared the variance plan and provided an overview of the proposal, including lot consolidation, building expansions, a proposed stormwater basin adjacent to the new construction, and additional screening along Oak Road to buffer neighboring properties. He further testified that no new stormwater improvements were required for a portion of the expansion constructed over existing asphalt areas.

Jeffrey DiMatteo, Executive Vice President, testified on behalf of the applicant. He testified that he is in charge of operations for both the farming business and the packing/storage facility. The purpose of the proposed expansion is to increase cold storage capacity for incoming fruit shipments from ports in Chile, Argentina, and Peru. The proposed additions on both the east (rear) side and the south (front) side of the building will be used strictly as refrigerated storage facilities, with the potential relocation of some equipment but no change in use. The expansion is necessary because the facility is approaching capacity and currently stores product at another location. The storage will be limited to fresh fruit, including citrus, blueberries, lemons, and limes, and will not involve frozen storage.

Lance Landgraf, Professional Planner, testified on behalf of the applicant. He explained that the applicant was seeking a D(2) use variance for the expansion of an existing nonconforming cold storage facility located within the R-5 and R-3 zones, where the use is not permitted. The variance criteria are similar to those required for a D(1) variance and outlined the positive criteria under the purposes of zoning pursuant to N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2, specifically purposes A, G, and M. He stated that the expansion would promote the general welfare by allowing an established agricultural business to remain and grow within the City of Vineland while maintaining existing employment. The site is adequately sized to accommodate the expansion, including stormwater management, with portions of the addition proposed over existing asphalt areas and other improvements designed to handle drainage on site. He also testified that the proposal represents an efficient use of land by expanding an existing long-standing use without creating new access points, maintaining circulation through the existing driveway. As for the negative criteria, he testified that the expansion would not substantially impair the zone plan or zoning ordinance and would not result in substantial detriment to the public good. The applicant was unaware of any complaints related to noise and that residential uses to the rear would be appropriately buffered with landscaping and screening.

Chairman made a motion to close the public hearing.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes

Albert Fisher: Yes

Andrew Groetsch: Yes

Eric Hernandez: Yes

Joseph Repice: Yes

Joseph Stefano: Yes

George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to approve the application.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes

Albert Fisher: Yes

Andrew Groetsch: Yes

Eric Hernandez: Yes

Joseph Repice: Yes

Joseph Stefano: Yes

George LoBiondo: Yes

Application granted.

GMR PROPERTIES, LLC, 2465 W. Oak Road, Block 2002, Lot 1, Zone W-5, use variance to permit parking and storage of unused trailers for an off-site cold storage facility.

The applicant was represented Terrance Bennett, Esq. He explained that the applicant owns land adjacent to the industrial park that is proposed to be used for overflow trailer parking associated with its cold storage operations. The business experiences seasonal fluctuations, at times requiring the use of up to ten trailers daily for several months, followed by periods when the trailers are not needed. During those inactive periods, the trailers occupy valuable operational space at the primary facility, prompting the request to utilize the adjacent parcel for parking purposes only. Mr. Bennett addressed concerns raised in correspondence from the Environmental Commission, stating that the proposal would not create significant increases in stormwater runoff, as drainage would be managed through an on-site basin within the same watershed as the existing facility. There would be a minor increase in impervious coverage but it will be insignificant. Lighting could be minimized or eliminated if required. There will be intermittent movement of trailers, typically occurring during late afternoon hours. The applicant's trucks do not utilize Morris River Parkway and would continue to access the site via Oak Road. He questioned whether maintaining wildlife habitat adjacent to a highway constituted a valid basis for objection but acknowledged that the property's W-5 zoning designation is established by the City. The applicant has evaluated other properties over time but has not identified a suitable property. He also confirmed that no professional planner was present to provide testimony that evening.

Mr. Headley noted that no planning testimony had been offered to address the positive and negative criteria required for a use variance. His concerns are outlined in his report regarding the appropriateness of the proposal within the W-5 zoning district. He advised that testimony would typically be provided by a licensed planning professional to establish that the proposal advances the purposes of zoning and would not create substantial detriment to the public good or impairment of the zone plan. The proposed trailer parking use is within the W-5 Woodland Conservation zoning district. He explained that although the applicant described the parcel as adjacent to the industrial park, the industrial zoning is limited primarily to the northeast corner across Route 55, while surrounding properties include residential homes along Oak Road and Morris River Parkway, as well as environmentally sensitive areas to the east.

The area is primarily woodlands with the nearby Blackwater Branch. It has flood hazard areas and wetlands in close proximity to the site. The W-5 zone is intentionally low density and designed to serve as a transition between higher density development and undisturbed forested land, supporting rural residential uses and environmental protection. He stated that although stormwater management could be addressed through basins, the proposed impervious trailer parking lot would be inconsistent with the intent of the zoning district. He further testified that the property had previously been utilized as a horse farm, an allowable W-5 use, and that suitable conforming uses remain viable.

Mr. Finley agreed with Mr. Headley's analysis and emphasizing the clear transition in land use west of Route 55 from industrial and higher density residential areas to a more rural, bucolic character consistent with the W-5 district. He noted that while the City has limited industrial land, it also faces a shortage of suitable residential land, and the subject property appears well suited for low-density residential development consistent with the zone. He also stated that he did not hear any positive criteria supporting the requested variance and believed the proposal presented significant negative zoning impacts despite the applicant's positive standing in the community.

Michael Villani, 1469 Maurice River Parkway, addressed the Board and spoke in opposition to the requested variance. He stated that numerous neighbors were present to express concern and emphasized that the property lies within a W-5 Woodland Conservation Zone, which he described as the most restrictive zoning designation intended to preserve forested character, protect native habitats, recharge aquifers, and maintain water quality within the Maurice River watershed. He referenced the proximity of the site to the Blackwater Branch, noting its history as a Superfund remediation area where arsenic contamination was addressed through extensive federal cleanup efforts costing more than \$170 million, after which the area was restored to a natural condition. The development could negatively affect these environmental improvements. He also referenced a report from the Vineland Environmental Commission, stating that the proposed trailer parking use would be inconsistent with the intent of the W-5 zoning district and could adversely impact the surrounding woodland environment. He urged the Board to deny the variance request while acknowledging the applicant's positive reputation within Vineland.

Dr. Mohammed Salah, 1331 Maurice River Parkway, testified in opposition to the requested variance. He stated that he resides directly across from the proposed property and has three young children who use a school bus stop along Maurice River Parkway. Dr. Salah testified that he spent time canvassing the neighborhood and collected approximately 47 signatures from residents opposing the application. He described Maurice River Parkway as a narrow, winding road consisting primarily of single-family homes, with no sidewalks and limited visibility, which he believes creates dangerous conditions. He further testified that there are already concerns regarding truck traffic on the roadway, including incidents of trucks turning around or becoming stuck in nearby low-lying wetland areas. He respectfully requested that the Board deny the variance application. Mr. Malinsky advised that petitions and written statements could not be entered into evidence without the individuals present to provide sworn testimony.

Dr. Hassan Salah, member of the public, testified in opposition to the requested variance. Dr. Salah stated that he has lived in the community for more than 30 years and works as a pediatrician with offices in Cumberland County. He testified that he frequently uses Maurice River Parkway for running and recreation with family members and described the roadway as narrow, with limited shoulders and visibility. He stated that truck traffic is generally uncommon in the area but that occasional trucks attempting to use the road as a shortcut from Route 55 have created dangerous situations, including an incident where a truck struck a power line due to height restrictions. He expressed concern that approving the proposed trailer parking use would increase truck activity and create additional safety risks for residents.

Donald Cromwell, 2171 W Oak Road, stated that the proposed rezoning would constitute impermissible spot zoning under New Jersey's Municipal Land Use Law, as it would reclassify a single property from woodland to industrial within the middle of a residential area for the benefit of a private developer seeking to establish a truck trailer storage lot. Mr. Cromwell emphasized that such a rezoning is inconsistent with the City of Vineland's Master Plan, which does not designate this residential area for industrial or truck-related uses. The proposed use would introduce heavy truck traffic, diesel emissions, noise, lighting, and safety risks, all of which are incompatible with the residential neighborhood and do not advance the general welfare of its residents.

Margret Shearer, 1076 Maurice River Parkway, lives directly across the street from the proposed site. She expressed strong concerns about the impact on the neighborhood. She noted that from her front window and mailbox, she can see the property, and she sometimes relocates wildlife, such as snakes or mice, to that lot. She emphasized that the neighborhood is very quiet and secure, with residents generally feeling safe enough not to lock their doors. She worries that allowing trucks on the property could attract unwanted visitors and increase crime. Her environmental concerns included potential runoff from the trucks affecting her well water and septic system.

Ivan Attoni, 1028 Maurice River Parkway, testified regarding alternative properties for the proposed use. He referenced a listing at 1496 N. Mill Road, approximately half a mile from Oak Road, with a frontage of 189.3 feet along Mill Road and a depth of 753.42 feet. He offered the listing to the applicant for consideration as an alternative location, noting that he did not know the zoning of the property.

Margaret Lopez Cornwell, 1855 Maurice River Parkway, has lived on this stretch of Maurice River Parkway for nearly 50 years and has witnessed the area's growth and development over that time. She emphasized that the neighborhood has always been residential, quiet, and wooded, and expressed strong opposition to the proposed truck trailer storage lot. She disputed claims that trucks from the M&O facility do not use Maurice River Parkway and pointed out that the proposed use would be an eyesore and would negatively impact the character of the neighborhood.

John Reed, 1076 Maurice River Parkway, emphasized that the area is designated as W5 woodland under the City of Vineland's Master Plan, which is intended to preserve the rural, residential, and natural character of the neighborhood. Converting this woodland to an industrial trailer drop-off would directly violate zoning laws and set a dangerous precedent for future industrial encroachment.

Ahmed Elbaly, legal counsel for the Salah family residing at 1331 and 1361 Maurice River Parkway, addressed the board regarding the proposed industrial use of the property. He summarized the objections of the Salah family and their neighbors, emphasizing that the neighborhood is serene and residential, and families chose to move there when it was zoned as W5 woodland, taking into account the nearby Route 55. Despite existing restrictions, trucks continue to use Maurice River Parkway, and he noted that there is no reliable method to enforce compliance, suggesting that approval of the project would exacerbate this problem.

Reid Schwartz, 2130 Maurice River Parkway, emphasized that the proposal would introduce an industrial use into a residential corridor celebrated for its natural beauty. He highlighted the unique character of Maurice River Parkway, describing it as a scenic street with freshly remediated waterways, protected woodlands, and quiet recreational areas suitable for activities like kayaking, fly fishing, and bird watching. He stressed that the proposed industrial storage lot, with its associated truck traffic, noise, security concerns, and environmental risks, would fundamentally alter this character and is incompatible with the setting.

Ertrude Thompson Pitts, 2009 Maurice River Parkway, addressed the board to express her opposition to the proposed project. She explained that she had not planned on speaking that evening but felt compelled to share her concerns. Ms. Pitts recounted an incident involving an 88-year-old neighbor, Bob Minton, who lived at 2050 Maurice River Parkway. Whenever a truck or bus entered the neighborhood that did not belong, Bob would intervene to prevent potential accidents. While she acknowledged the police department's efforts to monitor and

enforce traffic regulations, she stressed that enforcement can only go so far and cannot fully mitigate the dangers posed by heavy truck traffic.

Giorgio Ramo, 1391 Maurice River Parkway, stated that he is retired and enjoys spending time outdoors, which allows him to regularly observe the neighborhood. Mr. Ramo reported that trucks and tractor trailers frequently pass by his property, often producing significant noise that can be heard even inside his home. He emphasized that the increased traffic from the proposed project would exacerbate this noise issue. Additionally, he noted the presence of wildlife on his property, specifically a bald eagle in his backyard, highlighting the environmental sensitivity of the area. Based on these concerns, Mr. Ramo expressed his strong opposition to the project.

Chairman made a motion to close the public hearing.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes

Albert Fisher: Yes

Andrew Groetsch: Yes

Eric Hernandez: Yes

Joseph Repice: Yes

Joseph Stefano: Yes

George LoBiondo: Yes

Mr. Stefano made a motion to deny the use variance.

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes

Albert Fisher: Yes

Andrew Groetsch: Yes

Eric Hernandez: Yes

Joseph Repice: Yes

Joseph Stefano: Yes

George LoBiondo: Yes

Application denied.

Meeting adjourned at 9:19 PM

Roll call:

Terry Andrus: Yes

Albert Fisher: Yes

Andrew Groetsch: Yes

Eric Hernandez: Yes

Joseph Repice: Yes

Joseph Stefano: Yes

George LoBiondo: Yes

Yasmin Perez, Secretary

Zoning Board of Adjustment