

## PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

April 8, 2026

The pre-meeting of the Planning Board was called to order by Chairman Mr. David Manders at 6:00 PM in the Second Floor Caucus Room of City Hall.

### Members Present:

Sandy Velez  
Douglas Menz  
Thomas Tobolski  
Jeffrey DiMatteo  
Robert Odorizzi  
David Manders

### Also present were:

Amanda Moschillo, Planning Board Solicitor  
Yasmin Perez, Planning Board Secretary  
Kathleen Hicks, Supervising Planner  
Ryan Headley, Planning Board Planner/Engineer  
Elizabeth Jambor, Assistant Planner

### PRE-MEETING

Amended True North Territory– located on northeastern corner of the intersection of Landis Avenue and Delsea Drive, Block 2802, Lots 20, 21 and 22, Tax Map Sheet #28, Project No. PBA-25-00029. Amended preliminary/final major site plan approval, to convert a vacant department store/automotive center (Sears) into a church along with associated site improvements. The proposed changes include a reconfiguration of the rear parking area to eliminate cross-access and additional security and fencing.

Mr. Headley explained that the application involves a relatively minor amendment. The proposed changes affect parking, so a formal amendment was required. He noted that most aspects of the plan remain unchanged from the prior approval, with the primary modification relating to the elimination of cross access between two parking aisles. Originally, cross access had been proposed, but following discussions with neighboring property owners, no agreement could be reached to maintain it. Additionally, there is no recorded easement or formal requirement mandating such access. As a result, the plan was revised to include a full row of parking spaces in that area, along with the installation of a timber guide rail to prevent traffic between the properties. A similar adjustment was made in another area of the site for the same reason. He further stated that the site's entrance configuration will remain unchanged. The applicant has indicated an intention to install a gate or similar barrier to control access and discourage cut-through traffic during non-operational hours. The exact design of the gate has not yet been finalized. The applicant expressed concerns about unauthorized traffic through the site. All the previously approved variances and waivers remain applicable to this application. The only additional waiver requested pertains to the width of certain parking lot end islands, which are proposed to be narrower than the ordinance requirement, measuring approximately five to nine feet where ten feet is typically required.

Spanish Seventh Day Adventist Church-located on the northerly side of Chestnut Avenue between S Second Street and S. Third Street, Block 3914, Lots 2 and 3, Tax Map Sheet #39, Project No. ZBA-25-00057. Minor site plan approval to construct a thirty-two (32) square foot digital monument sign at an existing church.

Mr. Headley stated that this application is relatively straightforward and pertains to an existing church property located along Chestnut Avenue and Second Street. He explained that the applicant is proposing to install a new freestanding digital sign along the frontage of the property. The proposed sign exceeds the permitted size, measuring approximately 32 square feet where 24 square feet is allowed, and it is also located closer to the right-of-way than permitted, thereby requiring variance relief. He noted that Chestnut Avenue has an unusually wide right-of-way of approximately 100 feet, which is significantly greater than most roadways in the area. There is a substantial distance between the curblineline and the right-of-way, reducing the overall impact of the sign's proximity.

Land Use Ordinance Amendment- Amendments to §425-60, Subdivision Plat Details and Other Required Data, and §425-61, Site Plan Details and Other Required Data, of the Land Use Ordinance.

Ms. Hicks stated explained that plan submissions were made to include larger sheet sizes, noting that the Board has consistently granted waivers for 30" x 42" plan sizes. The ordinance was cleaned up to remove outdated reference materials that are no longer in use, particularly prior media and disk-based submission instructions. Updated folding and submission instructions were incorporated to reflect current standards for plan preparation and review.

FLAG SALUTE

Public notice pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act was given on December 16, 2025 by posting written notice on the Official Bulletin Board in City Hall, and mailing written notices to the Daily Journal, City Clerk, and the Board members.

MINUTES

Approval of minutes from the February 11, 2026 board meeting.  
The Chairman made a motion to approve the minutes.

Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Abstain  
Thomas Tobloski: Abstain  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

RESOLUTIONS

Approval of resolutions from the February 11, 2026 board meeting.  
The Chairman made a motion to approve the resolution.

Resolution #6752

Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Abstain  
Thomas Tobloski: Abstain  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

Resolution #6753

Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Abstain  
Thomas Tobloski: Abstain  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

Resolution #6754

Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Abstain  
Thomas Tobloski: Abstain  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Amended True North Territory– located on northeastern corner of the intersection of Landis Avenue and Delsea Drive, Block 2802, Lots 20, 21 and 22, Tax Map Sheet #28, Project No. PBA-25-00029. Amended preliminary/final major site plan approval, to convert a vacant department store/automotive center (Sears) into a church along with associated site improvements. The proposed changes include a reconfiguration of the rear parking area to eliminate cross-access and additional security and fencing.

The applicant was represented by Mr. DeSanto, Esq. He introduced two witnesses: Mr. Ted Wilkinson, project engineer, and Pastor Jesse Eisenhardt, representative of True North Church.

Mr. Wilkinson testified that he prepared the amended site plan. He explained that the purpose of the amendment is to address cross access issues between the property and adjacent properties. Specifically, the revised plan eliminates several points of vehicular access that previously allowed traffic to pass between the properties. These access points will be closed a combination of vertical curbing, landscaped buffer areas, or 30-inch-high timber guide rails designed to physically deter vehicles from crossing between sites. In the front portion of the property, a double curb with a landscaped mulch buffer for separation.

The addition of four new concrete parking islands are intended to break up long rows of parking and improve site aesthetics and safety. While two of the islands meet ordinance requirements, the other two are narrower—approximately five and nine feet wide whereas ten feet is required. Mr. Wilkinson explained that these dimensions were selected to maximize landscaping opportunities while preserving parking capacity. He also noted that extended concrete curbing, approximately six inches in height and three to four feet in width, will support landscaping and create a visual and physical barrier once vegetation is established. Additional shade trees are also proposed. He confirmed that the revised layout results in a slight increase in the number of parking spaces.

In response to comments in the Planning Report dated March 17, 2026. Item 8a, waivers for the reduced island widths, 5 and 9 feet whereas 10 feet required. He confirmed that the applicant is seeking those waivers. Waivers for items 12a-h, perfected plan details. Item 13a, the plan will be revised to correct inconsistencies in the parking space counts. Item 13b, will remove an improperly placed wheel stop within a divider island, and eliminate fence hatching shown on the plan where no fence is proposed.

Mr. Manders expressed concerns regarding the elimination of cross access and the impact on the rear access to the adjacent shopping center. He stated that the ordinance encourages interconnectivity between properties and expressed concern that the lack of an easement could create complications for emergency egress, deliveries, and waste collection.

Pastor Eisenhardt testified that the applicant has made multiple documented attempts to contact the neighboring property owner to negotiate a cross-access agreement. He has been unsuccessful due to lack of response and changes in ownership. The church has invested significantly in site improvements and must also address ongoing issues such as unauthorized truck parking, after-hours activity, and security concerns. The proposed barriers are intended to better control and secure the property for church use. The applicant agreed to provide documentation of efforts to contact the adjacent owner.

Andrea Land, member of the public, gave comments regarding the application. She stated that she wished to speak in opposition to True North Church locating at the subject property. She expressed concerns regarding the nature of so-called “mega churches,” including their structure, messaging, and financial transparency.

Ms. Moscillo advised Ms. Land that her comments were outside the jurisdiction of the Planning Board for the current application.

Mr. Headley explained that the use of the property as a church had already been approved through a prior redevelopment plan amendment, which was recommended by the Planning Board and formally approved by City Council approximately two years prior. The applicant has already received site plan approval and that the current application is limited to a minor amendment relating to parking layout and site design.

Mr. Mora, member of the public, gave comments regarding the application. He agreed with the previous speaker’s comments, while acknowledging that those concerns were not within the scope of the current application. He expressed concern regarding the proposed installation of barriers and the elimination of cross access between the subject property and neighboring properties. He questioned whether the use of physical barriers was consistent with the nature of a church, suggesting that it could convey a lack of openness to the community. Mr. Mora also raised concerns about potential impacts on emergency access, noting that restricting connectivity between properties could make access more difficult for emergency vehicles.

The Chairman entertained a motion to approve the application. Ms. Velez so moved, Mr. Odorizzi seconded.

Roll Call:  
Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Yes  
Thomas Tobloski: Yes  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

#### PUBLIC HEARING

Spanish Seventh Day Adventist Church-located on the northerly side of Chestnut Avenue between S Second Street and S. Third Street, Block 3914, Lots 2 and 3, Tax Map Sheet #39, Project No. ZBA-25-00057. Minor site plan approval to construct a thirty-two (32) square foot digital monument sign at an existing church.

The applicant was represented by Mr. Jose Silva, Esq. He introduced his witness, Mr. Abdiel Soto, who serves as an elder of the church. Mr. Silva explained that the purpose of the application is to install a digital sign along West Chestnut Avenue, replacing an existing sign that had been in place for many years but had deteriorated.

Mr. Soto testified that he is a lifelong member of the church, having been raised in Vineland, and currently serves as the First Elder. He explained that the church is seeking to install a digital sign to better communicate upcoming events, including community-focused activities such as a food bank held twice per month, as well as other church-related programs.

Mr. Silva confirmed that the applicant had reviewed the Planning and Engineer's reports and indicated that the church has no objections to complying with the conditions outlined, including items listed under paragraph 5a through 5e. He further acknowledged that the application includes requests for two variances: one for sign size and one for setback from the property line.

A motion was made and seconded to grant minor site plan approval, subject to the conditions outlined in the professional reports, along with approval of the requested variances. Specifically, the Board approved a freestanding sign with an area of 32 square feet where 24 square feet is permitted, and a setback of 5 feet from the property line where 10 feet is required.

The Chairman entertained a motion to close the public hearing. Ms. Velez so moved, Mr. Odorizzi seconded.

John Casadia: Yes  
Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Yes  
Thomas Tobloski: Yes  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

The Chairman entertained a motion to approve the application. Ms. Velez so moved, Mr. Odorizzi seconded.

Roll Call:  
John Casadia: Yes  
David Catalana: Yes  
Michael Pantalone: Yes  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Nilsa Rosario: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
Elizabeth Arthur: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

Land Use Ordinance Amendment- Amendments to §425-60, Subdivision Plat Details and Other Required Data, and §425-61, Site Plan Details and Other Required Data, of the Land Use Ordinance.

Ms. Hicks stated explained that plan submissions were made to include larger sheet sizes, noting that the Board has consistently granted waivers for 30" x 42" plan sizes. The ordinance was cleaned up to remove outdated reference materials that are no longer in use, particularly prior media and disk-based submission instructions. Updated folding and submission instructions were incorporated to reflect current standards for plan preparation and review.

The Chairman entertained a motion to make a recommendation to City Council. Ms. Velez so moved, Mr. Odorizzi seconded.

Roll Call:  
John Casadia: Yes  
Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Yes  
Thomas Tobloski: Yes  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

The Chairman entertained a motion to approve Resolution #6755. Ms. Velez so moved, Mr. Odorizzi seconded.

Roll Call:  
John Casadia: Yes  
Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Yes

Thomas Tobloski: Yes  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman entertained a motion to adjourn.

Roll call:

John Casadia: Yes  
Jeffrey DiMatteo: Yes  
Douglas Menz: Yes  
Thomas Tobloski: Yes  
Sandy Velez: Yes  
Robert Odorizzi: Yes  
David Manders: Yes

TIME: 7:20 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Yasmin Perez  
Planning Board Secretary