

**TOWNSHIP OF RIVER VALE  
JOINT PLANNING BOARD  
May 26, 2021  
7:30 p.m.  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

*Approved 6-23-21*

**ADEQUATE NOTICE STATEMENT:**

In accordance with the provisions set forth in the Open Public Meetings Law, notification of this meeting has been sent to all officially appointed Township newspapers and notice is posted at the River Vale Municipal Office.

**The Joint Planning Board saluted the flag.**

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**ROLL CALL:**

**Members Present:**

Robert Fortsch	Vice-Chairman
Scott Lippert	Chairman
Matthew Ross	(Alt. #1)
Susan Vaccaro	Secretary
Peter Wayne	

**Also Present:**

Marc E. Leibman, Esq.	Board Attorney
Lisa S. Neyman, P.E.	Board Engineer
Maria Haag	Land Use Administrator/ Recording Secretary

**Absent:**

Robert Adamo	
John Donovan	Councilman
Glen Jasionowski	Class I-Mayor
Gregory Lowe	
John Puccio	

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**REGULAR MEETING**

**APPLICATIONS:**

**Lagala- Block 801 Lot 3 - 524 Wittich Terrace**

- Patio/Set Backs

Counsel for the Applicant - Holly T. Schepisi, Esq., of Schepisi Consulting & Law, LLC.

Ms. Schepisi presented an overview of the application. The applicant Damon S. Lagala is the owner of the property and filed a zoning application for approval to construct a swimming pool, related patio, and drainage improvements. The applicant is seeking variance relief for the patio improvement which exceeds the required 10 ft. buffer from rear and side property lines. The proposed patio would be installed up to the homeowner's property line. The patio will be 1.4 feet from the property line. The applicant has already received approvals and has built the pool in full conformity with the township code. The application includes four photographs and four computer renderings of the proposed patio and letters of support from the surrounding neighbors and are all on the record.

Ms. Schepisi introduced the applicant/homeowner, Damon S. Lagala. Mr. Lagala was sworn in. Mr. Lagala described the project and stated that he is seeking a variance for a patio in conjunction with his pool project. Mr. Lagala described the photos that were submitted with the application. Mr. Lagala explained that there is a large tree in his backyard and to avoid having to take the tree down, the pool and patio were designed around the placement of the tree. Mr. Lagala spoke about the landscape architecture that is planned including green giant arborvitae trees, roses Sharon, and other plantings.

Mr. Wayne inquired about the plantings and whether they would fit into the proposed 1.4 ft buffer. Mr. Lagala explained that the plantings were intentionally chosen for a narrow space.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions. There being none, the meeting was closed to the public.

Ms. Schepisi presented witness Mark Martins, P.E., P.L.S., business address - 55 Walnut Street, Norwood, NJ. Mr. Martins was sworn in and accepted as an expert witness. Mr. Martins described plans prepared by the applicant's engineer Thomas Skrable, P.E. Mr. Martins stated that he had visited the site

and explained the need for the variance that the applicant is seeking. Mr. Martins testified as to a topographical error on the plans which showed the patio to be 2.4 feet from the property line, when in fact the proposal is that it be 1.4 feet from the property line. Mr. Martins confirmed that there is adequate storm water run off and described the underground retention system that the homeowner is installing. Mr. Martins stated that he does not foresee any proposed detriment to the surrounding neighbors. He stated that the applicant is at 27% impervious coverage and that the maximum is 40%. Mr. Wayne asked questions about the retaining wall being installed. Mr. Martins spoke about the retaining wall and explained that it is two feet high and about five inches off of the property line. He explained that it is a landscape feature.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions. There being none, the meeting was closed to the public.

Ms. Schepisi introduced Carlos Valentine, the neighbor of the applicant residing at 711 Beechcrest Drive. Mr. Valentine was sworn in. Mr. Valentine lives directly next door to the applicant and spoke in favor of the application. Mr. Valentine read a letter that he had written in support of the application.

The meeting was opened to the public for questions. There being none, the meeting was closed to the public.

Ms. Schepisi having no further witnesses concluded her presentation.

The meeting was opened to the public for testimony/comments. There being none the meeting was closed to the public.

A motion to approve the application as discussed was made by Mr. Fortsch; seconded by Mr. Ross; on roll call vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

**Resolutions:**

**Township of River Vale -  
Block 701 Lots 5, 6, 8, and 9 - 634 and 650 Rivervale Road  
- Preliminary and Final Subdivision Approval**

A motion for approval was made by Mr. Wayne; seconded by Ms. Vaccaro; on a roll call vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

**Dilone - Block 1701 Lot 1 - 507 Cleveland Avenue**  
- Fence/Corner Lot

A motion for approval was made by Mr. Wayne; seconded by Ms. Vaccaro; on a roll call vote, all in favor, the motion carried.

**MINUTES:**

A motion for approval of the minutes of April 28, 2021 was made by Mr. Wayne; seconded by Ms. Vaccaro; on roll call vote, all those eligible voted yes; the motion carried.

**PAYMENT OF INVOICES:** Chairman Lippert reviewed and signed

The meeting was opened to the public for non-agenda items, however there were no members of the public present.

**DISCUSSION:**

Joint Planning Board Member Gregory Lowe has resigned from his position on the board.

**NEXT MEETING:**

**Regular Meeting - Wednesday, June 23, 2021 at 7:30 p.m.**

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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**MARIA HAAG**  
Recording Secretary