MINUTES OF
PLANNING BOARD/BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
OF HIGH BRIDGE BOROUGH

Meeting Date: August 31, 2026 - **Meeting Time:** 7:30 P.M.
Meeting Location: 95 West Main Street, High Bridge, NJ 08829

1. CALL TO ORDER:
This is a special meeting of the Planning/Zoning Board of the Borough of High Bridge. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act in that a Notice was published in The Star Ledger on August 27, 2026 and the Hunterdon Review on August 26, 2026. Notice of and agenda for this meeting has also been posted on www.highbridge.org and posted on the bulletin board in Borough Hall.

2. FLAG SALUTE: Led by presiding officer, Planning Board Secretary, Barbara Kinsky

3. ROLL CALL:
Brosnan, present; Conroy, present Koffman, present; Lee, absent; Mart, present; Musnuff, absent; Ryder, present, Suozzo, absent; Osborne, present; Regan.
Also, present were Board Attorney, Kevin VanHise, Board Engineer William Burr, Board Planner, Austin Bejin and eight members of the public.

4. ELECTION: Election of Acting Chairperson:
Motion to nominate Joseph Brosnan as acting Chairperson for August 31, 2026, Special meeting: Koffman Second: Ryder
Brosnan, yes; Conroy, yes, Koffman, yes, Lee, absent; Mart, yes; Musnuff, absent; Ryder, yes; Suozzo, absent; Osborne, yes; Regan. Yes.

Acting Chairman, Joseph Brosnan, now presiding.

5. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** It is the policy of the Planning Board that all public comments on an issue shall be limited to 3 minutes per person and no person may make more than one (1) comment per subject. Comments may be made on any subject pertaining to Board issues. Comments pertaining to Public Hearings should be saved for that section of the agenda. No debating between residents. Comments should be addressed to the Chairman and Board members at the public microphone. NONE

6. BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT NEW BUSINESS:

Councilperson Conroy stepped down and remained in the audience.

A. Public Hearing for PBapp-04-2026, 84 Church Street, High Bridge, NJ 08829, Blocks 4.04 Lot 1for variances Owner: Lyle Kamenir

Motion to open public hearing: Motion/ Second: Ryder/Koffman
Brosnan, yes; Koffman, yes; Mart, abstain; Musnuff, absent; Ryder, yes; Suozzo, absent; Osborne, yes; Regan, yes.

Board member Mart recused himself because he resides within 200 feet of the property.

Board attorney Kevin VanHise confirmed that notice and publication requirements had been satisfied, establishing the Board's jurisdiction. Mr. VanHise swore in the applicant, Mr. Lyle Kamenir and architect Joseph Marchese.

The applicant's attorney, Mr. Brent Lamaire, introduced the application on behalf of the applicant, Mr. Lyle Kamenir. Mr.Kamenir has applied for bulk C variances for property located at 84 Church Street. The

triangular, undersized lot currently features a single-family dwelling adjacent to the Columbia Trail. A detached garage on the property was recently removed via permit.
In his testimony the applicant proposes the expansion of the existing 2-bedroom home into a 3-bedroom, 2.5-bath, single family residence. Mr. Kamenir also proposed the addition of a two-car detached garage and an elevated outdoor deck with a covered section designed to accommodate a future hot tub. The applicant has requested variance relief for front yard setbacks, rear yard setbacks, driveway location, lot coverage and rear yard coverage. He stated the expansion of the dwelling is for personal residential use. Mr. Kamenir expressed intent to utilize traditional, natural materials (e.g., cedar-shake or cement board siding, asphalt roof) that complement the neighborhood's historic character. The applicant explained that the proposed improvements will enhance the property's aesthetics and increase living space, improving access to the adjacent woods and trail while boosting local property values and supporting High Bridge's growth. Removing the old garage creates more open yard space, and natural features will be preserved by cutting the front stone wall back 30 feet for driveway access and replanting trees to replace two being removed (shown in Exhibit A-1). The deck design accommodates a future recessed hot tub, with separate permits to be filed if necessary. Mr. Kamenir testified that drainage naturally flows according to the existing topography, primarily toward Columbia Trail, the old garage site, and slightly downhill toward unimproved Mountain Avenue. Proposed utility upgrades include replacing the old oil system with a new gas line, along with likely replacements for the sewer, water, and electric lines. Lastly, planned exterior lighting will be non-obtrusive, basic fixture and landscape lighting that will be angled downward to prevent light pollution onto neighboring properties.

Questions and comments:

Board Planner Austin Bejin thanked the applicant for addressing the proposed tree removal, noting that initial comments suggested only one tree was slated for removal. He recommended making compliance with local tree removal and replacement regulations a formal condition of approval. Because exact trunk measurements could not be determined from the photo, official pre-removal measurements will be taken to calculate the precise number of required replacement trees, with an initial estimate of two replacements per tree removed.

Board Engineer, William Burr, inquired about the property's purchase date and the status of the old garage. The homeowner confirmed purchasing the property last December and removing the detached garage last month per county requests. Mr. Kamenir stated that county officials were satisfied with its removal, with any future feedback to be handled as a condition of approval. Asked about structural changes, the applicant noted the first floor stays as-is while a new roof reorients the house to connect with a right-side addition containing a new attached garage, bedroom, and bathroom. Finally, the engineer asked about the deck layout and lower level, and the applicant confirmed an elevated rear deck with a covered hot tub section and no patio below.

Board Member Brosnan raised concerns regarding the site's impervious coverage, which is proposed to increase from 19.7% to 45.2% and requires a variance. Noting engineer comments about stormwater measures, Brosnan suggested utilizing the site of the recently removed detached garage for green infrastructure or enhanced drainage to absorb runoff. The homeowner responded that while there are no immediate design plans for the old garage site since it is far from the house, they intend to add vegetation and drainage features across the property to settle rainwater and manage runoff.

Mr. Marchese’s credentials were accepted by the Board as a licensed architect.

Mr. Marchese’s testimony began with a review of the property’s unusual triangular shape and its significantly undersized condition within the zoning district. It was confirmed that the lot circle is also undersized and that the property contains several pre-existing non-conformities, including encroachments of the existing dwelling into both front yard setbacks along Church Street and Mountain Avenue. Mr. Marchese explained that the kitchen addition would slightly reduce the existing setback along Mountain

Avenue by approximately half a foot due to the angle of the house, while the remainder of the addition would be built directly above the existing footprint. The attached garage could not be placed farther from Mountain Avenue without increasing impervious coverage, and its proposed location was determined to be the most feasible given the dwelling's placement. Any deck placed behind the house would inevitably violate setback requirements because the existing home already sits too far back on the lot. The driveway was positioned less than 40 feet from the Mountain Avenue and Church Street intersection to allow a direct approach to the new garage and to avoid paving across the rest of the small property. The intersection was illustrated in Exhibit A-2, which Mr. Marchese confirmed accurately reflects the site based on his own visits. He explained that the unimproved portion of Mountain Avenue continues behind the house and appears to run toward the Columbia Trail. Mr. Marchese stated that the sharp curve at the Mountain Avenue and Church Street intersection naturally slows vehicle speeds, and that the sight lines for a driver exiting the proposed driveway would remain unobstructed. The proposed addition and covered deck extend toward the Columbia Trail, leaving a very small rear yard of roughly 1,100 square feet. Testimony established that, given the triangular lot and the existing placement of the house, there is no location where a two-car garage or up to 35 percent impervious coverage could be added without encroaching into all three setback areas. Mr. Marchese stated that the improvements would enhance the property's appearance, align with the neighborhood's character, create no safety issues, and maintain adequate open space. Because the detached garage has already been removed, the yard now has additional usable open area. He also confirmed that all natural features aside from two previously identified trees would be preserved and that no environmentally sensitive areas would be affected.
Mr. Marchese then addressed the comments contained in Mr. Burr's technical review. He stated that the driveway's proximity to the unimproved portion of Mountain Avenue would not affect accessibility, grading, or safety. He explained that only minimal grading would be required and that the driveway would tie into Church Street at the existing grade, with just a small area needing fill. He described the current stormwater conditions and explained that the front roof drains to the ground through a standard gutter and leader, while the rear roof drains into an older underground pipe system that appears to no longer function. He testified that dry wells may be added to manage runoff from the new garage roof and confirmed that the plans account for all proposed impervious surfaces. The total disturbance area is approximately 4,000 square feet, including the pier-supported portion of the rear addition. He also noted recent plan revisions, including correcting Mountain Avenue's classification from a side yard to a front yard. Mr. Marchese stated that the project would not disturb steep slopes, would not require retaining walls, and would not require importing soil.

Questions and comments:

Board Member Ryder questioned the absence of civil or site drawings, noting that such plans typically accompany applications involving grading, stormwater, and tree removal. Mr. Marchese stated that he is not a civil engineer but understands the site layout and disturbance areas and reiterated that the property contains only gentle slopes.

Board Member Brosnan noted that the survey submitted did not include any topographic information, and Mr. Marchese confirmed that was correct. It was also clarified that the Borough's stormwater management ordinances are not triggered because the project qualifies as a minor development, though the Board retains the authority to require additional information or conditions if deemed necessary. Mr. Brosnan also suggested that any future survey or plot plan includes utility locations to ensure the record clearly reflects where all utilities will be placed.

Board Engineer William Burr reviewed two primary issues in his report: driveway construction and a significant increase in lot coverage from 19.7 to 45.2 percent. Citing a grade drop on the right side of the house and missing contour details, Burr asked if the applicant would provide a professional grading plan as a condition of approval; Mr. Marchese agreed, noting the driveway is feasible with grading. To mitigate aesthetic and drainage impacts from the lot coverage variance, Burr requested stormwater runoff

management, which Marchese also accepted. Finally, Burr confirmed that the detached garage has been removed and that all remaining stone will be cleared to restore the area to lawn.

The Board Planner Austin Bejin stated that the remaining concerns involved tree removal and potential need for a retaining wall near the driveway which could be addressed through engineering review during permitting.

Jane Karp of 83 Church Street asked how the new gas service would be installed, noting the property currently has no gas. Mr. Kamenir explained that the gas company has already extended a gas line along Church Street, and the new connection would be made directly to that existing line. She also asked whether the roof height of the proposed addition would increase. Mr. Marchese stated that the roof pitch is being rotated 90 degrees, resulting in a peak approximately six feet higher, but the slope then tapers back down so the overall height impact would be limited.

Andrew Schneider of 81 Church Street and 11 Seal Street asked whether a future patio beneath the deck would be permitted under the proposed impervious-coverage variance, noting that a deck allows water to pass through, but a patio would not. He expressed concern that a patio could alter drainage and reduce infiltration. The Board's attorney explained that because the deck area is already counted as impervious coverage, replacing that same area with a patio would not change the lot-coverage calculation. However, any approval would be based on the plans and testimony presented, and the Board could condition its approval to prevent additional impacts. Any future changes inconsistent with the approved plan would require the applicant to return to the Board.

Liv Wallin of 12 Mountain Avenue asked about the "unimproved" portion of Mountain Avenue and was informed that the grassy strip is legally part of the roadway and creates an intersection. She asked which side of the house the driveway would be located on and confirmed it would not affect her sight line when rounding the curve. She also asked about the project's duration and daily construction hours, noting prior early-morning noise when the garage was removed. The applicant stated work would follow typical construction hours. She suggested that future engineering or survey updates include utility locations.

The applicant's attorney, Mr. Lamaire added testimony that outlined the basis for the requested C-1 hardship variances, citing the lot's irregular triangular shape and substandard size, which limit where improvements can be placed. He stated that the project would not harm the public good, would aesthetically improve the property and neighborhood, and would maintain residential and environmental characteristics aside from the removal of two trees, which will be replaced. He concluded that both the positive and negative criteria for granting the variances were satisfied.

Comments and questions:

Board member Ryder commented that a full set of site drawings showing existing and proposed conditions would have been helpful for evaluating the application. The Board's attorney clarified that while formal site plans are typically submitted for development applications, the Municipal Land Use Law exempts single-family residential projects from formal site plan requirements. He explained that the Board's role is to determine whether the materials provided are sufficient to evaluate the requested variances, noting that a formal site plan cannot be required for this type of application.

Board Member Koffman stated that the primary concern is the proposed driveway and requested additional drawings or renderings showing its placement, grading, access, and treatment of the retaining wall, potentially as a condition of approval. The comments also acknowledged the public's question on impervious coverage. It was clarified that the application is being presented as a deck, and any future replacement with concrete or another impervious surface would be a significant concern. A condition of approval was proposed requiring any such future modification to return to the Board for a new variance request.

Public Comments: (members of the public were sworn in)

Councilperson and Planning Board member, Coleen Conroy stated that she was speaking as a member of the Environmental Commission reviewed the plans and identified concerns about increased impervious surface, the size and placement of the deck, and potential runoff impacts on the adjacent trail, including existing wall damage. The Commission noted that any removed trees would require replacements and emphasized the need for effective stormwater management. While supportive of neighborhood improvements, the Commission stressed its responsibility to protect environmental resources and the ecological impacts of development.

Jane Karp of 83 Church Street stated that she lives directly across from 84 Church Street and expressed strong concerns about the proposed addition. She described the neighborhood as an intact historic area and said the attached double-wide garage with a second story would significantly alter the historic character and scale of the house and streetscape. She noted that the two front trees proposed for removal are meaningful plantings and that their loss, along with the increased building mass, would dramatically change her view of the wooded area, trail, and seasonal sightlines to the lake and waterfall. She raised concerns about precedent for increased density, extended construction impacts, changes to the roof form and proportions, and referenced earlier demolition work occurring before permits were posted. She stated that the project would permanently affect neighborhood aesthetics, open space, and the historic character of the area.

Andrew Schneider of 81 Church Street and 11 Seal Street expressed support for the project but asked the Planning Board to ensure that any approval protects the integrity of the adjacent trail. It was noted that water already pools and causes erosion along the trail, particularly in winter, and that any changes on the property should not worsen those conditions. Appreciation was expressed for the Board's time.

Motion to close the Public Hearing: Ryder Second: Koffman Voice vote: 5 yes votes, motion passed.

Motion to approve PBapp-04-2026 with the following conditions:

• Tree Measurements: Take tree measurements prior to removal to determine appropriate replacement options.
• County Review (Detached Garage): Resolve any county concerns regarding the demolished detached garage.
• Survey & Plan Review: Provide a comprehensive survey and plan covering grading, topography, utilities, and driveway construction subject to review and approval.
• Stormwater Runoff Management: Implement a stormwater management plan (such as a dry well, rain garden, or suitable green alternative) to mitigate all new coverage, to the Board engineer's satisfaction. Roof leaders on the trail-facing side must be routed into this system to protect the trail.
• Deck Restriction: Maintain the area beneath the deck as unimproved; any future modification or replacement of the deck (such as adding a patio) requires returning to the board for a new variance.

Motion/ Second: Koffman/ Regan

Brosnan: Yes, stated that the conditions address board and public concerns, and noted the homeowner is making improvements within available limits.

Koffman: Yes, appreciated the investment in the home and community, noting the conditions ensure due diligence

Ryder: Yes.

Osborne: Yes, stated the project will improve both the property and the neighborhood.

Regan: Yes, confirmed that all board concerns were addressed adequately.

Five yes votes, motion passed.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS: It is the policy of the Planning Board that all public comments on an issue shall be limited to one (1) minute per person and no person may make more than one (1) comment per subject. Comments may be made on any subject pertaining to Board issues. Comments pertaining to Public Hearings should be saved for that section of the agenda. No debating between residents. Comments should be addressed to the Chairman and Board members at the public microphone. NONE.

Board Member Brosnan commented and suggested considering future aesthetic or historic zoning protections for the High Bridge area.

7. ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn: Ryder Second: Koffman Voice vote: five yes votes, motion passed.

Next Meeting Date: September 21, 2026
Meeting Location: 95 West Main Street, High Bridge, NJ 08829
Meeting Time: 7:30 P.M.