

**Mannington Township Planning Board
Regular Meeting
December 11, 2025**

MEETING RELOCATION

The Regular Mannington Township Planning Board meeting was relocated in anticipation of high public attendance. The meeting was moved to the Ware Agricultural Office Complex located at 51 Cheney Road, Woodstown, New Jersey 08098.

Present:

Donald Asay, John Sakewicz, Richard Eber, Andrew Carpenter, Bethanne Patrick, Dory Emel, Joanne Wright, Michael Colletti, Robert Schmid, Michael Aimino, and Donna Miller (representative from Clark, Caton & Hintz), Nicholas Culver, and Donald Richman

Absent:

Michael Sullivan, Gaynel Schneeman, David Cadwallader

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by John Sakewicz, Chairperson.

The Sunshine Law Statement was read.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was recited.

Roll Call was taken to justify that there was a quorum in attendance.

The secretary of the planning board has given adequate notice of the meeting.

Regular Meeting

Mr, Sakewicz stated that the meeting cut off end time will be 10 pm. A five-minute break will also take place around 8:00 pm or 8:30 pm.

Richard Eber made a motion to approve the November Regular Meeting minutes.

Andrew Carpenter seconded the motion. All in favor.

This is a zoning board matter so Mayor Asay and Committeeman Eber have to step down.

Block 60, Lot 4

Mannington Mills Road

Completeness Hearing Application for a Use Variance

Corey Gaskill and Donna Miller reviewed their letters regarding completeness.

Dorey Emel made a motion to deem the application complete. Nicholas Culver seconded the motion.

ELIGIBLE TO VOTE: MC, NC, DR, JS, DE, AC and RS

Roll Call

YES: MC, NC, DR, JS, DE, AC and RS

NO:

ABSTAIN:

Block 39, Lot 33

Block 40, Lot 21

Block 45, Lots 1, 11, 11.02, 11.03 and 15

Block 46, Lots 5 and 6

Block 47, Lots 10, 12 and 16

Fenwick Creek Solar, LLC

2180 South 1300 East, Suite 500, Salth Lake City, Utah 84106

Application for a Favorable Interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance, or, in the Alternative, Use Variance Relief

This application is being continued from the November 13, 2025 meeting. No additional notice was required by the applicant.

This is a zoning board matter so Mayor Asay and Committeeman Eber have to step down.

Due to a conflict, Michael Colletti stepped down.

Due to a conflict, Andrew Carpenter stepped down.

This is a Zoning matter so 7 members will vote.

Keith Davis and Dan Brown are the attorneys for the applicant. Keith Davis continued his application testimony. He recapped the previous meeting presentation.

Mr. Davis stated that they have used the month to attempt to address some of the concerns regarding decommissioning. He stated that they also have soil experts available this evening. Paul Hughes, Sarah Leaskey, Jeffrey Allen and Scott Welsh will also provide testimony. Sarah Leaskey will speak but is not licensed in New Jersey. Jeffrey Allen will confirm this testimony.

Lewis Fox will provide testimony regarding the shepherding aspect.

Ms. Wright asked about the various variances that are being requested. There may be a D6 variance regarding height.

Mr. Davis stated that he believes that they can all be requested during the application.

Ms. Miller stated that they can all be heard at the same time,

Mr. Davis stated that some properties will be purchased, some will be leased.

Ms. Miller asked about the offsite substation. The 82-acre substation will be decommissioned. The switching station will be conveyed to Atlantic City Electric. That switching station will not be in the decommission statement.

The useful life is 30-35 years.

The following individuals were sworn in:

Corey Gaskill

Donna Miller

Lewis Fox

Angelo Fatiga
Paul Hughes
Sarah Leaskey
Jeffrey Allen
Tiffany Morrissey

Paul Hughes was qualified as an expert. Mr. Davis asked about the masts and the improvements. This is Exhibit A4. An elevation view of the base height and full height of 65 feet. 45 feet from ground level. Lightning mast is 20 feet from top of the structure. The locations were identified on A2. These are the 80+ acres on the Heil property. The switching station has not been designed yet. They will return for sight plan approval.

Corey asked about the other locations of lightning masts on the property. This plan is marked as exhibit A5. This is similar to another project.

Sarah Leaskey is a licensed landscape architect in PA. She works for a company that is focused on regional designs and has practiced since 2010. She collaborates with Jeffrey Allen, who is a licensed in NJ. She cannot be qualified as an expert, but is a fact witness. She was at the meeting in November.

Exhibit A6 reflects the pollinator and grazing meadows. She described the fence as the black dashed line. This will also serve as a visual buffer.
Exhibit A7 will have native plants and shrubs, including bayberries and inkberry hollies. There will also be cedars. In the dryer area there will be pines and in the lower, wetter areas there will be magnolias and hollies.

Joanne Wright asked is this how it will look after 10 years.

Exhibit A8 Tall

This is optimized for growth and establishment rate. Most trees are 8 ft tall and shrubs 3 ft tall. Some shrubs may grow faster. Year one would begin at installation of the trees. This would be after the construction. This could be installed as areas are completed.

Exhibit A9 Short Shrub

This would provide screening

Exhibit A10 Pine Screening.

This would be implemented in areas where they would not block the arrays.

Nicholas Culver asked about the 10-year growth on a 35-year project.

Exhibit A11 Atlantic White Cedar

This is regarding water soils.

They do not have an approximate number of plants that reflects the full quantity. If they receive approval they would return for site plan approval showing all plants.

Exhibit A12 Pollinator Meadows

This will be for rotational grazing. This is also outline of the fenceline. They would work with DEP and the township regarding pollinator plan approvals and management plans. DEP also monitors throughout the full duration of the project.

DEP does not often report to the township. If reports are provided to the applicant, they would be willing to share it to the Zoning officer.

A13 Stormwater Basins

They will identify the stormwater runoff. These plantings are similar to the pollinator meadows. There will be two areas that will not be appropriate for the sheep grazing. Sheep grazing is a blend of native and nonnative plants that are rich in nutrients. The nonnative plants are not invasive.

This is not the proposal; this is a general presentation as an overview. As a condition of approval, the applicant would be willing to work with the board regarding planting to receive site plan approval.

A14 Site Lines and schematic Rep of Substation

The items are conceptual. This is diagrammatic for ideas only. This part of the plan has not yet been designed. There is an existing hedgerow. The ever greens would be behind the established hedgerow.

A15 North/south of the same area. Quaker Neck Road at the bottom. There is existing vegetation on three sides. Sub station below, switching station above.

A16 Visualizing the Site: Illustrations from Four Viewpoints.

View 1 west on 45

Solar panels and fence are behind existing property.

These are 10 years out “after” views.

Mr. Sakewicz asked about who takes care of the trees, not only establishing the landscape, but also maintaining. There is a 80% establishment.

Mr. Davis stated that there can be a two-year performance guarantee on the landscaping. It will not cover the full 30 years.

Ms. Wright asked if the landscaping would be removed at the end of the project.

The applicant believes that they should be removed but are open.

Jeffrey Allen is a landscape architect. He is licensed in six states, including New Jersey. He is familiar with the information that by Ms. Leaskey has presented. Mr. Allen stated that all information is consistent with NJ standards.

He spoke regarding growth rates. The species were selected in a collaborative process.

Mr. Allen stated that the planting will be closer to the solar plans.

Mr. Culver stated that there is also height and density project.

Mr. Allen cannot speak to that specifically. This is a general standpoint. At the time of site plan, this is something that can be tightened up to modify and increase horizontal screening.

Who enforces these items? They are enforced under other, strong agencies.

Mr. Allen stated that the Cumberland Salem Soil Conservation District. How do we handle soil compaction – specifically in instillation and decommissioning. There will be a soil compaction plan. There are requirements for testing locations as part of the site plan application. The Soil Conservation District would also require a permit for decommissioning.

Mr. Allen thinks that the soil can be returned to agriculture after the decommissioning process. Other agencies, including the letter to the Mayor, dated December 9, 2025, Exhibit A17 from Giuseppe (Joe) Grillo, Business Ombudsman from the BPU. There is a continuing process with these agencies.

There was a bit of discussion regarding galvanized supports. It is in no ones interest to have the supports corrode. The structures will need to standup. The soils will be sampled. This will be addressed in the site plan. What is naturally there? What is appropriate?

Ms. Wright – So no specific answers will be shared until the site plan?

Mr. Allen – You can request these items but this is not when the details are presented.

Mr. Davis reminded the board that they can impose reasonable conditions.

Ms. Wright asked if Mr. Allen has been involved in decommissioning. Mr. Allen stated that there are decommissioning projects for other industries. He has not been involved in the decommissioning of a solar field. He has been involved in brownfield decommissioning.

Ms. Miller asked about Exhibit A17 and how this was presented by the landscape architect. Mr. Aimino stated that the board is not required to accept Exhibit A17. The board does not have the ability to cross examine Mr. Grillo.

Ms. Miller asked about the scoring for the project.

Ms. Laura Kellogg was sworn in at this time. Ms. Kellogg was not on the project at the time that the scoring was done. The applicant will look into finding this documentation.

5-minute break 8:30 pm

Angelo Fatiga provided the following testimony.

He is not licensed in the state of NJ. He is speaking regarding decommissioning projects. He is not a LPE. He can testify regarding factual information.

Typically his firm remediates sites regarding decommissioning. As part of the decommissioning plan that they would propose, they would look at the soils and determine steps. The certified person investigates and implements decommissioning. A decommissioning plan would be submitted as part of the plan. The individual could not speak to the decommissioning bond. He spoke regarding general decommissioning examples.

Mr. Aimino stopped. This witness cannot be called as an expert. He is a fact witness. Mr. Davis stated that he is asking if he can oversee the decommissioning of a project. Mr. Fatiga will establish baseline conditions to restore the site to the known conditions.

This is not a currently contaminated site.

Mr. Gaskill asked about the substation sites, he cited concerns about oil leaks, and the underground electric lines, fluid access areas. He asked if Mr. Fatiga could speak to those conditions.

Mr. Fatiga stated that they would test those areas, samples would be taken and they would have to meet the baseline conditions as well as the regulatory guidelines set forth by the state.

Ms. Wright asked how do you bring back habitat. This is beyond Mr. Fatiga's scope. Mr. Davis stated that buffers will be established regarding the wetlands. Every state DEP regulation would be adhered to regarding this site.

Mr. Culver asked about the amount of material that could be left in the ground. Can materials be left if they are three feet deep.

Ms. Kellogg stated that this would be a decommissioning plan for a different project. The board can request that the materials be removed.

Regarding how energy from solar panels are moved to the substation area, Ms. Kellogg stated that she has met with the county several times about the option of using the roadways. She stated that there was a possibility but there might be a financial limit.

Mr. Aimino stated that this could affect this application. Mr. Davis stated that this is not part of this application. The applicant is in the process of conversations with the county and state. If it triggers a site plan application in Mannington, it will come before the board.

Mr. Wright stated that this is all part of this larger project. Mr. Gaskill stated concerns about above ground transmission.

Ms. Kellogg stated that they are exploring a right of way with the state and in discussion with the state.

Mr. Aimino asked what the county's feedback was.

Ms. Kellogg spoke with the county road engineer. There seemed to be an openness to run the line down the road that would come at a certain cost. The cost will impact the project.

Corey Gaskill asked who would own the underground lines. The applicant does not know if AC Electric would be interested in the lines.

Ms. Kellogg: These are private lines.

Ms. Miller asked about the baseline. What are you evaluating the soils for?

They want to know the soil conditions and how they impact the materials used and support the design. They will look at the chemical characteristics of the soils.

Mr. Gaskill asked about situations regarding above standard soil readings. This is based on the soil standards. It would be considered baseline for decommissioning purposes. They do not want to exceed any conditions previously found. They test in the top two feet typically.

The ground may be tilled to mix the soils.

Ms. Wright asked about the connection. Ms. Kellogg stated that this route is not in this application. Mr. Davis stated that the route has not been finalized. Notice has not been provided to the property owners near the parcels for the substation.

Lewis Fox has a background in agriculture. He works with solar arrays that use sheep grazing with solar integration. AgroVoltaic will implement a solar grazing program for sheep integration for the Fenwick Creek application. He grew up on a dairy farm but now focuses on solar grazing. He has engaged in a similar type of use in Vermont. About 1500 acres with 85 projects total. They deployed about 2500 sheep last year. They graze in New York, Vermont, and Maine. Next year they will also be in Illinois. He finds sheep are a complimentary piece to solar arrays. He is a founding member of the Solar Grazing Association. He raises the sheep for lamb and mutton production. Some wool, but it is limited. The United States import roughly 60% of the lamb that we consume. He is familiar with the site and has provided input regarding this plan. They are not slated to be involved in the grazing of the site. The intention is that the Cadwallader Family will be caring for the flock. Rotational grazing is grazing no more than 4 days in a paddock that will vary between 30 and 58 days for the entirety of the site. The sheep are checked daily or every few days. During the winter it is expected that the sheep will be in barn facilities. This is a readily grazable site. The grazing lasts roughly April to November. Lambing takes place in the barn.

Ms. Wright asked if there is a contact for the grazing of the sheep. This has not been developed yet. Generally grazing begins after a year. There are often new seedings and they begin with a low stocking rate. The solar grazing would be expected approximately one year after construction.

Mr. Davis stated that the sheep could be integrated within one year after the solar panels are energized. Mr. Fox confirmed that this was an achievable goal.

The vegetation grazing contract is similar to the vegetation management contract. This is not done 100% with the sheep. There will be some mowing as well, typically. There is not a specific number of sheep on site at any given time. Ms. Wright asked if he has experience with projects this size. They have a 300-acre site come in on line this year. They also have a contract for an area as small as an acre.

Mr. Aimino asked what happens if the sheep aren't working out?

Mr. Fox expects that the industry will be strong.

Mr. Davis stated that this is a legal issue and if the sheep are not on site, the operation would be in violation of the zoning ordinance.

There is an expected upper limit for the site. Mr. Fox believes that it would be reasonable to have a lower number bound to the site.

Mr. Culver asked about the farming aspect of the sheep farm.

Mr. Fox stated that his sheep farm is a separate business. They produce lambs that are sold. It is a viable agricultural business.

Mr. Aimino asked the minimum number of sheep to be a working farm. Mr. Davis offered that the board could set the boundary. Mr. Fox said that it could be one sheep per acre minimum. It would require some careful thought.

Ms. Wright asked about the 600 head number provided in the applicant's narrative statement provided with the application. Mr. Fox provided explanation regarding foraging.

Ms. Miller asked what size the optimal rotational grazing area. Mr. Fox stated that they shoot for 38 to 58 days for a single rotation. They don't like the sheep to be in the paddock for more than 4 days. There is no standard size for the paddock. It is divided by the size of the site. The sheep go into one paddock. These would be the choice of the grazing manager. The stocking density could be between 10 to 20 sheep per acre.

Mr. Emel asked if the sheep stay year-round. This is often in the south. The sheep do not stay on site during the winter; they would be in barns. Some farms buy feed.

Mr. Gaskill stated that if they hit 10 sheep per acre they may need to create a confined Animal Waste Management plan. Mr. Fox stated that he would need to look that up.

Stephen Dadio was sworn in. He is a soil scientist. The state of NJ does not have a license for this. He is registered in PA and licensed in DE. He testified in NJ Superior Court as a Soil Scientist. He is familiar with the plan.

He believes that the soils can be protected and maintained through rotational grazing. He believes that this enhances soil growth through root growth.

Soil Conservation will also provide oversight in addition to the plans that are developed.

Ms. Miller asked about soil restoration and decommissioning.

Mr. Dadio explained that the soil would be tested. There are ways to reduce compaction, including tilling. Removal and replacement may be needed.

Ms. Miller asked if the replacement of the soil may be needed at the substation.

Mr. Dadio stated that in a general sense, yes, there may be the need for replacement.

Ms. Miller and Mr. Sullivan are not available to meet on January 8th. Mr. Davis is not available for February 12th meeting.

It was determined that the application will be carried to the January 8th meeting. The application will be amended and new public notice will be provided. The meeting will be at the Ware Building.

Miscellaneous Business

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca Gower Ferguson
Planning Board Secretary