MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 5, 2018

The regular meeting of the Sussex County Board of Adjustment was held on Monday, November 5, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. in the County Council Chambers, 2 The Circle, Georgetown, Delaware.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Chairman John Mills presiding. The Board members present were: Mr. Dale Callaway, Ms. Ellen Magee, Mr. Bruce Mears, Mr. John Mills, and Mr. Brent Workman. Also, in attendance were Mr. James Sharp, Esquire – Assistant County Attorney, and staff members Ms. Janelle Cornwell, Planning and Zoning Director, Mr. Jamie Whitehouse – Planning Manager, and Ms. Ann Lepore – Recording Secretary.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Mills.

Motion by Ms. Magee, seconded by Mr. Callaway, and carried unanimously to approve the revised agenda. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Motion by Mr. Callaway, seconded by Mr. Workman, and carried unanimously to approve the Minutes and Findings of Facts for the September 10, 2018, meeting. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Mr. Sharp read a statement explaining how the Board of Adjustment meeting is conducted and the procedures for hearing the case.

OLD BUSINESS

Case No. 12213 – Tony Petersen seeks a special use exception to operate a day care center (Sections 115-23 & 115-210 of the Sussex County Zoning Code). The property is located on the east side of Webb Farm Rd., approximately 0.44 mile south of Staytonville Rd. 911 Address: 11113 Webb Farm Rd. Greenwood. Zoning District: AR-1. Tax Parcel: 230-18.00-10.00.

Mr. Whitehouse presented the case and explained that the case was left open for the limited purpose of allowing staff to research whether the Property was in an agricultural preservation district and whether this use is permitted in that district. The Property is subject to agricultural preservation rules.

Mr. Sharp explained that the agricultural preservation statute allows for a daycare facility serving up to five (5) children located in an agricultural preservation area.

The Board discussed the Application.

Ms. Magee moved to approve the special use exception to allow a daycare with a maximum of five (5) children for Case Number 12213, seconded by Mr. Callaway. Motion carried 5 – 0.
The vote by roll call; Mr. Workman – yea, Ms. Magee – yea, Mr. Mears – yea, Mr. Mills – yea, and Mr. Callaway – yea.

**Case No. 12217 – Roman Morales & Rubicela Moran-Morales** seek variances from the front yard setback for existing structures and from the minimum road frontage requirement for a proposed subdivision (Sections 115-25 and 115-211 of the Sussex County Zoning Code). The property is located on the north side of Nine Foot Rd., approximately 0.32 mile southwest of DuPont Blvd. (Rt. 113). 911 Address: 28007 Nine Foot Rd., Dagsboro. Zoning District: AR-1. Tax Parcel: 233-10.00-75.00

Mr. Whitehouse presented the case and stated that this case was deferred at the last meeting for further consideration.

The Board discussed the Application.

Ms. Cornwell advised the Board that the minimum lot size for this zoning district is ¾ acres; and that the Applicants are seeking the road frontage variances to subdivide the Property into 2 lots.

Mr. Mears moved to approve Variance Application No. 12217 for the requested variances for the following reasons:

1. The uniqueness of the property is 289.28 ft. of road frontage.
2. It cannot be otherwise developed into two lots without these variances.
3. This situation was not created by the Applicants.
4. Dividing the parcel into two lots will not alter the character of the neighborhood.
5. The requested variances are the minimum variances necessary to afford relief.

Motion by Mr. Mears, seconded by Mr. Workman, and carried unanimously that the variances be granted for the reasons stated. Motion carried 5 – 0.

The vote by roll call; Mr. Workman – yea, Ms. Magee – yea, Mr. Mears – yea, Mr. Mills – yea, and Mr. Callaway – yea.

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**Case No. 12222 – Michael L. & Susan E. Wood** seek a variance from the front yard setback for an existing structure (Section 115-34 of the Sussex County Zoning Code). The property is located on the east side of Foxwood Ct., approximately 545 ft. south of Pinewood Dr. 911 Address: 15 Foxwood Ct., Lewes. Zoning District: MR. Tax Parcel: 234-11.00-384.00

Mr. Whitehouse presented the case and stated that the Office of Planning and Zoning received no correspondence in support of or in opposition to the Application and zero mail returns. The
Applicants seek a variance of 8.9 ft from the required front yard setback of thirty (30) ft. for an existing porch and steps.

Ms. Magee recused herself and left Chambers.

Michael Wood was sworn in to give testimony. Richard Berl, Esquire, was present on behalf of the Applicant, and presented the Application. Mr. Berl submitted exhibit booklets to the Board.

Mr. Berl stated that the property is located in the Lockwood development; that the Applicants purchased the property in 2000; that the Applicants later installed a modular home; that there was a septic system on the property at the time and the septic system was located in the rear yard; that the community is an older subdivision; that newer homes have been added in the community; that, in 2017, the Applicants added decks, an outdoor shower, and a covered porch; that the porch was added to the front of the house and replaced a small stoop; that the porch provides protection from the elements; that the porch does not affect any sightlines from the street; that covering the front porch was the only way to provide reasonable use of the porch; that the need for the variance was not created by the Applicants but by the contractor – Delaware Roofing and Gutter Pros, as the Applicants depended on the contractor to follow setbacks listed on the permit; that the builder obtained the permits and never showed it to the Applicants; that the Applicants only learned of the encroachment after they received the violation notice; that the Applicants then obtained a survey which showed the encroachment; that the property is unique because it is a small lot and the septic system takes up most of the back yard; that the variance is necessary to enable reasonable use of the property; that the exceptional practical difficulty was not created by the Applicants; that the variance will not affect the character of the neighborhood but improve it; that the variance requested is the minimum variance necessary to afford relief; and that there are a number of variances in this neighborhood.

Mr. Wood affirmed the statements made by Mr. Berl as true and correct. Mr. Wood testified that the contractor was not in attendance; that a survey was completed when he purchased the property; that there is no well but there is a septic system that takes up most of the rear of the property; and that there is about 15 feet between the front property line and the edge of pavement.

The Board found that no parties appeared in support of or in opposition to the Application.

Mr. Mears moved to approve Variance Application No. 12222 for the requested variance for the following reasons:

1. The uniqueness of the property is due to the septic placement in the back yard;
2. The property could not be otherwise developed and could not put the house because of the septic system;
3. This situation was not created by the Applicant but by the building contractor;
4. The variance will not affect the essential character of the neighborhood but enhance it;
5. The requested variance is the minimum variance to afford relief.
Motion by Mr. Mears, seconded by Mr. Callaway, and carried unanimously that the **variance be granted for the reasons stated.** Motion carried 4 – 0.

The vote by roll call; Mr. Workman – yea, Mr. Mears – yea, Mr. Mills – yea, and Mr. Callaway – yea.

Ms. Magee returned to Chambers.

**Case No. 12223 – Apple Electric, c/o Lisa Prestipino** seeks a variance from the rear yard setback for a proposed and existing structures (Sections 115-82 & 115-156 Attachment 1, Table 1 of the Sussex County Zoning Code). The property is located on the northwest side of John J. Williams Hwy. (Rt. 24), approximately 1,589 ft. southwest of Coastal Hwy. (Rt 1). 911 Address: 18854 John J. Williams Hwy., Rehoboth Beach. Zoning District: C-1. Tax Parcel: 334-12.00-89.00.

Mr. Whitehouse presented the case and stated that the Office of Planning and Zoning received no correspondence in support of or in opposition to the Application and zero mail returns. The Applicants seek a variance of twenty (20) ft. from the required rear yard setback of thirty (30) ft. for a proposed building.

Lisa Prestipino was sworn in to give testimony.

Ms. Prestipino testified that the property is unique because it is zoned commercial but surrounded by residential properties; that the proposed pole building will be used to store equipment; and that the existing garage will be removed to provide access to the new building and additional parking.

Ms. Cornwell advised the Board that the front yard setback requirement is 60 feet and the rear yard setback requirement is 30 feet because the Property is adjacent to residential properties.

Ms. Prestipino testified that the standard rear yard setback requirement for commercial properties is 5 feet but, due to the residential properties to the rear of the Property, the setback requirement is 30 feet and does not allow enough space for the building; that the Property cannot be otherwise developed without a variance as there is nowhere else suitable on the Property to place this building; that neighboring properties are zoned residential but are used for Tidewater Utilities and Maplewood Dentist; that the proposed building will be more aesthetically pleasing to the neighbors; that granting this variance will not alter the character of the neighborhood as there are commercial buildings on either side and the proposed structure will not be visible from the road; that the Applicant is requesting a variance on the rear yard only; that there is a wooden fence in the rear of the property; that the Property is located adjacent to Route 24; and that the building will allow for parking on the site.
Ms. Cornwell advised the Board that Maplewood Dentist has a conditional use and that this is the only C-1 property.

Ms. Prestipino testified that the basement entrance to the existing building limits the placement of the pole building; that they have received no complaints from neighbors about their business; that no lights will project onto neighboring properties; that the building will be one-story tall; that the trees will be retained to provide a buffer; that the Applicant explored other options on the Property; and that the lean-to will be used to store ladders.

The Board found that no parties appeared in support of or in opposition to the Application.

Mr. Callaway moved to approve Variance Application No. 12223 for the requested variance as the applicant has met the standards for granting a variance.

Motion by Mr. Calloway, seconded by Mr. Workman, and carried unanimously that the variance be granted for the reasons stated. Motion carried 5 – 0.

The vote by roll call; Mr. Workman – yea, Ms. Magee – yea, Mr. Mears – yea, Mr. Mills – yea, and Mr. Callaway – yea.

Case No. 12224 – Kevin & Pamela Wilson seek variances from the side yard setback for proposed structures (Sections 115-42, 115-181 and 115-183 of the Sussex County Zoning Code). The property is located on the east side of Laws Point Rd. approximately 1,947 ft. north of Swann Dr. 911 Address: 37028 Laws Point Rd., Selbyville. Zoning District: GR. Tax Parcel: 533-12.16-280.00

Mr. Whitehouse presented the case and stated that the Office of Planning and Zoning received no correspondence in support of or in opposition to the Application and one mail returns. The Applicants seek a variance of 1.4 ft. from the required side yard setback of 5 ft. for proposed steps and a variance of 1.6 ft. from the required side yard setback of 5 ft. for proposed HVAC equipment.

Gil Fleming was sworn in to give testimony.

Mr. Fleming testified that he is presenting the case on behalf of the Applicants; that they wish to replace the old singlewide home with a doublewide home; and that the Property is located in Swann Keys.

Ms. Cornwell advised the Board that the front yard and rear yard setback requirements are 5 feet.

Mr. Sharp stated that, based on the survey, it appears as though the house could be shifted to the north and no variance would be necessary.
Mr. Fleming testified that the Applicant prefers to center the house on the lot; that the Property is unique because it is extremely narrow; that the only way it could be developed otherwise would be by moving the entire home 1.6 feet therefore, it would not be centered on the Property; that it was not created by the Applicants; that it will not affect the character of the neighborhood as many of the neighbors have also upgraded to a doublewide home; that the HVAC unit is located by the furnace area; that an HVAC system in the front yard is not preferred; that this is the minimum variance to afford relief; and that there are other homes in Swann Keys were are centered on the lot.

Ms. Cornwell and Mr. Sharp advised the Board of changes to the ordinance for small lots passed earlier this year.

Mr. Fleming testified that, if the home was off-centered, it would likely not be noticeable.

Ms. Cornwell advised the Board that staff discussed the Application with the Applicants but they wanted it to be centered on the lot.

Mr. Fleming testified that the house will be raised to be outside the flood plain and that there will be sufficient room for parking.

The Board found that no parties appeared in support of or in opposition to the Application.

Ms. Magee stated that she believes the Applicants could build the home in compliance with the Code.

Mr. Workman agreed.

Ms. Magee moved to deny Variance Application No. 12224 for the requested variances because the property could be otherwise developed by moving the home just 1.6 ft.

Motion by Ms. Magee, seconded by Mr. Workman, and carried unanimously that the variance be denied for the reasons stated. Motion carried 5 – 0.

The vote by roll call; Mr. Workman – yea, Ms. Magee – yea, Mr. Mears – yea, Mr. Mills – yea, and Mr. Callaway – yea.

Case No. 12225 – Old Orchard Ventures, LLC requests a special use exception to operate a convalescent home, nursing home, and/or home for the aged (Sections 115-23 & 115-210 of the Sussex County Zoning Code). The property is located approximately 1,000 ft east of Old Orchard Rd. and approximately 1,000 ft south of New Rd. with access off Old Orchard Rd. 911 Address: N/A. Zoning District: AR-1. Tax Parcel: 335-8.00-25.01.

Mr. Whitehouse presented the case and stated that the Office of Planning and Zoning received
no correspondence in support of or in opposition to the Application and zero mail returns. Mr. Whitehouse stated that the Applicant seeks a special use exception to operate a convalescent home, nursing home, and/or home for the aged.

Larry Fifer, Esquire, was present on behalf of the Applicant and he presented the Application. Robert Palmer was sworn in to testify about the Application. Mr. Fifer submitted exhibit booklets to the Board to review.

Mr. Fifer stated that the Applicant seeks a special use exception to operate a convalescent home, nursing home, and/or home for the aged; that the project will be known as “Traquility at Breakwater”; that the facility will provide skilled nursing; that the Property is 1,000 feet from Old Orchard Road and is accessed by Oyster Cove Road; that the area surrounding this property largely consists of residential and medical office uses; that this project will contribute to the community by providing jobs; that the facility will require approximately a dozen nurses; that the facility will have 104 rooms; that eastern Sussex County has seen a large influx of retirees and many of those retirees will need this type of facility; that the facility will be used for active seniors; that the facility will have a theatre, walking trails, and other amenities; that the facility will have interconnectivity to adjacent parcels; that an existing structure which was used as a net house for the menhaden industry will remain; that the Property is ideally suited for this type of facility due to its proximity to doctor’s offices, pharmacies, and shopping; that there are 4 pharmacies nearby; that the Villages at Five Points, which is located nearby, has shopping; that the Property is approximately a half-mile from those facilities; and that there are shops located along Savannah Road as well.

Mr. Palmer testified that the facility will consist of 104 rooms and will be a three-story structure; that the facility will be modeled after similar structures in the area; that the Property is landlocked; that there will be inner connectivity with walking paths through the property; that the Property is accessed from Oyster Cove Drive; that there will be minimal tree removal to retain the original character of the property; that a portion of the Property was used as a borrow pit and has overgrown, steep slopes; that the Applicant intends to improve those slopes with retaining walls; that the Applicant intends to retain the seclusion of the Property; that the Applicant intends to limit clearing of the Property but tree removal is inevitable; that the Applicant intends to replant when possible; that the net house will be converted to a community center; that there are only 3 other similar facilities within 5 miles of Beebe Hospital; that the elderly population is projected to greatly increase; that the facility is needed; that the Property is within the Level 2 State Strategies; that the area around the pond is within the Level 3 State Strategies; that the Applicant intends to construct a grand entrance to give an attractive appearance to the entrance of the facility; that the entrance would accommodate a fire truck; that there is a 50 feet wide cross access easement providing access to the Property; that a conditional use was granted in July 2016 for a 24 unit duplex on adjacent property; that access to the Property will be over that lot; that the facility will comply with storm water regulations; that 2 ponds are proposed and one pond will be used for a scenic vista and the other pond will have an infiltration basin; that water and sewer will be public; that Tidewater Utilities will provide water; that the City of Lewes will provide wastewater services; that there are 3 septic tanks on the Property but those tanks
will be abandoned; that the Applicant has been in contact with Sussex County about interconnection to the Lewes wastewater facility; that there is ample capacity for this facility; that the Applicant has had no discussions with the Lewes Fire Department or EMS; that the Applicant has spoken with the Fire Marshal about the facility; that the Applicant has met with DelDOT officials about the project; that DelDOT directed the Applicant to obtain a traffic impact study of 14 intersections; that the traffic impact study is complicated; that DelDOT is proposing to realign Old Orchard Road and to make improvements to New Road; that the facility should generate 315 vehicular trips per day; that the Applicant proposes a nearby bus stop and will likely have shuttle service; that medical, grocery, and shopping services are located nearby; that there are no known endangered species on the site; that the Applicant will protect existing wetlands; that approximately 38% of the site will be retained as open space; that the facility will be serviced by public utilities; that the Applicant will meet all storm water regulations; that the facility will meet the objectives of the comprehensive plan; that the facility will not substantially affect adversely the uses of neighboring and adjacent properties; that there are natural buffers from the neighboring development; that the facility will have a mixture of independent and 24 hour care sections; that the facility will have an infirmary and cafeteria; that the Applicant is in discussions with Beebe Hospital; that the facility will be no taller than 42 feet tall; that all lighting will be downward screened and shielded; that the light impact will be minimal; that there have been no property value studies; that the noise generated by the facility will be minimal; that there is no expectation of noise other than vehicular traffic; that trees will provide a visual and noise buffer; that the Applicant anticipates that the facility projects to have more than 75 employees; that he expects some residents to have vehicles but most residents will not; and that the facility is considered an end-of-life facility.

Ms. Cornwell stated that the Applicant will also have to go through the site plan review process to ensure that it complies with all Code requirements; and that there are no restrictions on the cross-access easement agreement.

The Board found that four people appeared in support of and five people appeared in opposition to the Application. The following people were sworn in to give testimony in opposition to the Application: Janice Almaris, Robert Viscount, and Paul Reiger.

Ms. Almaris testified that she lives at the Villages of Five Points; that west of the site are 24 proposed townhouses; that another nearby site is proposed to have 6 medical and professional buildings; that Old Orchard Road splits the Villages of Five Points; that she has concerns about the traffic impact; that there is a proposal to have 2 hotels in the area behind Walgreens and PNC Bank; that she opposes this development until she sees the results of the current traffic study; that she wants to have safe access across Old Orchard Road to access her community’s amenities; that the development will exacerbate the traffic issues along Old Orchard Road and impact the Villages of Five Points; that she encourages the delay of the decision until the traffic impact study is complete; and that Old Orchard Road is paved.

Ms. Cornwell stated that the traffic impact study must be complete prior to the site plan
Mr. Viscount testified that the facility is close to neighboring homes and is only 150 yards from the Villages of Five Points; that the design of the facility looks nice; that Old Orchard Road is being reconfigured; that the Property is not in the middle of nowhere; that the speed and traffic along Old Orchard Road is problematic; that Old Orchard Road connects New Road and Savannah Road; that neighbors have discussed with DelDOT the traffic along Old Orchard Road; that the other projects in the area will change traffic patterns in the area; that this facility will be in the heart of where there is already an existing traffic problem; that DelDOT is doing traffic studies are other projects as well to determine the cumulative effect of traffic; that the Property is in the hub of a major traffic area; and that he requests that the record be left open for a traffic impact study is completed.

Mr. Reiger testified that he is opposed to the Application because he feels it was incorrectly advertised and that he believes the Application should have been posted along Old Orchard Road.

Mr. Sharp stated that the property along Old Orchard Road would not be posted because it is not the property which is the subject of this application; that there is case law which requires the Board to post on the property which is the subject of the application; that there are properties in Sussex County which do not have a mailing address; that the advertising includes a description of the site and the tax map parcel number; and that information regarding the Application is available on the land use docket.

Mr. Reiger testified that he questions the definition of a nursing home; and that new definitions were approved earlier this year.

Mr. Sharp stated that the Applicant is seeking a special use exception to operate a convalescent home, nursing home, and/or home for the aged and that the issue before the Board is whether the use substantially affects adversely the uses of neighboring and adjacent properties.

Mr. Reiger argued that this type of use should go before County Council.

Ms. Almaris testified that there was a 55,000 square foot fitness center proposed on the other side of the Villages at Five Points and that facility was deemed to be out of character for the neighborhood; that there is precedent in the area; that there are single-family homes in the area; and that there is commercial property along Old Orchard Road as well.

The Board took an eight (8) minute recess.

Mr. Reiger asked if nearby lands are in agricultural preservation.

Walter Bahr was sworn in to give testimony in opposition to the Application. Mr. Bahr testified that he is opposed to this Application due to the size of the building and all the development
in the area; that there are no three-story buildings in the area; that the facility will be larger than the Shell We Bounce facility; that there are 6 developable properties in the area – two of which are commercial; that the Property sits behind commercial property; and that other properties are zoned for development.

Mr. Fifer stated that the Property and surrounding properties are not in an agricultural preservation district; and that he is unable to state how long it will DelDOT to complete the traffic impact study.

Mr. Palmer testified that traffic counts were submitted to DelDOT today; that he expects DelDOT to take 2-3 months to accept those counts; that DelDOT then analyzes the data; that the analyzing process will take approximately 8-10 months; that the study will be incorporated with other projects in the area; that the trip warrants needed to trigger a traffic impact study is 1,000 vehicular trips and this project only results in 315 vehicular trips per day; that the facility cannot be seen from Old Orchard Road; that the area where the building will be located 10 feet lower than neighboring properties due to historical borrowing on the site; and that mature trees buffer the facility from neighboring properties.

Mr. Fifer stated that the facility will not substantially affect adversely the uses of neighboring and adjacent properties; that the facility will be buffered by trees and elevation changes; that the opposition did not bring substantial evidence to support their claims and have relied on speculation; that the City of Lewes supports the Application; that the facility will benefit the neighboring community; and that the traffic impact from this facility will result in no more traffic impact in this location than anywhere else in eastern Sussex County.

Ms. Magee suggested leaving the record open for written comments from DelDOT and the public.

Mr. Sharp stated that DelDOT may be reluctant to provide comments on the traffic impact at this time.

Ms. Magee stated that she would like to review the materials.

Mr. Workman stated that he would like to close the record.

Motion by Ms. Magee, seconded by Mr. Callaway, and carried **unanimously to table this case until the December 10, 2018 meeting**. Motion carried 5 – 0.

The vote by roll call; Mr. Workman – yea, Ms. Magee – yea, Mr. Mears – yea, Mr. Mills – yea, and Mr. Callaway – yea.
Case No. 12226 – Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless seeks a special use exception to place a telecommunications tower (Sections 115-23, 115-194.2 and 115-210 of the Sussex County Zoning Code). The property is located on the west side of Camp Arrowhead Rd. approximately 1.2 miles south of Angola Rd. 911 Address: 23182 Camp Arrowhead Rd., Lewes. Zoning District: AR-1. Tax Parcel: 234-18.00-26.00

Mr. Whitehouse presented the case and stated that the Office of Planning and Zoning received one letter in support of and three letters in opposition to the Application and zero mail returns. Mr. Whitehouse summarized the general concerns raised by the opposition. The Applicant seeks a special use exception to place a telecommunications tower on the property.

Andrew Petersohn and Sean Saxe were sworn in to testify about the Application. John Tracey, Esquire, was present on behalf of the Applicant, presented the Application.

Mr. Tracey stated that no variances will be needed for the tower; that the tower will meet all lighting requirements; that this telecommunications tower will not interfere with any radio transmissions in the area; that the applicant has looked at all properties within a two-mile radius and only found one other property about a mile and a half northwest but that property was too far from the needed service area and was also too close to another telecommunications tower; that the tower will meet all the setbacks for the property; that the tower will be in compliance with all F.C.C. requirements; that trees will screen the tower from neighboring properties; that no trees will be removed from the property; that the community of West Bay is located nearby and is owned by owners of this site; that neighbors are looking forward to better communication service in the area; that the tower is designed to collapse on itself; that, even if the tower collapsed, it will not fall on neighboring lands other than lands owned by the State of Delaware; and this special use exception will not substantially affect adversely the uses of adjacent and neighboring properties.

Mr. Petersohn and Mr. Saxe affirmed the statements made by Mr. Tracey as true and correct.

Mr. Tracey submitted two real estate reports to the Board and he stated that the tower will have no adverse impact on real estate values and the noise and traffic associated with the tower will be minimal.

Mr. Petersohn testified that need for telecommunication towers changes as the need for data usage due to increasing population shifts continuously.

The Board found that no parties appeared in support of or in opposition to the Application.

Ms. Magee moved to approve the Application No. 12226 for the requested special use exception to permit the construction of a 150 ft. telecommunications monopole as it will not substantially adversely affect the uses of adjacent and neighboring properties.
Motion by Ms. Magee, seconded by Mr. Callaway, and carried unanimously that the special use exception be granted because the tower will not substantially affect adversely the uses of neighboring and adjacent properties. Motion carried 5 – 0.

The vote by roll call; Mr. Workman – yea, Ms. Magee – yea, Mr. Mears – yea, Mr. Mills – yea, and Mr. Callaway – yea.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.