

MINUTES

PLANNING BOARD

TOWNSHIP OF BERKELEY HEIGHTS, NEW JERSEY

Regular Meeting

August 19, 2026

The Regular Meeting of the Planning Board was called to order at 7:30 PM by Secretary Pro-Tem Regina Giardina.

Mrs. Giardina confirmed that the meeting was being held in conformance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Adequate notice of this meeting has been posted on the Township website and sent to the newspaper of record. The Agenda has also been posted on the Township website and bulletin board at the Municipal Building at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting. The Agenda items will not necessarily be heard in the order listed and the meeting will not continue substantially past 10:30 PM.

Roll Call:

Members present were Ms. Poage, Mr. Popolo, Mr. Harris, Mr. Kraut, Mr. Couto, Mr. Sternheim and Mr. Leo. Mr. Robertson, Board Attorney, and Michael Mistretta, Township Planner, were also present.

Mr. Kraut was nominated and elected to act as Temporary Chairman on the motion of Mr. Popolo, seconded by Mr. Couto and carried 7-0 by roll call vote.

Adoption of Minutes:

July 15, 2026 Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Ms. Poage, seconded by Mr. Couto, to adopt the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 15, 2026 as presented. The voice vote was 7-0.

Applications for Review:

ADJOURNED UNTIL SEPTEMBER 9, 2026:

App.#SP-5-25: Lockhern Property II, LLC, 458 Springfield Ave., Bl. 702, L. 4 & 6
Proposed 33-unit mixed-use residential building (4 stories and garage) and associated site improvements.

Mr. Robertson advised that the application has been adjourned at the request of the applicant and new notice will be provided.

App.#SP-2-26: The Connell Company, 800 District Drive, Bl. 4102, L.1 (MU-Zone)

Proposed installation of a new blade-type sign (15' high x 3.25' wide) projecting from the façade of the entertainment building to be known as 800 District Drive. The sign is for a bowling alley business at The District at The Park. Relief is needed from various sections of Section 6.3.5.1.L. of the Municipal Land Use Procedures Ordinance. Approval for the development known as The District at Connell was granted by the Planning Board on 9/21/2022 and memorialized in a resolution adopted 11/2/2022.

Thomas Garlick, attorney representing the applicant, stated that the applicant is seeking variances for a proposed blade sign for a bowling alley/steak house use in The District at the Park. Four variances are required for size, lighting, materials and projection of the sign. Mr. Garlick further stated that the proposed sign is unique and tastefully designed and will have no negative impact or detriment to the neighborhood.

Shane Connell was sworn, stated that he oversees the operations of the hospitality and development group for The Connell Company. Mr. Connell provided Exhibit A-1 - slide presentation showing the layout of the Connell mixed use center, indicating previous sign packages that have been approved by the Board and providing renderings of the proposed bowling alley/steak house.

Stuart Johnson, architect, was sworn, provided his educational and professional background and was accepted as an expert witness. Mr. Johnson described the proposed blade sign that will be 15' tall and project off the side of the building. He stated that four variances are required for the sign area, sign material, type of illumination and projection of the sign. Mr. Johnson continued the slide presentation showing the progress of construction at the site and shop drawings of the proposed sign. He stated that the proposed sign will be neon with no light spillage off the property and no negative impact on the neighbors. The light will be static with no blinking, will not be distracting to drivers, and will not be visible from public roadways outside of The District.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Robertson explained why this application is before the Planning Board rather than the Board of Adjustment. Mr. Johnson indicated the screening that is provided by trees and buildings that makes it not visible from the roadways, Mr. Connell stated the sign will be lighted during operating hours weekdays 12:00 to closing and weekends 10:00 – 5:00 but that it has not yet been determined if the sign will be lighted during non-operating hours, and Mr. Johnson stated that they do not anticipate any problem with birds on the ledges of the sign.

A sign identified as The District at the Park Coming 2026 was marked as Exhibit A-2.

Open to the Public

The hearing was opened to the public for questions or comments regarding the presentation.

Joe Iadanza was sworn and expressed concern about the safety of the sign, light pollution, and the precedent being set if the sign is approved.

Mr. Johnson stated that their structural engineer has designed the sign and how it will be anchored to the building.

Mr. Robertson advised that there may be specific reasons why this sign might be approved but that does not mean that another tenant coming in would be granted approval. He recommended a condition of approval that a future tenant changing the signage would have to go back to the Board for review.

Michael Mistretta, Township Planner, stated that the proposed sign is unique for this particular use and asked how it will be reconfigured if the bowling use is discontinued.

Mr. Garlick stated that any new signage would require a new application.

Mr. Iadanza requested consideration of the Seinfeld episode regarding neon signage.

Mr. Garlick noted that the proposed sign is not near any residential buildings.

Mr. Robertson reviewed the conditions of approval.

A motion was made by Mr. Harris, seconded by Ms. Poage, to approve App# SP-2-26: The Connell Company, 800 District Drive, Bl. 4102, L.1 (MU-Zone), subject to the conditions discussed and further subject to the requirements, restrictions and limitations that shall be set forth in a Resolution of Memorialization to be adopted by the Board at a future meeting. The roll call vote was 7-0 with Ms. Poage, Mr. Popolo, Mr. Harris, Mr. Kraut, Mr. Couto, Mr. Sternheim and Mr. Leo voting in favor and none opposed.

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Mr. Popolo, seconded by Ms. Poage, to adjourn the meeting. The voice vote was unanimous, and the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Regina Giardina, Secretary Pro-Tem