

**READINGTON TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
October 17, 2024**

The Meeting was called to order by Chair Mittleman at 7:30 p.m. stating that the requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been met and that this meeting had been duly advertised.

ROLL CALL

Board Members in Attendance:

Barton
Bola
Mittleman
Nees
Roglieri
Saad

Board Members Absent:

Giallorenzo

Mr. Roglieri moved, and Mr. Nees seconded a motion to excuse the absence of Board Member Giallorenzo. The motion carried unanimously.

Others Present:

Board Attorney Joseph Tauriello, Board Planner James Clavelli, Board Engineer Rob O'Brien and Board Secretary Ann Marie Lehberger

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Barton abstained.

Mr. Saad moved, and Mr. Roglieri seconded a motion to approve the September 19, 2024, minutes. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTIONS

There were none.

ADJOURNMENTS OF ANY SCHEDULED HEARINGS OR MOTIONS

There were none.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE SESSION RESOLUTION

WHEREAS N.J.S.A. 10:4-12 (the Open Public Meeting Act) authorizes this Board to exclude the public from that portion of a meeting at which this Board discusses certain matters;

WHEREAS, the Board is about to discuss such a matter, specifically a matter falling within the attorney-client privilege where confidentiality is required for the Board Attorney to exercise his ethical duties as a lawyer with respect to attorney-client privileged legal advice he wishes to give the Board.

WHEREAS this Board believes the public should be excluded from this discussion and advice.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Readington Township Board of Adjustment on October 17, 2024 that this Board now go into closed session and the public be excluded and that the Board believes that the discussions conducted in the closed session may not be disclosed to the public because they will involve attorney-client privileged advice and information.

Mr. Bola moved, and Mr. Saad seconded to adopt this resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Bola moved, and Mr. Saad seconded a motion to come out of closed session. The motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Hayden's House of Healing
Appl# ZB24-004- Preliminary & Final Site Plan with "D" Variance-Retreat Center
Block 57 Lot 7-11 Forty Oaks Road

Attorney Mark Peck was present on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Peck explained that the applicant is seeking preliminary and final site plan approval with use variance to operate a faith based retreat facility at the subject property. He explained that the retreat programs would occur 18 to 20 times per year from Thursday or Friday to early Sunday afternoon and have no more than 10 attendees, with 3 hosts. He described the existing conditions at the property and permitted uses. He and stated that no changes are proposed to the existing residential structure or garage.

The following people were present on behalf of the applicant and sworn:

Ady Dorsett, Chief Executive Officer(CEO) of Hayden's House of Healing
Robert Dorsett, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of Hayden's House of Healing
John Hansen, applicant's engineer and planner

Board Planner James Clavelli and Bord Engineer Rob O'Brien were also sworn.

The following exhibits were marked into evidence as follows:

- A-1 Hayden's House of Healing Informational packet
- A-2 Marked up architectural plan noting the location of the beds in each room (2pages)

Ady Dorsett, CEO of Hayden's House of Healing provided some background on how Hayden's House of Healing came to be. She explained that their son Hayden was born in 2012 with a heart defect and lived only for 5 months and 4 days. She provided testimony as follows: Hayden's House of Healing hosts retreats for parents and families who have experienced child loss. It is a 3 night retreat where the attendees come together to do workshops and grieve. They started hosting retreats in 2015, and Hayden's House of Healing was established in 2017. She explained that she is a teacher by trade, and they are affiliated with their family's home church in Bloomfield NJ. There is an executive board of

11 people that help run the organization. There is also an advisory board that consists of 25-30 individuals who have attended the retreats and help support their mission.

Robert Dorsett, CFO explained that 80-90% of the funding is through a grassroots type of situation from donations from attendees who attend the retreats and network. He also noted that they have also received some grants as well.

Ady Dorsett continued her testimony as follows: Most attendees find out about the retreats through word of mouth and social media. They do not spend money on advertising. They have held their retreats at Airbnb's over the past year. They own the subject property but reside in North Arlington NJ. There are no plans for anyone to live in the home when the retreats are not in session. No exterior changes to the home or any changes to the footprint are proposed. There will be no more than 20 retreats per year that will begin at approximately 3 pm on Thursday or Friday and go until approximately 1pm on Sunday. There would be no more than 10 attendees and three hosts staying on site for each retreat. Food is catered in from local restaurants. Ms. Dorsett outlined what a typical retreat weekend would look like from start to finish. She explained that they clean the house after each retreat and garbage is picked up by a local service. She also confirmed that none of the activities take place outside and there is no amplified sound.

The Board questioned if garbage and recycling were picked up in the same week.

The Board questioned the number of attendees if there is a large family. Ms. Dorsett explained that they do not have family retreats. The retreats are either solely mothers, solely fathers, couples or mother and a teenage daughter.

In response to a question from the Board, Ms. Dorsett confirmed that 13 people would be sleeping in the house during the retreat.

The Board questioned what happens at the property when there are no retreats scheduled. Ms. Dorsett stated that it would not be used for any other purpose.

In response to a question from the Board, Ms. Dorsett confirmed that the home would not be rented.

The Board inquired where 13 people would sleep in the 4 bedroom home. Mr. Dorsett explained that there are 3 bedrooms that have 2 beds in each room, a large master bedroom that has 4 beds in it and a finished basement that has 3 beds in it with egress to the outside.

Engineer O'Brien confirmed that the applicant has proposed septic work to accommodate the proposal.

The Board questioned if the hosts were in house employees. Ms. Dorsett stated that they are volunteers that have attended retreats and take a 6 month training session.

The Board questioned how the grounds would be maintained. Mr. Dorsett stated that they will use a local landscape company.

In response to a question from the Board, Ms. Dorsett stated that alcohol was not provided but was allowed for adult retreats.

The Board questioned if the garage was connected to the basement.

The Board questioned whether there have been any changes to the interior of the home since 2006, which is the date on the plans that were submitted. Ms. Dorsett stated that they have not done any renovations to the home since they purchased it a year ago.

The Board questioned whether lanterns or balloons were sent up during the retreat as mentioned in the submitted paperwork. Mrs. Dorsett confirmed that it was not done.

The Board questioned if there are other visitors that would come to the retreat but not stay overnight. Ms. Dorsett stated that they have yoga instructors that come in in the morning and a worship team for a brief amount of time.

The Board questioned if they had any plans for use of the out building. Ms. Dorsett stated that they plan to use it for storage.

In response to a question from the Board, Ms. Dorsett confirmed that there would be no signage on the property.

The Board questioned if the garage has electricity or plumbing. Mr. Dorsett confirmed that it has electricity and did receive a permit from the Township.

Board Planner James Clavelli questioned whether there were any future plans for growth of the organization that may result in the need to expand this facility. Ms. Dorsett stated that there were not any plans.

Mr. Clavelli question if additional parking would be needed to accommodate the visitors that may come to the retreat, such as the yoga instructor and worship team. Mr. Peck stated that the applicant's engineer would address parking in his testimony.

Board Engineer Rob O'Brien requested clarification of the number of beds and rooms.

Chair Mittleman opened the public portion of the meeting for questions of Mr. and Mrs. Dorsett.

Paul Carvalho inquired about the deed for the property specifically whose name was listed on it and who was paying the mortgage on the home. Mr. Dorsett stated that the deed was in their name. Mr. Carvalho also inquired about tax exemption, if they had applied for a use variance in another NJ town and if fundraising funds were being used for the cost of the variance process.

Board Attorney Tauriello stated for the Board and members of the public that under the MLUL (Municipal Land Use Law) and the rules that govern the proceedings, you are to consider evidence for this application only.

Pete Justo inquired as to whether retreats were currently going on at the house.

Dennis Fimbel inquired if any of the executive board members or committee members of the organization use the home for events. He questioned whether any mental health professionals or licensed counselors attend the retreats and the training that is given to the hosts. He also inquired as to whether background checks were done on the attendees.

Nicole Panzarella inquired about the permitted uses in the AR zone as stated by the applicant's attorney. She also questioned whether they have hosted any events or workshops at the subject property since they purchased the property in 2023.

Ms. Panzarella submitted the following into evidence as follows:

O-1 Pictures from home listing on website and post from Hayden's House of Healing Facebook page

Mr. and Mrs. Dorsett stated that they had an event for the executive board members.

Ms. Panzarella questioned what the applicant has done to support the Readington Township community.

Mary Beth Antonello expressed concern about parking on the property and questioned if they plan to expand the driveway.

James DiPaolo questioned the flyer that was provided in the application packet, outside activities during retreats, insurance on the home and whether attendees were permitted to leave the home.

Caitlin Alicino questioned if all the attendees will remain on the property for the entire duration of the retreat.

Kerry DiPaolo expressed concern about residents expressing grief outside on the street.

Carolyn Fimbel expressed concern about additional noise noting that an infant lives next door.

Meredith Carvalho inquired if background checks were done on the staff expressing concern with the children in the neighborhood and questioned how they would mitigate the risk.

Mario Tehlikian inquired about the mortgage on the property.

Joseph Panzarella asked for clarification on the number of bedrooms in the home and inquired why they purchased the home prior to getting a variance. He also asked if the garage had a loft and if there is a bathroom in the basement.

Ralph DeLorenzo questioned why the application was submitted as Hayden's House of Healing when the property is owned by the Dorsett's. He also inquired about the requirement for an electric vehicle (EV) charging station.

Chair Mittleman announced that the application will be carried to the meeting on December 12, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. with no further notice. The applicant agreed to provide an extension of time for the Board to act through January 31, 2025.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Saad moved, and Mr. Barton seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Marie Lehberger
Zoning Board Secretary