

WEST WINDSOR TOWNSHIP PLANNING BOARD MEETING
REGULAR MEETING
May 6, 2026

The Regular meeting of the Planning Board was called to order at 6:30 pm by Vice Chairman Hoberman in Meeting Room A in the Municipal Building.

STATEMENT OF ADEQUATE NOTICE

Pursuant to the Sunshine Law, a notice of this meeting's date, time, location, and agenda was mailed to the news media, posted on the township bulletin board, and filed with the Municipal Clerk on April 23, 2026.

ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Curtis Hoberman, Vice Chairman, Class IV
Hermant Marathe, Mayor, Class I
Linda Geevers, Councilwoman, Class III
Sue Appelget, Class IV
Simon Pankove, Class IV
Allen Schectel, Class IV
Pankaj Patel, Alt. #1

ABSENT: Michael Karp, Chairman, Class IV
Jyotika Bahree, Class II
Anis Baig, Class IV

TOWNSHIP CONSULTANT STAFF PRESENT

Gerald Muller, Esq., Attorney, Muller & Baillie, P.C.
David Novak, PP, Planner, Burgis & Associates
Edward Snieckus, Jr., LLA, PP, ASLA, Burgis & Associates
Francis Guzik, PE, Township Engineer
Quazi Masood, PE, PTOE, Traffic Engineer, Arora & Associates

Lisa Komjati, Administrative Secretary

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Vice Chairman Hoberman opened the meeting for public comment on non-agenda and non-pending application items. There were no comments from the public.

MINUTES

March 18, 2026

Councilwoman Geevers made a motion to approve the March 18, 2026 minutes with amendment; seconded by Mayor Marathe. Approved by Voice Vote.

Abstention(s): Appelget, Schectel, Patel

APPLICATION(S):

PB26-03

Princeton Ascend Development LLC

Sign Variance

West Windsor Township Planning Board
Regular Meeting Minutes May 6, 2026

43 Princeton-Hightstown Road, Ste 2106; Block 12.04, Lot 25
Property Zoned: RP-7 District
MLUL: 5/30/26

Applicant is requesting the following relief for signage accessory to a mixed-use building at 43 Princeton Hightstown Road; a variance from 20(d)[1] of the West Windsor Township Zoning Ordinance (the "Ordinance") to permit a monument sign where the property is set back less than 50 feet from the right-of-way; a variance from 200-258(D)(4)(d)[2] of the Ordinance to permit a monument sign measuring 100 square feet; and a variance from 200-258(D)(4)(d)[3] of the Ordinance to permit a monument sign that is 12 feet high.

Attorney Muller confirmed that proof of publication was in order and the Board has jurisdiction.

Augusta O'Neill, Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg representing the applicant, Princeton Ascend. She introduced her Exhibit package containing Exhibits A-E that were provided to the board members:

- Exhibit A – Ariel view of the location of the building
- Exhibit B – Copy of the site plan initially reviewed by the board
- Exhibit C – Signage Plans
- Exhibit D – Pylon Placement
- Exhibit E – Neighboring Property Signs

Attorney O'Neill explained that this property is located at 43 Princeton Hightstown Road which is a very busy road and the purpose of this application is to provide some accessory signage, so the building is more visible to members of the public. In 2017 the applicant received approvals to construct a mixed-use building at that location. The building has 23 multifamily units, five of which are affordable. The building is L-Shaped and has over 12,000 square feet of commercial space. There are two commercial spaces visible from Princeton Hightstown Road, but a lot of the commercial units are in the L portion of the building that is not visible from the road. The location of the sign will be the same as it was on the site plan that was approved in 2017. She showed a rendering of what the sign would look like if approved and added that all the text would be black and white. There will be landscaping consistent with the ordinance, and it will be aesthetically pleasing. The bottom of the signage has brick that will match the building. She stated that the sign they are proposing is going to be a total of 100 square feet which is consistent with other signs that are located along Princeton Hightstown Road. Attorney O'Neill then showed pictures of comparable signs in the area.

The Township's Planning Board Professionals were sworn in simultaneously by Attorney Muller:

David Novak, PP, Planner, Burgis & Associates
Edward Snieckus, Jr., LLA, PP, ASLA, Burgis & Associates
Francis Guzik, PE, Township Engineer
Quazi Masood, PE, PTOE, Traffic Engineer, Arora & Associates

Township Planner Novak explained how the ordinance defines sign area for monument signs and similar signs. He stated that sign area includes only the space within the outermost limits of the lettering and logo, and does not include the monument's base or cap. As a result, a sign may be larger in overall width and height than its calculated sign area

suggests. Although the proposed sign functions more like a project tenant identification sign, that type of sign is not specifically permitted in the Princeton Junction Redevelopment Area, so the monument sign standards were applied for review. Under those standards, the maximum permitted sign area in this district is 30 square feet, the maximum height is 6 feet, and signs are allowed only for buildings set back at least 50 feet from the right-of-way. Therefore, this application requires three variances.

Mr. Schectel challenged Attorney O'Neill's characterization of the interior space as retail, noting that uses such as a dentist's office and a tutoring center are not typically destinations people choose on impulse while driving by. He said the space had therefore been mischaracterized. He also asked Planner Novak whether the nearby signs shown by Attorney O'Neill predated the ordinance and whether they were truly comparable. Mr. Novak replied that some did predate the ordinance, but the comparison was still requested. He added that one factor in evaluating detriment to the public good is whether a sign would appear out of character in the district. Mayor Marathe responded that visibility from the road is important because retail tenants are unlikely to lease the space without signage that can be seen from Princeton Hightstown Road, and he noted that nearby signs are of similar size. Mr. Schectel clarified that he does not object to having a sign, but believes the proposed sign is too large. He said it could be reduced and still accommodate the seven tenants. Vice Chairman Hoberman added that drivers traveling 40 mph on Princeton Hightstown Road need lettering of sufficient size to read the sign, and he said he supports the monument sign and considers it comparable to others in the area.

Ms. Appelget expressed concern about the sign's placement, noting that making a left turn at that location is already difficult. Referring to Picture A in Exhibit C, she said it appears the stop sign is positioned before the proposed sign. Planner Novak explained that the prior site plan submitted in 2016 originally included a sign in that location, although it was later withdrawn. He added that the plans still show the AASHTO sight line at the southwesterly corner, and the proposed sign is outside that sight line, as confirmed during the TRC review process.

Councilwoman Geevers asked why the Princeton Ascend lettering was so large. She suggested reducing it to allow larger tenant lettering and inquired why the sign does not include the street address for emergency services. Mr. Schectel agreed with Councilwoman Geevers that the Princeton Ascend name occupies a large portion of the sign and that reducing it could decrease the overall square footage without affecting the tenant's lettering. He noted that the ordinance permits 30 square feet, while the proposed sign is 100 square feet, and said he was seeking middle ground. Planner Novak agreed and asked if the Princeton Ascend lettering were reduced while still leaving room for the address number, the sign's width could be narrowed to about 8 feet. He added that the tenant lettering should not be reduced because it is already small for visibility on a 40 mph road.

Attorney Muller simultaneously swore in witnesses for the applicant:

Michael Jin, Applicant, Princeton Ascend
Howard Chinn, Forman Sign Company

Mr. Chinn of Forman Sign Company reviewed his qualifications and was accepted by the Board as an expert witness. He then addressed concerns about the sign's location within the sight line, stating that the stop sign is a few feet in front of the proposed sign and that the photograph's angle makes it appear the opposite way. He explained that the sign will use black-and-white lettering and halo lighting, so the face will not be brightly illuminated at night. Instead, light will project

from behind the letters to create a halo effect, while the tenant letters will be routed and backlit. He explained that the black-and-white design improves daytime readability. The tenants' lettering is about 7 inches and if the size is reduced it would be difficult to read at 40 mph. He added that the larger Princeton Ascend lettering reflects the building's name, though it could be reduced if necessary, and that the street number could be added to the sign or the brick base if it does not appear on the building.

Mr. Pankove asked whether the utility poles shown in Picture B of Exhibit C will be relocated, noting that they block part of the sign. The applicant, Mr. Jin, responded that one of the poles is temporary and belongs to the neighboring property. He added that the other pole belongs to PSE&G and will be relocated when the County improves the road. Township Engineer Guzik explained that, during TRC review of the application, he examined the County's plans to reconstruct Princeton Hightstown Road in this area. He noted that the curbline next to the neighboring property currently extends farther into the roadway than the curbline in front of Princeton Ascend. When the road is improved, the curbline will shift back in front of the adjacent property, and the utility pole will be relocated in front of that property. The Princeton Ascend plans already show the curbline in its final location, so nothing will change in that area. He added that the project will be completed in two phases, with this section included in the first phase.

Vice Chairman Hoberman stated that he believes the presentation of the word "Ascend" needs to be changed because the lettering appears to descend on the sign. He suggested that the "A" should begin at the bottom so the lettering rises, consistent with the word's meaning. He went on to say that too many issues remained unresolved for the Planning Board to act on the application at this time and asked if the applicant would consider the Board's comments and suggestions and return at a future meeting.

Mr. Jin agreed to consider the Board's suggestions and return at a future meeting. Attorney O'Neill acknowledged that no action would be taken this evening but noted that several Princeton Ascend tenants were present and wanted to testify. Vice Chairman Hoberman responded that, considering the Board's concerns, he preferred to defer that testimony until the applicant returns. Attorney Muller added that when the applicant returns, they would not need to notice because the application was being continued, not withdrawn or denied.

Planner Novak summarized the Board's comments and concerns, noting that much of the discussion focused on reducing the sign's size. He stated that narrowing the sign, rather than lowering it, seemed preferable and could likely be achieved by adjusting the Princeton Ascend lettering while still leaving room for an address number. He added that the setback from the stop sign would be reassessed, particularly considering the County's planned road changes, to ensure the location is safe. He noted that narrowing the sign might also move it an extra foot or two farther from the driveway and street intersection, a point the applicant could discuss further with the Board's professionals.

Vice Chairman Hoberman called for a break so the next applicant could set up.

7:40PM – Break

7:50 PM – The Planning Board reconvened.

PB26-02

MarketFair Mall/Tenant Improvements

Preliminary/Final Site Plan & Bulk Variances

3535 US Route 1; Block 7.15, Lot 14.04

Property Zoned: B-2 District

MLUL: 6/3/2026

Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association is the owner of Block 7.15, Lot 14.04, as designated on the tax map of the Township of West Windsor, said property being located at 3535 US Highway 1, Princeton, New Jersey. The property is 27.54 +/- acres and is in the B-2 Business District (the "B-2 Zone"). The property is currently improved with the existing MarketFair Mall consisting of approximately 280,695 +/- SF, and associated parking with existing driveway access to Route 1. The applicant is seeking preliminary and final site plan approval with bulk variances and design waiver relief in order to complete the internal and external remodel of four tenant spaces on the southeast side of the MarketFair Mall with façade and building signage improvements, hardscape and landscape improvements, two (2) building additions consisting of approximately 274 +/- SF and 145 +/- SF and a proposed vestibule and additional landscape islands in the parking lot.

Attorney Muller announced that proof of publication was in order and the board has jurisdiction.

Mr. Jeffrey Chang of Fox Rothschild, representing the applicant, Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association, gave a brief overview of the project. He explained that the applicant was seeking preliminary and final site plan approval, along with C variance and design waiver relief, for interior and exterior renovations to the mall.

The Township's Planning Board Professionals were sworn in simultaneously by Attorney Muller:

David Novak, PP, Planner, Burgis & Associates
Edward Snieckus, Jr., LLA, PP, ASLA, Burgis & Associates
Francis Guzik, PE, Township Engineer
Quazi Masood, PE, PTOE, Traffic Engineer, Arora & Associates

Attorney Muller simultaneously swore in all professionals testifying on behalf of the applicant:

Rob Osterlof, Landscape Architect, Bohler Engineering
Ben Crowder, Civil Engineer, Bohler Engineering
Anthony Palino, General Manager of MarketFair
John Taikina, Planner, All Things Planning and Development, LLC
Ian Ramous, Architect, Reztark Design Studio

Mr. Palino, General Manager of MarketFair, began by giving a brief description of his background. He explained that they are here tonight requesting approval to take the outdated former Bahama Breeze space that is exterior facing only and they would like to remodel this for a new incoming tenant, LaScala Fire. They will also be adding a Kohler Signature Store and creating a storefront entrance for them directly next to the future LaScala Fire. The former TGI Friday's building will be made into two spaces, the tenants cannot be disclosed yet because the leases have not been signed.

One will be athleisure wear and the other a food and beverage establishment and they would like to include a patio for them. With the addition of the four new tenants this will help MarketFair to adapt to the economy and continue to elevate its already high-end tenant structure.

Mr. Crowder, Civil Engineer, and Mr. Osterlof, Landscape Architect, both went over their backgrounds and qualifications and were accepted as expert witnesses by the Board.

Mr. Crowder, Civil Engineer, presented Sheet C01 as Exhibit A-1, an aerial view of the property, and explained that MarketFair Mall is a 27.5-acre site in the B-2 zone. He said the application is limited to the mall's southeast corner, where four new tenants are proposed, and that no changes are planned to site access or overall internal circulation. He then presented Sheet C-301 as Exhibit A-2, the overall site layout plan. Mr. Crowder explained that the application seeks one variance related to impervious coverage. Although the ordinance permits 60% impervious coverage in the B-2 zone, the property currently has 77.95% coverage, which would be slightly reduced to 77.94% under the proposal. He said the project would add some impervious surface through landscaping, an outdoor patio, hardscape improvements, and screening for the existing service loading area. As a result of TRC discussions, the applicant also looked for opportunities to add more green space elsewhere on the property and proposed 13 new landscaped islands in the eastern parking area along US Route 1. Because those islands would replace existing parking spaces, the application also includes a design waiver for parking. The site currently has 1,210 spaces, and the new islands would remove 26 more, reducing the total to 1,184. However, he said the applicant's traffic engineer completed a parking accumulation study and found that peak occupancy reached only 58%, indicating that parking would remain sufficient. He then presented Sheet L-101 as Exhibit A-3, showing the 13 landscaped islands, and stated that the existing parking lot drainage patterns would be maintained.

Mr. Schectel asked whether TGI Friday's and Bahama Breeze were vacant when the traffic study was conducted. Councilwoman Geevers expressed concern that the high-end restaurants and bars could increase demand for parking in that area of the mall. Mr. Crowder confirmed that both spaces were vacant at the time of the study, but said the 58% occupancy rate showed there would still be ample parking once those spaces are reactivated. He added that the study evaluated parking patterns throughout each section of the mall to help determine where the new landscaped islands should be placed and had considered future occupancy of the reactivated spaces.

Mr. Osterlof, Landscape Architect, began by showing the trees that will remain and the new ones that will be added to the landscape islands which are Honey Locust (thornless and seedless). He gave an overview of the landscaping, outside furnishings, and bollards that will be provided throughout the area where the new tenants will be added. He explained that they will have to remove 13 trees near the exterior patio next to the future dining area. The ordinance requires them to replace 18 trees, and they will be providing 25 trees at a larger caliber. Mr. Snieckus commented on the proposed bench locations, explaining that benches are typically placed near restaurant entrances for patrons waiting for takeout orders or tables. He asked about the ramped entrance into the patio area. Mr. Osterlof replied that a bench is planned near LaScala's entrance. He added that the patio area is intended more as a grab-and-go outdoor café than a reservation-style dining space, with tables, chairs, and umbrellas provided. Mr. Snieckus confirmed that additional seating would also be available near the future athleisure store and agreed that would be sufficient.

Mr. Ramous, Architect, summarized his qualifications and was accepted by the Board as an expert witness. He introduced Sheet A-1 as Exhibit A-4, which shows the overall improvement area and the proposed materials. He said the

goal is to create a more consistent and cohesive design for this portion of the mall. He then introduced Sheet A-3 as Exhibit A-5 and Sheet A-2 as Exhibit A-6. Addressing the enclosed patio, he explained that the former Bahama Breeze patio is approximately 998 square feet and that the proposed patio is intended to be similar in size and location. He noted that the windows open to allow airflow, creating an indoor-outdoor space. In addition to the improvements already discussed, the proposal includes minor upgrades to existing mall entrances. He added that the proposed materials are intended to match the mall entrances that were recently renovated. He also clarified that although signage appears on the sheets, it is shown for reference only and is not part of this approval request.

Mr. Schectel said he understood that signage was not part of the approval request but noted that each sheet includes sign square footage details. He expressed concern that approving plans with those specifications could be interpreted as approving the signage as well. He asked that the plans include a disclaimer stating that no signage is being approved. Attorney Chang said he had no objection to adding that the signs are not scaled and they will be in compliance with the signage ordinance. Attorney Muller agreed, stating that no specific signage is being approved and that signage would be addressed later during resolution compliance.

Vice Chairman Hoberman asked whether LaScala's enclosed patio is separate from the interior dining area and whether it would include heat lamps for extended seasonal use. Mr. Palino replied that the space has ceiling-mounted heating/air as well as sprinklers, making it part of the building and suitable for year-round use.

Councilwoman Geevers asked what protection the LaScala patio would have if a vehicle lost control and jumps the curb. Mr. Osterlof said no barrier is currently proposed in front of the patio. Attorney Chang noted that the applicant is improving a space previously used by Bahama Breeze, which had no such protection, and said he was unaware of any past safety concerns there. Planner Novak pointed out the stucco base and columns shown on the plans and asked whether they would provide some protection from an oncoming vehicle. Mr. Ramos responded that the brick elements would provide some substantial resistance and should be sufficient to stop a vehicle. He added that the curbs would also make it difficult for a car to maintain speed, though he could not say that no damage would occur.

Attorney Muller questioned whether a variance was needed for impervious coverage, noting that the proposal would reduce, not increase, impervious coverage and that a variance had already been granted in the prior application. Attorney Chang agreed and explained that he anticipated the issue might be raised and included the request out of caution, to avoid any question later as to whether a variance should have been sought. Attorney Muller said the resolution will state that no variance is required.

Mr. Taikina, Planner, reviewed his qualifications and was accepted by the Board as an expert witness. He explained that the applicant is seeking a parking waiver, which he believes is reasonable because strict compliance could cause hardship. He noted that the proposal would reduce parking by 26 spaces beyond the previously granted variance to add landscaped islands. He also reiterated that the parking study showed peak utilization at 58%, leaving 42% of spaces vacant.

Mr. David Novak, Township Planner, referred to his April 16, 2026 memo and stated that the applicant had addressed all planning review comments related to the site plan, parking and circulation, and the architectural plans. He also noted that no signage was being approved as part of this application. In closing, he said the proposed improvements are consistent with the rest of the mall.

Mr. Edward Snieckus, Township Landscape Architect, summarized his April 24, 2026 memo. He requested that the retained Linden tree be properly protected during adjacent construction. He asked whether the parking area improvements would affect any existing or proposed parking lot lighting. Mr. Osterlof explained that the Linden tree will be protected during construction. He responded that the lighting changes are limited to the areas being improved and are intended to enhance site lighting without affecting the parking lot lighting previously approved. He added that all new spaces will have independent lighting that complies with the ordinance.

Mr. Quazi Masood, Township Traffic Consultant, referred to his April 22, 2026 memo and stated that the applicant had addressed all remaining traffic engineering comments.

Mr. Francis Guzik, Township Engineer, referred to his April 24, 2026 memo. He asked that comment 2.01, which requires a traffic protection plan showing how the parking lot will be reconfigured during construction while remaining safe for the public, be made a condition of approval. He also asked the applicant to address comments 3.02 and 3.03, which relate to prior PB24-04 conditions governing non-security lighting and the dimming of non-security fixtures.

Mr. Crowder, Civil Engineer, stated for the record that the applicant would comply with comment 2.01 requiring a traffic protection plan. He added that, after consulting with Mr. Palino, the applicant would also comply with the prior conditions regarding dimming and security lighting in the areas covered by the proposed improvements.

Councilwoman Geevers asked about comment 3.03 and whether reducing the lighting could create security concerns for people leaving the mall after hours. Mr. Palino explained that the lights would be dimmed, but each fixture has motion detection, so the lights will turn on when a person or vehicle is present. Mr. Guzik added that this is the current condition under PB24-04 and that the same requirement should apply to any new exterior lighting.

Vice Chairman Hoberman read into the record Fire Chief Lynch's report dated April 24, 2026, which stated this proposal has no impact on emergency response or fire department services, therefore he has no comments on this application.

Vice Chairman Hoberman opened the meeting for public comment on this application. There were no comments from the public. Mr. Schectel made a motion to close this meeting for public comment; seconded by Mr. Pankove. Passed by Voice Vote.

Attorney Muller explained this application is for preliminary and final site plan approval with one design waiver with respect to parking which is less than required, submission waivers for both preliminary and final with conditions, protecting the Linden tree, traffic protection plan, and two regarding lighting.

Motion to approve PB 26-02 for preliminary and final site plan approval, one design waiver, submission waivers for both preliminary and final with conditions previously listed by Counsel. Moved by Mr. Pankove; seconded by Mr. Schectel.

Vice Chairman Hoberman added that the application did include a bulk variance and that was discussed and decided it was not applicable in this situation and signage will be handled later.

West Windsor Township Planning Board
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Roll Call:

Aye: Patel, Schectel, Pankove, Appelget, Geevers, Marathe, Hoberman

Nay: None

Abstentions: None

Absent: Baig, Bahree, Karp

ADJOURNMENT:

Planner Novak announced that the next meeting will be held on May 20, 2026

Councilwoman Geevers asked about the status of the parking garage lighting ordinance. Mr. Guzik replied that a new Land Use Manager will start on May 11th and that the matter will be added to his list.

Vice Chaiman Hoberman adjourned the meeting at 9:00 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Trish Van Clef

Recording Secretary