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08/30/2025

To: Central Pine Barrens Commission
624 Old Riverhead Road
Westhampton Beach, New York 11978
Tel. (631) 288-1079

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Re: Wildfire Buffer Adjacent to Improved Industrial Buildings at Westhampton

SEP 02 2025

Dear Ms. Julie Hargraves,

Central Pine Barrens
Joint Planning & Policy Committee

Attached please find ariel surveys of each of my buildings along the west side of Old Riverhead Road at Westhampton. All my properties are within the Pine Barrens Core Area and are adjacent to lands owned by Suffolk County Department of Parks.

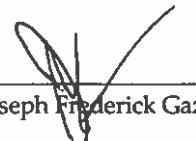
At issue is how to protect my buildings from the next wildfire emanating from the Pine Barrens Core Area. A buffer/separation between my buildings and the pine vegetation at a minimum is the recommendation by the Westhampton Fire District. The perimeter of my properties is outlined in blue line on the attached ariel surveys.

Grinding the vegetation to 1 foot of grade to create a layer of mulch for turf to grow is my request. This request may be considered §57-0107 (13) (C) development and development within the core is prohibited absent a hardship permit. §57-012.1 (1c) Grounds for a hardship permit in connection with my applications are as follows:

My industrial buildings have no beneficial used if damaged by wildfires, they were all built prior to 6/1/1993. There is a public need to protect the firemen who risk their lives attempting to control wildfires. Safety of my buildings, the Hospice Center, the BOCES School, a propane company and other businesses are all at risk from the spread of wildfires all being adjacent to the preserved pine barren lands. Decrease the danger of fire as it affects pre-existing improved buildings within the core area. The Pine Barrens Act per Legislation Declaration §57-0103 as managed by the Pine Barrens Commission is to protect, manage, oversee and participate in a comprehensive plan for the pine barrens area.

The loss of my building at 541 Old Riverhead Road, Westhampton, per photos submitted is sufficient proof of the effects of wildfire if not contained by at least a minimum buffer around my building.

Yours Truly,


Joseph Frederick Gazza

Attach.

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To: Suffolk County Department of Economic Development & Planning Commission
Attn: Joseph Sanzano - Director
H. Lee Dennision Building, 2nd Floor
100 Veterans Memorial Highway
Hauppauge, New York 11788
Tel. (631) 853-5191
planning@suffolkcountyny.gov

08/27/2025

Suffolk County Department of Parks
P.O. Box 144
West Sayville, NY 11796
Tel. (631) 854-4949
Email: scparks@suffolkcountyny.gov

Attn: Southampton Town Planning Board
Christine Preston Scalera, Counsel to Board cscalera@southamptontownny.gov
Kristin Dougherty, Confidential Secretary kdougherty@southamptontownny.gov
Southampton Town Hall
116 Hampton Road
Southampton, New York 11968

Attn: NYS DEC
Craig Lawrence Elgut, Esq
50 Circle Rd, Stony Brook, NY 11790, United States
Tel. (631) 941-2753

cc: Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning & Policy Commission
Attn: Julie Hargrave
624 Old Riverhead Road
Westhampton Beach, NY 11978
Julie.Hargrave@SCWA.com

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*Central Pine Barrens
Joint Planning & Policy Commission*

Re: Protection of Private Property and Firefighters Safety within the Pine Barrens Core

Dear Representative Members,

I am the owner of tenant occupied industrial buildings that border the Pine Barrens Preserve which you own, manage and have jurisdiction over at Westhampton. A result of the wildfire of 3/8/2025, my building at 541 Westhampton-Riverhead Road was burned and fire fighters were injured attempting to hold back the fire as it swept over my building.

With New York State's enactment of ECL §57 (Pine Barrens Act) in 1993 the disturbance of natural pine barrens vegetation within the Core Area of the Pine Barrens is considered development ECL §57-0107 (13) and development is prohibited absent a hardship permit issued by the Pine Barrens Commission ECL §57-0121 (10).

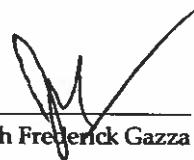
My buildings existed prior to the Pine Barrens Act and the buffer of reduced vegetation that existed surrounding my buildings when they were built has been overgrown with natural vegetation, over the past 30 years, in most cases to the walls of my buildings or curbs of their parking lots. Without a buffer area between the west side of my buildings and the thousands of acres of Pine Barrens to the west, my buildings have a reduced chance of surviving the next wildfire. The three most recent wildfires at Westhampton have all swept from the northwest to the southeast which makes the northwest side of my buildings the most vulnerable.

With the support of the Westhampton Beach Fire District, I have applied to the Pine Barrens Commission for a hardship permit to reduce the height of natural vegetation along the northwest side of my buildings by grinding to one foot above grade, all vegetation from my building to my property line as shown in red on ariel maps attached hereto.

I must manage at least this minimal buffer around my buildings to afford some protection from wildfires that periodically occur. Your consent for my lowering of vegetation on my property only is respectfully requested between my building and my property line. I have made a compelling argument before the Pine Barrens Commission for this minimal vegetation disturbance and have been advised by the Commission Chief of Staff, Ms. Julie Hargrave, that I should request your consent for the grinding prior to Commission decision.

The responsibility of management comes with the ownership of land. The municipal owners of the vast tract of land to the northwest of my buildings should create a buffer between their preserve area and adjacent developed property. Firefighting safety dictates a minimum of a 100-foot buffer in order to allow fire fighters defendable space to protect buildings. Without fire breaks or prescribed burns within the preserve area, private property will remain at risk as well as fire fighters tasked to fight the fire to save persons and property in the wildfire path. Your cooperation with fire safety is respectfully requested.

Yours Truly,



Joseph Frederick Gazza

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Joint Planning & Policy Commission*

Attach.
cc: File



541 OLD RIVERHEAD ROAD WESTHAMPTON

900-246-2-11.004

BUILT 1955

SCALE 66 FT = 1"

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479-1,2 OLD RIVERHEAD ROAD WESTHAMPTON
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900-285-2-28.001

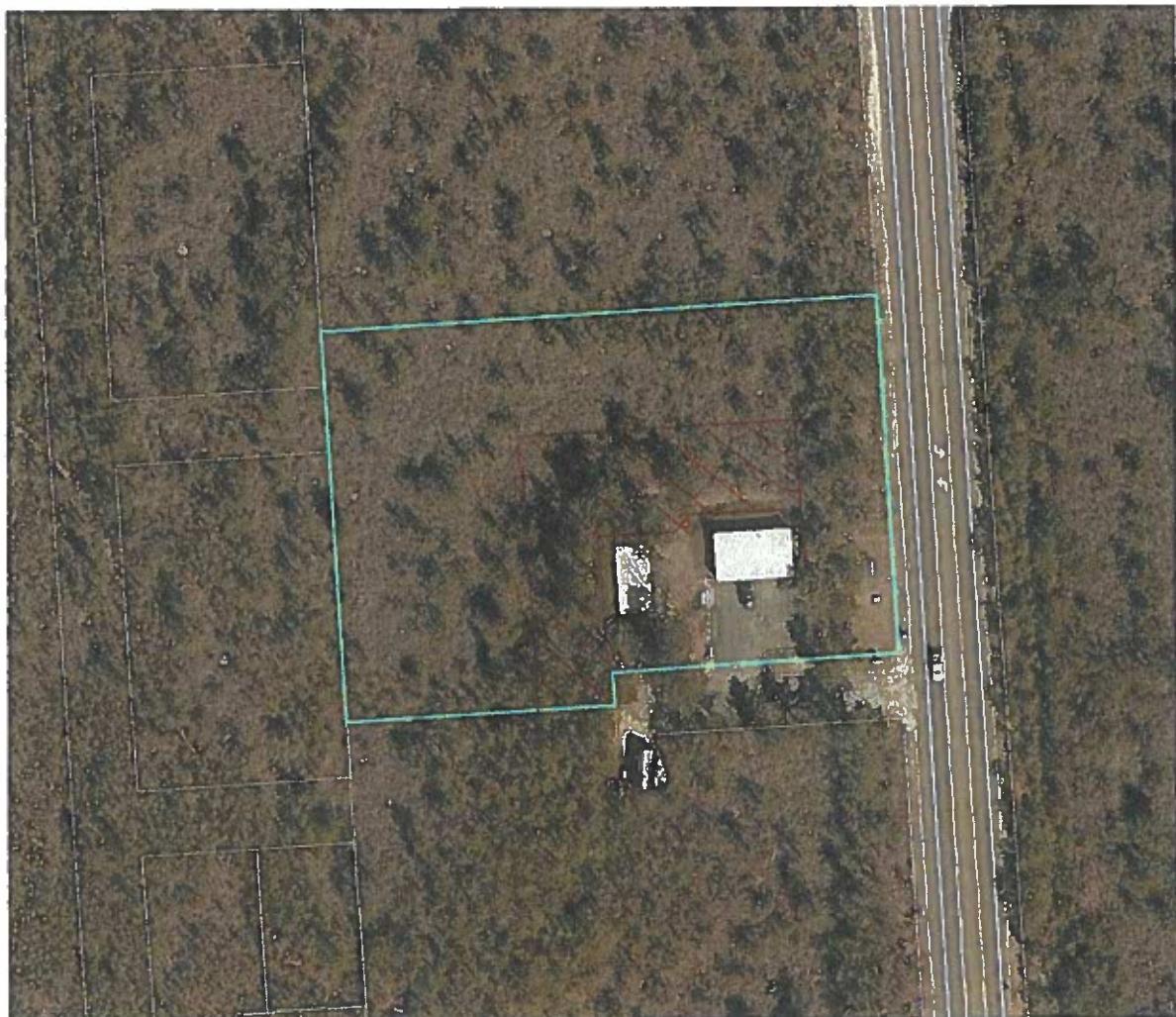
BUILT 1985

SCALE 56' = 1'

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411-1, 2 OLD RIVERHEAD ROAD WESTHAMPTON

900-286-2-38.008

BUILT 1985, 1989

SCALE 1/16 FT = 1"

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381-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, OLD RIVERHEAD RD. WESTHAMPTON

900-284-2-38.002

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BUILT 1989, 2000

SCALE 180 FT = 1"

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351-1, 2, 3, 4, 5 OLD RIVERHEAD ROAD WESTHAMPTON

900-310-2-3.001

BUILT 1989

SCALE 104' = 1"

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343-1,2,3 OLD RIVERHEAD ROAD WESTHAMPTON

900-310-2-4.002

BUILT 1989

SCALE 95' = 1"

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101 No. SUMMIT BLVD WESTHAMPTON

900-331-3-11003

BUILT 2005

SCALE 156' = 1"

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