



Central Pine Barrens Commission Meeting of April 15, 2026
Southampton Town Hall, 116 Hampton Road, Southampton

Adopted Resolution on the Gazza Properties in the Core on CR 31
West side of CR 31, Westhampton, Town of Southampton
Suffolk County Tax Map Numbers 900-246-2-11.4; 900-285-2-28.1; 900-286-2-38.8;
900-286-2-38.2; 900-310-2-3.1 and 900-310-2-4.2

Present:

Ryan McGarry, New York State Governor's Representative
Sarah Lansdale, for the Suffolk County Executive
Michelle DiBrita, for the Brookhaven Town Supervisor
Maria Moore, Southampton Town Supervisor
Matt Charters, for the Riverhead Town Supervisor

Whereas, on September 2, 2025, Joseph F. Gazza (the Applicant) submitted a Core Preservation Area (Core) Hardship Application to the Central Pine Barrens Commission (the Commission) to clear vegetation on six separate properties in the Core Preservation Area (the Project Sites) in the hamlet of Westhampton on the west side of Old Riverhead Road (County Road 31) to protect structures and property from the effects of potential wildfires (the Project), collectively the Application, and

Ryan P. McGarry
Chairman

Jerome Halpin
Member

Maria Z. Moore
Member

Daniel J. Panico
Member

Edward P. Romaine
Member

Whereas, the Project Sites were initially developed prior to the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act of 1993; the Applicant owns the Project Sites and leases each building or property and each building is currently occupied and used by Applicant's tenants; and

Whereas, the Applicant submitted two letters expressing concerns related to wildfire and aerial photographs of the Project Sites seeking to remove approximately two (2) acres of natural pine barrens vegetation, and

Whereas, the Applicant seeks to create a "buffer/separation between [my] buildings and the pine vegetation at a minimum recommendation by the Westhampton Fire District outlined in blue in aerial surveys and grinding the vegetation to one foot of grade to create a layer of mulch for turf to grow;" and

Whereas, the Project constitutes "development activity" pursuant to New York State Environmental Conservation Law §57-0107(13)(c), which states, "commencement of mining, excavation and material alteration of grade or vegetation on a parcel of land," and

Whereas, the Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan Section 4.5.1 states the Act requires the prohibition or redirection of development in the Core and sets forth the jurisdiction of the Commission, over and certain requirements for processing, hardship exemptions. The Act authorizes the Commission to waive strict compliance with this Plan upon finding that such a waiver is necessary to alleviate hardship pursuant to subdivision of §57-0121(10) of the Act; and

Whereas, a public hearing was held on November 19, 2025, and a stenographic transcript was prepared for the hearing and provided to the Commission, and

Whereas, the Application is deficient and without scientific evidence to support the Project, no site plans, scientific or professional plans or reports were prepared and submitted for review, no review of hardship criteria and no information provided demonstrating a hardship

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exists, and

Whereas, the Project is not unique to the subject parcels in the Core and set a precedent for other private and publicly owned property in the 50,000 acre Core area and the 106,000 acre Central Pine Barrens region, and

Whereas, the Applicant granted extensions of the decision deadline decision deadline for review of the Application, and the current decision deadline is April 15, 2026, and

Whereas, the Project is classified as a Type I Action pursuant to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) regulations, the Commission performed a lead agency coordination, and no other agency sought Lead Agency status, and

Whereas, the Commission assumes Lead Agency, pursuant to Section 4.5.1.1 of the Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and

Whereas, the Commission has completed the review and analysis of this decision, and no significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated as a result of this decision.

Now, therefore be it

Resolved, that the Applicant has not provided substantive information, including any material to address the hardship criteria to demonstrate that the Project Sites have no beneficial uses of used for their present uses, and be it further

Resolved, the Application has significant precedent setting nature in the Core and the Central Pine Barrens region including potential significant adverse environmental impacts on the pine barrens ecosystem, and be it further,

Resolved, the Application is denied without prejudice, and be it further,

Resolved, the Commission has prepared a Short Environmental Assessment Form (SEAF) to analyze the potential adverse environmental impacts of denying the Application. No such impacts were identified and therefore the Commission issues a negative declaration through the SEAF.

Record of Motion:

Joseph F. Gazza Core Preservation Area Application on Six Properties in the Core on CR 31 in Westhampton
Deny Without Prejudice

Motion by: Michelle DiBrita
Seconded by: Matt Charters
Yea Votes: 5
Nay Votes: 0
Absent: 0
Abstain: 0