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C E N T R A L P I N E B A R R E N S  
C O M M I S S I O N M E E T I N G

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GAZZA WILDFIRE BUFFER  
CORE PRESERVATION  
AREA HARDSHIP APPLICATION

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November 19, 2025  
3:05 p.m.  
4 West 2nd Street  
Riverhead, New York

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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A P P E A R A N C E S:

- JUDITH E. JAKOBSEN, Executive Director
- MATTHEW CHARTERS, Riverhead Town Representative
- MICHELLE DIBRITA, Brookhaven Town Representative
- MARIA Z. MOORE, Southampton Town Supervisor
- EDWARD ROMAINE, Suffolk County Executive
- DAVID WILCOX, Southampton Town representative
- JULIE HARGRAVE, Joint Planning and Policy Manager
- JOHN C. MILAZZO, Commission Counsel
- ANGELA BROWN-WALTON, Administrative Assistant

PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

Nina Leonhardt

1  
2 MS. JAKOBSEN: I'd like to start by  
3 reading the Notice of Public Hearing.

4 Pursuant to New York State  
5 Environmental Conservation Law Article 57  
6 Section 57-0121(10) and the Central Pine  
7 Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan, notice  
8 is hereby given that the Central Pine Barrens  
9 Joint Planning Commission will hold a public  
10 hearing on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, on  
11 the matter of an application for a Core  
12 Preservation Area Hardship.

13 Name of the project is Gazza Wildfire  
14 Buffer Core Presentation Area Hardship  
15 Application. The applicant Joseph F. Gazza.

16 The project site Suffolk County Tax  
17 Numbers are: 900-246-2-11.4; 900-285-2-28.1;  
18 900-286-2-38.8; 900-286-2-38.2;  
19 900-310-2-4.2.

20 The project location is west side of  
21 the Old Riverhead Road, Westhampton, Town of  
22 Southampton, Suffolk County, York.

23 The project description is a request  
24 for a Core Preservation Hardship Area Waiver  
25 to remove natural vegetation on six

1  
2 properties with industrial development in the  
3 LI 40 and CR 200 zoning districts. No SEQRA  
4 coordination has occurred to date.

5 Said hearing may be adjourned from  
6 time to time as necessary.

7 A public hearing will be held at  
8 Riverhead Town Hall, 4 West 2nd Street,  
9 Riverhead, New York at 2:30 p.m. on  
10 November 19th. And the notice goes on to say  
11 the application is posted on the Commission's  
12 website and a copy of the application is  
13 available for examination during regular  
14 business hours at the Commission office at  
15 624 Old Riverhead Road, Westhampton Beach.

16 Could we start by putting appearances  
17 the record.

18 MR. ROMAINE: Edward Romaine  
19 representing the County of Suffolk.

20 MR. CHARTERS: Matt Charters,  
21 designated representative for the Town of  
22 Riverhead.

23 MS. DIBRITA: Michele DiBrita,  
24 designated representative for the Town of  
25 Brookhaven.

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MS. MOORE: Maria Moore, Supervisor,  
Town of Southampton.

MR. WILCOX: David Wilcox, Town of  
Southampton designated representative.

MS. JAKOBSEN: Judith Jakobsen,  
Executive Director.

We will start with hearing from Julie  
Hargrave, Commission Staff.

MS. HARGRAVE: Thank you. Good  
afternoon. I'll try to keep this brief. I'm  
sure the applicant will make a presentation  
as well. We'll go over all the information  
that was provided in the hearing notice, but  
I'll give you an overview of the staff report  
and any exhibits that were provided.

Again, this is a proposal to manage  
six properties, the vegetation of six  
properties in the Core Preservation Area to  
reduce the risk of wildfire to developed  
properties. The proposal includes seven  
parcels in the Compatible Growth Area on the  
west side of Summit Boulevard in the  
industrial development county residence, but  
that we'll cover a little bit later.

1  
2 The core properties are on the west  
3 side of County Road 31, Old Riverhead Road in  
4 Westhampton and they are all developed with  
5 commercial or industrial uses. Some  
6 vegetation remains on each parcel, they are  
7 under LI 40 or CR 200 zoning district. The  
8 list of parcels is in Attachment A at the end  
9 of the staff report, the last page of the  
10 staff report, page 7.

11 The proposal, again, is to manage  
12 some of the vegetation on these properties to  
13 reduce wildfire risk. The request originated  
14 from the March 6th wildfire in Westhampton  
15 that damaged one of the applicant's  
16 structures in the application the northern  
17 most parcel, the building on the northern  
18 most parcel in the proposal.

19 There is currently no precedent for  
20 this type of application; it's the first of  
21 its kind. So, I'll go briefly through the  
22 exhibits to help you visualize what is being  
23 proposed.

24 Exhibit A contains an overview of the  
25 parcel which is on the west side of Old

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Riverhead Road. The parcels from north to south, these are the six parcels in the core and they are each developed with at least one structure. They have, again, different areas and there's different amount of area on each parcel that the applicant would manage for this project.

Exhibit B contains an aerial photograph of each parcel, a close-up of a large scale photo of aerial photo of each parcel.

Exhibit C contains photographs of each of the facilities on each parcel.

Exhibit D is a study area map. This shows the wider small scale version of the area. And you can see how widely natural the area is in the study area that is surrounded by a significant amount of open space, most of it is owned by Suffolk County, some by New York State, and also there are some Pine Barrens conservation in the study area.

Exhibit E is the applicant's application and material they provided.

Exhibit F is some wild and urban

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interface zones that show a 30 foot radius from each of the buildings and 100 foot wide radius, and those are some of the wildfire defensible space zones that are established in other areas in the country.

So, again, just to go through a few items that are important for your consideration:

The amount of vegetation to be managed on each parcel is a different amount, and that, again, is provided in the Attachment A to the staff report. It ranges from 1,800 square feet to 51,000 square feet for the largest parcel in this proposal.

The applicant needs to address the hardship criteria outlined in the Act. This is not significantly expanded upon in the application, and a few other items.

So the ownership. The Commission does not own land in the Pine Barrens, and the Pine Barrens, as you know, is a fire dependent ecosystem. Clearly, there is a balance between preserving Pine Barrens and managing the risk of wildfire. The Pine

1  
2 Barrens, as a fire dependent ecosystem, there  
3 are different approaches that can be done to  
4 manage this risk, and not cutting the Pine  
5 Barrens down to reduce this risk is maybe not  
6 reasonable, but there are ways to reduce the  
7 risk. There are structural modifications  
8 that can occur to buildings and also  
9 modifications around structures,  
10 modifications to vegetation in this  
11 defensible spaced zone that may be possible  
12 to, again, reduce the risk for wildfire.

13 So, at this point, the applicant is  
14 proposing to only remove vegetation, but  
15 there may be additional measures to the  
16 structures that could be taken to modify some  
17 of the building materials or other aspects of  
18 the site that could help reduce the risk.  
19 The reasoning, my understanding, is there is  
20 not going to be a fire truck available for  
21 every parcel and to protect every building  
22 structure, nonresidential and residential  
23 use. So, the owner has a responsibility as  
24 well to protect their assets. As far as  
25 liability, that's something maybe John can

1 speak to more about the liability the  
2 Commission has, as they don't own the land or  
3 private property to help mitigate this risk.  
4

5 Again, the SEQRA review has not  
6 occurred to date. We would need feedback  
7 from the Commission if you would like to  
8 coordinate this application with the Town of  
9 Southampton, for example, that has clearing  
10 restrictions on vegetation, which the  
11 Commission does also, but this is in the  
12 Core; although, there are no restrictions,  
13 because development in the Core is prohibited  
14 and clearing for more development is  
15 prohibited, so there were no clearing limits  
16 established in the Core. The County would be  
17 also another entity to engage in a  
18 coordination, since they are an adjacent land  
19 owner, and the DEC, since the cutting of  
20 trees will impact the northern long-eared  
21 bat, which is an endangered species in  
22 Suffolk County.

23 So, the long-term plan of this type  
24 of a proposal is important to understand  
25 because this is not a one time event. If

1 this is authorized, the owner would need to  
2 continue forever, it would be expected  
3 forever, as long as these structures are  
4 there to manage vegetation so that it does no  
5 regrow. So, that's a management plan that's  
6 a long-term plan for all of these sites and  
7 staying on top of that, so that this issue  
8 doesn't occur, or that same concern doesn't  
9 come up again that the applicant is  
10 expressing now for the vegetation to regrow  
11 and to have the same issue in the future. So  
12 a more comprehensive review may be necessary  
13 for consideration for every parcel in the  
14 Pine Barrens, really, and that has,  
15 implications of how much vegetation will be  
16 really involved in being removed over the  
17 entire Pine Barrens or being managed to a  
18 certain extent so everybody has an  
19 understanding.

20  
21 Again, the precedent setting nature  
22 of this, you may see next week already the  
23 BOCES facility in Westhampton has submitted a  
24 similar type of application to you that we'll  
25 need to bring to your attention, because they

1  
2 have similar concerns, especially after the  
3 recent wildfires in that area and the  
4 sensitivity with their facility and making  
5 sure that there is a proper evacuation  
6 opportunity there.

7 Lastly, the applicant would need the  
8 ability to provide an extension, at this  
9 point, since the deadline is next month, and  
10 I don't think all of this review will be  
11 completed by that time, especially if you are  
12 looking to coordinate this application with  
13 other agencies.

14 So, if you have any questions, I'm  
15 happy to answer.

16 MS. JAKOBSEN: Does anyone have any  
17 questions?

18 MS. MOORE: Is the one foot is what  
19 is being requested? I know on the map you  
20 have a 30 foot radius and 100 foot.

21 MS. HARGRAVE: I think it was brought  
22 up at one point. The 100 feet for most of  
23 these properties extends into land that the  
24 applicant does not own. So, they would be  
25 able to amend the vegetation without

1  
2 authorization of that ownership. In most  
3 cases the County and, again, in some cases it  
4 might be the Commission also owns easements  
5 on adjacent properties, or maybe the Town  
6 also.

7 So, again, the radius maps are meant  
8 to depict some of the practices that wild and  
9 urban practices that occur in other places in  
10 the country and where that could be possible,  
11 but it may not really be feasible for some of  
12 those parcels. Some range around the  
13 buildings might be possible but not really  
14 extending into properties that the applicant  
15 doesn't own and the Commission doesn't own.

16 MS. JAKOBSEN: Usually when you're  
17 looking at a parcel and you're applying these  
18 zones, a lot of parcels are not large enough  
19 to be able to -- it will say to the property  
20 line. You didn't have control over what was  
21 beyond the property line. So, 100 feet is  
22 their property line. It will just be to the  
23 property line.

24 MR. MILAZZO: With that said, Judy,  
25 I'm looking at the pictures. Wouldn't it

1  
2 then be the application really only on two  
3 parcels? The application would only be  
4 parcel 28.001 and 38.008, because all the  
5 others seem to be cleared to his limits, with  
6 the exception of parcel 3.1 and 4.2. But  
7 they have vegetation on the easterly side,  
8 which is adjacent to a road, which is a fire  
9 break greater than what he is asking to do.  
10 Can't we narrow it down?

11 MS. JAKOBSEN: Which are you looking  
12 at?

13 MR. MILAZZO: I'm looking at Julie's  
14 Exhibit B as in boy. I'm using the lot  
15 numbers. Exhibit B as in boy, the first  
16 picture is of parcel 11.004 -- Lot Number  
17 11.004. That parcel on the westerly side is  
18 cleared to the property limit, the property  
19 line. The property on the easterly side has  
20 trees, but then it has a paved 50 foot at  
21 least road, which is equal to or greater than  
22 what he is seeking to clear, which is going  
23 to be defensible, which would be maintained  
24 by the fire department.

25 So, the next one is 28.001. There is

1  
2 some vegetation on the westerly side. The  
3 easterly side does has trees and, again,  
4 adjoins a clear area. So, that one wouldn't  
5 necessarily be -- 28.1 has vegetation on the  
6 west.

7 MS. JAKOBSEN: Sorry to interrupt.  
8 You have to also look at the most critical  
9 zone is within that five feet around the  
10 building.

11 MR. MILAZZO: Okay.

12 MS. JAKOBSEN: That's where you will  
13 have flaming embers to potentially land. And  
14 more structures are lost from flaming embers  
15 that travel a mile or two from the flaming  
16 front and land on the property. So, you do  
17 have to look around the structure itself.  
18 That's probably the most critical part,  
19 around that structure. And depending also  
20 what the composition of the structure is: Is  
21 it metal, is it wood, is it vinyl siding.  
22 And the nature of the roof, is it fire  
23 resistant? The windows, are they double  
24 pane, things along that line.

25 So, the structural elements you look

1  
2 at also. But in terms of the vegetation  
3 management, you do have to look around at  
4 what's right against the building.

5 MR. MILAZZO: Fair enough. I'm just  
6 trying to focus Mr. Gazza's conversation and  
7 presentation to the Commission on parcels  
8 that have vegetation, intact vegetation on  
9 the westerly side rather than the easterly  
10 side. Perhaps we can dispense of some of  
11 these parcels and have a more focused  
12 conversation on parcels that are relevant.

13 Mr. Gazza, it's your time. Keep that  
14 in mind.

15 MR. GAZZA: Good afternoon,  
16 Commission Members. My name is Joe Gazza. I  
17 reside at 5 Ogden Lane in Quogue. I built  
18 personally the buildings that are the subject  
19 of today's hearing before you. There's  
20 actually 14 buildings on six parcels of land  
21 all on the Old Riverhead Road, across the  
22 street from your facility, which is the  
23 Suffolk County Water Authority. You can see  
24 quite a bite of me since the wildfires of  
25 March of this year, because I did suffer a

1  
2 loss of one of my buildings and I had  
3 tremendous problems with insurance, tenants,  
4 etcetera. I have learned a lot since March  
5 about the whole process, and I've learned a  
6 lot about the fires themselves. I have  
7 learned that the fires are going to occur  
8 again. They occur periodically, every 6 to  
9 20 years. I have learned that the fires are  
10 particularly dangerous in the dwarf pine  
11 plains, because the vegetation is lower and  
12 it ignites faster and it's a rolling ball of  
13 fire, and it has a tremendous amount of  
14 needles with turpentine in them, like  
15 gasoline. So, it's a very difficult place to  
16 have buildings. Now, you may ask why the  
17 buildings are there? They were there for 35  
18 years already. So, they were built before a  
19 Pine Barrens Commission, before all this  
20 knowledge was available.

21 As the owner of the buildings, I'm  
22 trying to protect my interest. My life  
23 savings is at stake here. You have seen  
24 photographs. Some Commission members have  
25 actually inspected the damage that can occur

1  
2 when a wildfire occurs. I'm very concerned  
3 that it is going to happen again, and I want  
4 to have some protection of my property.

5 I have been in touch with many of  
6 firefighters, the fire district, and they are  
7 equally concerned, because they are  
8 firefighters which immediately respond to  
9 these type of emergencies and put their lives  
10 on the line to protect life and property.  
11 Property being my buildings, and life being  
12 the people who are still in the buildings or  
13 haven't evacuated or other people in the  
14 area.

15 So, we had a dangerous situation. It  
16 has to be addressed. I have appealed to the  
17 Commission for to you address it by doing  
18 prescribed burns, like creating buffers, by  
19 giving some protection between your Pine  
20 Barrens forest and the industrial buildings  
21 of Joe Gazza along the road.

22 I guess other people are now equally  
23 concerned. I know that the Hospice Center of  
24 Southampton had damage right up to their  
25 building; they're right down the street from

1  
2 me. The BOCES school, which has hundreds of  
3 children is right on the edge of the Pine  
4 Barrens. You have a situation that has to be  
5 addressed. I know that it hasn't been  
6 addressed up to now. The area south of  
7 Sunrise Highway and west of the Old Riverhead  
8 Road, nothing has really been done. There  
9 have been several wildfires, but the latest  
10 one is very important to me because I lost a  
11 building and it brought me before you today.

12 Now, I have prepared and submitted to  
13 Julie photographs of each of my buildings,  
14 the vegetation. They are superimposed on tax  
15 maps, so that you know where my properties  
16 are. It's on a map behind me, which I  
17 probably have access to. I only found out  
18 through the process of preparing this, and I  
19 had meetings with the Pine Barrens  
20 Commission, representatives of the fire  
21 people, and they talked to me and they said,  
22 You know, the Pine Barrens Commission has  
23 created a brochure that addresses these very  
24 concerns that I had. I never knew this  
25 brochure existed. I only found out about it

1  
2 a month or so ago. This brochure, which is  
3 published by your Commission, paid for by  
4 your Commission, it talks about measures to  
5 protect property and life next to the Pine  
6 Barrens in case of a fire.

7 I got an education reading this, but  
8 I also got an education in that no one ever  
9 provided this information to me from the Pine  
10 Barrens. Based on this brochure, there must  
11 be knowledge to everyone about the zones, the  
12 protections zones of the buffer, what's  
13 necessary to protect property and people,  
14 because you published it. However -- and I  
15 think Mr. Romaine brought this up at one of  
16 the meetings. He said it pertains to homes.  
17 It doesn't pertain to commercial buildings.

18 Now, some of my buildings they have  
19 24 hour people living in the buildings,  
20 working on the buildings. They need  
21 protection, just like somebody living in a  
22 home. I thought that to simplify this whole  
23 process, my appearance before you and all the  
24 work that had to go into this. If the  
25 Commission, by resolution, applied your

1 brochure to homes to commercial buildings.  
2 You know, I don't expect to go off my own  
3 property. As Judy Jakobsen said, I'm not  
4 going off my own property, I can't do that.  
5 I can't go on someone else's property. I  
6 wouldn't think of doing that. But there has  
7 to be zones of protection around my  
8 buildings. Right now, there's no zone.

10 When I built the buildings 35 years  
11 ago, there was a zone, because I cleared  
12 around the buildings to construct the  
13 buildings. There was enough area for a  
14 transit mix truck to go around and pour  
15 concrete, because all of my buildings are  
16 concrete. But over the 35 years, because of  
17 the Pine Barrens Act and prohibition against  
18 disturbing vegetation, which I strictly  
19 adhere to, the vegetation is now up to the  
20 walls on most of my buildings. Right up to  
21 the walls. That was clearly shown in the  
22 photos of the building that was in the path  
23 of the last wildfire. That's why the  
24 building burned, because there was no  
25 protection between my building and the Pine

1  
2 Barrens. Not on my property, not on the Pine  
3 Barrens forest. It's just a dangerous  
4 situation.

5 I know that in my submission I asked  
6 for 30 feet, 70 feet, 60 feet, up to 100  
7 feet. But after reading the booklet, I think  
8 at least, at a minimum, you should give the  
9 same protection to commercial buildings that  
10 you give to residences. There are guidelines  
11 about what types of trees and trimming and  
12 construction. I could follow these  
13 guidelines, I could live with this, but I  
14 can't live with nothing. If you're not going  
15 to give protection to commercial buildings  
16 with people in them, my buildings are going  
17 to be at risk, the occupants are going to be  
18 at risk, the firefighters who attempt to  
19 control the fires are going to be at risk,  
20 and the Commission is going to be at risk for  
21 not handling a situation that I believe  
22 you're charged with handling to preserve and  
23 protect not only the Pine Barrens but the  
24 economic buildings in the Pine Barrens.

25 So, I don't want to get into an

1  
2 argument about not letting me clear, letting  
3 me clear. I need something. If you're not  
4 going to take it upon the Commission to  
5 create a buffer or prescribe berms, you have  
6 to let me do something to protect my  
7 buildings. I think this would be a minimum.  
8 It might be the easiest for your Commission.  
9 Why don't we start with this and I'll see how  
10 it goes, how I can trim the bushes, trim the  
11 trees, cut back vegetation. They talk about  
12 lawn no higher than four inches for 30 feet.  
13 Give that to a house, you can't give that to  
14 a commercial building? It would be  
15 unreasonable not to apply the same rules.

16 Now, I prepared a few statements, as  
17 far as the hardship, because I know that this  
18 is a hardship hearing today. I have studied  
19 Section 57-121 Part 10 talks about conditions  
20 that an applicant must comply with to obtain  
21 extraordinary hardship permit. There has to  
22 be a beneficial use that is being preserved.  
23 Well, certainly my buildings are a beneficial  
24 use to the occupants and to me, and I'm  
25 asking to protect and preserve them.

1  
2 My desire is only to clear what's  
3 adjacent to the buildings, not off the  
4 property. Only sufficient amount to give my  
5 buildings some fire protection. It took the  
6 section -- I talk about the character of the  
7 area. Well, we know that it's all Pine  
8 Barrens Core. There's no dispute about that.  
9 But we can't have Core right up to the wall  
10 of my building. There's got to be a little  
11 buffer there.

12 Now, the fires that occurred, I had  
13 nothing do with them. They are not a result  
14 of my actions in any way. I mean, if you  
15 want to consider that, there's a hardship. I  
16 have no control over that. They're going to  
17 periodically occur. When it's dry and when  
18 it's windy, it's going to happen. The land  
19 in the Pine Barrens is as flat as a pancake  
20 over there. When those fires get rolling,  
21 it's going to roll over there like a  
22 steamroller. There has to be a buffer.

23 The clearing. The Section C, small  
24 letter i is not going to adversely affect  
25 public safety, it's going to help public

1  
2 safety. If we have a little clearing, it's  
3 going to make it safer for those firefighters  
4 to give them a mitigation area where they can  
5 hold back the flames, and hopefully it's not  
6 too windy.

7 The clearing is consistent with  
8 protecting and management. Article 57 talks  
9 about your duty to protect and to manage.  
10 Certainly a small amount of clearing next to  
11 the buildings is protecting and managing. I  
12 believe that the Section 57-103 provides that  
13 it's the Commission's duty to preserve and  
14 protect and protect the economic value of  
15 region. I'm asking you to step up to that  
16 duty, to help me in this situation.

17 I'm available for questions. Julie,  
18 thank you. Your booklet is a beautiful job.  
19 She did an excellent presentation. It's  
20 great. I could use that for court.  
21 Beautiful job. It looks professional. I  
22 hope we don't have to go there. Let's try to  
23 reach a piece to give me some protection.  
24 I'm going to bear the expense. I'm going to  
25 do the clearing of the vegetation. I'm not

1 asking you for the money. I'm going to do it  
2 to save my buildings. So, I'm not asking  
3 much. Those other people want \$20 million,  
4 \$40 million?  
5

6 MR. ROMAINE: \$20 million for new  
7 headquarters.

8 MR. GAZZA: Was it 2,000 square foot  
9 or something? As a sidelight, I built a  
10 school in Southampton 25 years ago for my  
11 wife, the Montessori School. Very similar to  
12 the design that the other applicants were --  
13 partially sunk into the ground, solar panels,  
14 modern technology. At that time it cost  
15 about \$300 a square foot. That was 25 years  
16 ago. Ms. Moore said about \$900. Well, my  
17 builder friends claim that \$1,000 a foot is a  
18 mansion in Southampton. That's the top  
19 number.

20 MR. ROMAINE: They want to build a  
21 super mansion.

22 MR. GAZZA: Back to my case. I'm  
23 asking for, pleading with you to give me some  
24 relief. Let's not fight about this. Give me  
25 something. Let me do this to start, see how

1  
2 it works out. Thank you for the time this  
3 afternoon.

4 MS. JAKOBSEN: I just wanted to  
5 clarify something. That brochure was for a  
6 specific funded project and it was geared  
7 towards residences. But this overall  
8 application of fire-wise principles, it  
9 applies to structures. They no longer just  
10 call it for homes. They refer to it now as  
11 applying it to structural addition zones. It  
12 applies for business, homes, any structure.  
13 I just wanted to clarify that for you.

14 MR. GAZZA: Are we in agreement that  
15 they have Zones 1, 2 and 3 classifications of  
16 vegetation.

17 MS. JAKOBSEN: You also have to  
18 understand, the ultimate protection is when  
19 those harden, the structure, when they have  
20 an opportunity, especially when they're going  
21 to need to do repairs or upgrades, especially  
22 then they look at what the construction  
23 material is of the building, what the siding  
24 is, what the windows, all of that, and put in  
25 the more fire resistant materials in place.

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2 Some of your buildings are metal. Metal  
3 doesn't burn. But you have to also make sure  
4 that any openings on any of those buildings  
5 are sealed, secured, because those embers are  
6 going to get in there. But anyway, I just  
7 wanted to clarify.

8 MR. GAZZA: I think we have all  
9 learned a lot since the March wildfire. I  
10 have. I'm going to do whatever I can to  
11 protect my buildings. I want to do it within  
12 the law, and that's why I'm appealing to you  
13 to give me a little latitude for clearing,  
14 which is development under your Act. Only on  
15 my property, close to my buildings. That's  
16 what I'm asking for.

17 Thank you for your time this  
18 afternoon. If there's any questions, I'll be  
19 glad to remain. I'm probably on the clock  
20 with the stenographer.

21 MS. DIBRITA: I have a question. If  
22 you were to be granted the permission to  
23 clear, what would you put in its place?

24 MR. GAZZA: Grass, four inches off  
25 the ground, just like it shows in the

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brochure.

MS. DIBRITA: Just where are you looking to clear?

MR. GAZZA: The center page it talks about Zone 1. It says, "Keep your lawn mowed to four inches high." That's it. That would be my proposal.

MR. ROMAINE: Thank you.

MR. GAZZA: Thank you Board Members.

MS. JAKOBSEN: Public comment.  
Anyone from the public wish to speak at this time?

Nina.

MS. LEONHARDT: Thank you for a few minutes. As I said in the last few meetings, we have rules, and we can understand concerns that are addressed. How are we protecting the Pine Barrens, if we keep allowing these hardships, which each one has to be considered independently, which you do. The staff established a report and, obviously, there's still questions remaining. It sounds like there will be an extension here and nothing will be discussed today, but I would

1  
2 ask the Commissioners to keep in mind that  
3 the rules, the standards that were put in  
4 place after much debate and much thought have  
5 to stand for something. If we keep allowing  
6 them to be overridden by the hardship, how  
7 many of the situations that came up today are  
8 going to come back with a hardship waiver  
9 request? We have to keep that in mind.  
10 Thank you.

11 MS. JAKOBSEN: John, are we going to  
12 close the hearing, leave it for comment?  
13 What are we doing?

14 MR. MILAZZO: I suggest closing the  
15 hearing. The deadline is -- Mr. Gazza, would  
16 you be inclined to grant an extension to,  
17 let's, the say February meeting? That way  
18 we're able to get everyone squared away here.

19 MR. GAZZA: Yes.

20 MR. MILAZZO: I would close the  
21 hearing today, keep public comment period  
22 open for two weeks. I would make it three  
23 weeks, because next week is Thanksgiving. It  
24 will give the Committee the time with the  
25 extension. We'll hold it open until

1  
2 December 10th, and then we can, on the 17th,  
3 have a further discussion or the Commission  
4 can continue to deliberate on the information  
5 that has been provided today.

6 MS. MOORE: I just had one last  
7 question for Mr. Gazza. Ms. Jakobsen has  
8 mentioned some prevention measures for the  
9 buildings themselves. I'm wondering if your  
10 building had incorporated any of these  
11 things, like five foot from the foundation of  
12 noncombustible materials?

13 MR. GAZZA: I have been open with all  
14 my tenants. We have no more outside storage  
15 of any nature that I'm going to allow outside  
16 of the buildings. There is not going to be  
17 any flammable material: Wood, paper,  
18 cardboard, anything, even dumpsters. We  
19 don't want anything next to the buildings or  
20 within 30 feet of the buildings there could  
21 be flammable.

22 My buildings are all masonry, but  
23 they do have steel decking, corrugated roofs  
24 with built-up asphalt. Yes, when embers get  
25 up there, it starts a fire. That is a

1  
2 typical roofing that is placed on all  
3 commercial buildings. I don't know how I'm  
4 going to get around that. The walls  
5 themselves are all brick and block, which  
6 give me a big benefit. It has a bermming  
7 (sic). I know there's pros and cons with the  
8 bermming (sic). One firefighter said the  
9 flames may be able to go up the berm. But I  
10 feel that the bermming gives at least eight  
11 feet of building protection from having heat  
12 or fire getting into it. It's pros and cons.  
13 But outside, it's going to be cleaned up.  
14 I'd love to trim the vegetation all around.

15 MS. MOORE: The siding is  
16 noncombustible, you said?

17 MR. GAZZA: It's all masonry. It's  
18 block and brick. The roofs are all  
19 combustible. I can't change that. That's a  
20 standard roof for a commercial building. If  
21 I'm building a house, I might consider a  
22 metal roof. They have knew metal roofs.

23 MS. JAKOBSEN: Are they asphalt  
24 shingles?

25 MR. GAZZA: No, it's built up.

1  
2 Asphalt comes in a roll with hot tar. They  
3 roll it out in layer. It's four inches of  
4 Styrofoam underneath on top of the metal  
5 decking, and then it's built-up asphalt rolls  
6 of hot tar, several layers. That's the  
7 typical construction for commercial  
8 buildings.

9 MR. ROMAINE: I'll make a motion to  
10 close the public hearing and keep comments  
11 open for three weeks.

12 MS. JAKOBSEN: Is there a second?

13 MS. MOORE: Second.

14 MS. JAKOBSEN: All in favor.

15 (WHEREUPON, there was a unanimous  
16 affirmative vote of the Board.)

17 MS. JAKOBSEN: Any opposed?

18 Motion carries unanimously.

19 (Time Ended: 3:45 p.m.)

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November 19, 2025

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, BETHANNE MENNONNA, a Notary Public within and for the State of New York do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the proceedings, as taken stenographically by myself to the best of my ability, at the time and place aforementioned.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 8th day of December, 2025.

*BethAnne Mennonna*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
BETHANNE MENNONNA