

The Mayor and Council of Middletown

General Administration

19 W. Green Street

Middletown, DE 19709



PLANNING & ZONING MEETING

JANUARY 15, 2026

ATTENDEES: **David Chillas, Chair**
Morris Deputy, Town Manager
Frank Bailey, Fire Chief
Donald Dibert
Don Hall
Chuck McCausland
Jenn Parrish
Joe Pontak
Gretchen Rachko
Keith Thompson

AGENDA:

1. 105 E. Cochran Street – Conditional Use Permit request for an auto detailing building/garage (Detail Works) in an R-1A zoned area. CU-01-26. Tax Parcel No. 23-0009.00-046.

Brandon Parrott is seeking approval to build a 30' x 40' building to operate his auto detailing business at 105 E. Cochran Street.

- Mr. Parrott indicated his business is low volume, with three to four automobiles per week. A typical complete detail is 5 to 7 hours.
- Paint correction and ceramic coating jobs can take five to seven days and he usually only has about one per week.
- His current shop is on Industrial Drive; business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. He said his business does not create excess noise. He is moving because commercial rent is high.
- Clients will not be dropping off or picking up vehicles on the street; all estimates, pickups and drop-offs will be scheduled.

Jenn Parrish asked for additional information on the types of products, chemicals, etc., and if any aerosol paint would be used.

Mr. Parrott said just normal detailing products: car wash soap, compounds and polishes, extractor shampoo, window cleaners. He indicated he will not be painting cars; the touch-up paint is available in any auto parts store; no aerosol paint will be used.

Gretchen Rachko asked if the building is existing or if it will be constructed.

Mr. Parrott said the existing structure is a carport-type structure that will be removed. The existing concrete pad will be removed.

Ms. Rachko pointed out, the code allows a detached garage as an accessory use in the R-1A zoning district.

Mr. Deputy explained Mr. Parrott is requesting Conditional Use approval to operate his business on-site, based on the list of businesses allowed in the R-1A residential district – not just to construct the building, but to use it as a business.

Mr. Deputy further indicated Mr. Parrott will have to get a building permit for the building and comply with building requirements, such as set-backs and proper utility and drain hookups.

Jenn Parrish asked if any other car detailing businesses are in a residential area.

Mr. Deputy said the only one the Town has record of was for a mobile unit in an R-1A district, but not a separate building.

Kristen Krenzer said the business approved on S. Broad Street was approved in 2011 and operated with a mobile unit.

Don Dibert commented it's no more than a homeowner washing or waxing his car at home.

Keith Thompson said his biggest concern was the amount of traffic that might be generated, but there are other businesses listed that could generate more traffic.

Ms. Rachko asked what type of equipment would be used and if any generators would be onsite. Mr. Parrott said vacuums, no generators, just normal electric would be used. He said he does have an air compressor that will be kept in the bathroom, to help keep noise down.

Ms. Parrish questioned the carwash operation, type of soap used and if he would be doing anything with motor oil, grease, heavy metals from break dust, etc.

Mr. Parrott said he will have a wash mat inside which contains the water. The water can then be pumped out onto the grass – the EPA recommends, even for at-home carwashes, it be done on gravel or grass which acts as a natural filter. He said he would not be doing anything with oil, grease, etc.

Ms. Parrish indicated certain carwash soaps contain phosphates that are harmful to the environment.

Tommy Jacobs, resident at 105 S. Cox Street, voiced his opposition for the auto detail shop next to his property:

- The structure will be located 20 feet from his house.
- Noise pollution from the compressors and pressure washes which all exceed 90 decibels.
- Oily and carcinogenic wastewater runoff onto his property.
- Zoning is in place to protect the community. Running this type of business close to residential homes is disrespectful and dangerous.
- A blacktop driveway will be installed; all the soap and chemicals coming off the engine and car will drain onto his property.
- He respectfully requests the committee to protect the community and deny the rezoning request.

Whitney Jacobs, resident at 105 S. Cox, adjacent to Mr. Parrott's property read a statement expressing her concerns with the auto detail shop in a residential neighborhood:

- Mr. Parrott does not own 105 E. Cochran Street nor is his name on the deed for the property.
- The EPA shows that auto body operations emit volatile organic compounds and hazardous air pollutants.
- Auto paints, no matter what they are, contain toxic substances. Without proper ventilation, toxic vapors can pose inhalation and health risks. The CDC indicates sanding and polishing metals can remain airborne.
- Noise created by compressors and other tools is over 85 decibels.

- OSHA mentions flammable chemicals used in detailing significantly increase fire and explosion risk when stored or used outside of purpose-built commercial facilities.
- This business will add to the already increased traffic on E. Cochran Street.
- Approving this rezoning will change the character, integrity, and safety of the neighborhood, place an unnecessary burden on the families in the area; and pose health risks to the environment.
- Ms. Jacobs respectfully requested the committee deny the application and protect the well-being of the community.

Keith Thompson corrected the comments referring to the application as a rezoning. The property is zoned residential and a commercial business is allowed under certain conditions.

Chuck McCausland questioned the number of cars per week and if any sanding will be done. Mr. Parrott said he anticipates three or four cars a week and no sanding will be done; he said this is not a body shop.

Mr. McCausland asked if the garage could be moved about ten feet from the property line. Parrott responded he can move the building further as long as he can get the driveway in.

The committee discussed the motion and moving the building further away from the neighbors. They questioned if setbacks pertained to businesses.

Mr. Deputy responded the code requires a five-foot setback restriction for accessory structures; there are no set-back restrictions for a particular business. He indicated the committee could include in their recommendation to Council that the building be moved further from the property line.

Ms. Rachko, following up on the OSHA comments, indicated in the zoning code, under general provisions, states approvals may be granted providing the use will not "Affect adversely the health or safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood".

Clarification on the motion discussion. Jenn Parrish asked if a condition for approval will be to move the building closer to his (Parrott's) residence. The response was yes.

General discussion on the type of products the average resident has in their garage.

Frank Bailey commented the car wash itself is not flammable; painting will not be done and the paint to be used is a very small amount. He will probably have nothing more than the typical resident would have in their garage.

Don Hall asked what the height of the structure will be.

Mr. Parrott said about eighteen (18) feet.

Mr. Jacobs asked if the vacuum would be outside. He questioned if the compressor will be put in the bathroom, can the vacuum be put there too.

Mr. Parrott said he is pretty sure he can put the vacuum in the bathroom or an enclosed room.

Moved by Keith Thompson and seconded by Chuck McCausland to recommend Mayor and Council approve 105 E. Cochran Street, Conditional Use Permit request for an auto detailing business/garage (Detail Works) in an R-1A zoned area, with the condition the building is placed further away from the property line if possible. CU-01-26. Tax Parcel 23-009.00-046. Motion Carried 6 - 1.

Gretchen Rachko voted "Nay" based on the provision in the code that it would adversely affect the health or safety of persons residing or working in the neighborhood.

Jenn Parrish did not vote because she felt she did not have enough information to vote comfortably.

(It was confirmed the motion included the condition as stated.)

2. 17 Wood Street, Unit 39 – Conditional Use Permit request for an indoor playground (The Cozy Play Corner) in a C-2 zoned area. Indoor playground is designed for children 8 months to 7 years old. Play areas may contain slides and climbing structures. CU-02-26. Tax Parcel No. 23-005.00-038.

Anthony Solis requested approval to allow an indoor children's soft-play center designed for children 8 months through 7 years old at 17 Wood Street with slides and padded/soft play equipment, and age-appropriate toys for children. There are no trampolines or ball pits.

Jenn Parrish asked if it will be similar to Natural Nest.

Mr. Solis indicated it's similar but different; Natural Nest is geared more for one-to-two-year-olds with wooden structures.

Don Dibert asked if parents would be there with their kids and how many parking spaces are available, as other businesses use the parking too.

Mr. Solis said yes, parents will be with their children. Thirty-three parking spaces are available on the interior lot with 53 in the overflow area.

Mr. Deputy commented there is parking near the railroad track also.

Dave Chillas asked what hours are proposed.

Mr. Solis indicated weekends possibly 9 a.m. to 6:30 or 7 p.m.; Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. or 12 p.m. until about 5 p.m.; the hours will be reduced because most children will be in school. This business would not technically align with night-life.

Joe Pontak asked if the layout inside is changing and what capacity is proposed.

Mr. Solis indicated the layout is currently wide-open. A bathroom will be installed and an emergency exit door added as well. The landlord mentioned the space is proposed for two separate businesses. A false wall will be installed between the two businesses and a new emergency exit will be added in the back.

Maximum capacity will be determined by the Fire Marshal. He said they would be targeting 40 to 50 families throughout the day and less on weekends.

Moved by Joe Pontak and seconded by Jenn Parrish to recommend Mayor and Council approve 17 Wood Street, Unit 39, Conditional Use Permit request for an indoor playground (The Cozy Play Corner) in a C-2 zoned area. Indoor playground is designed for children 8 months to 7 years old. Play areas may contain slides and climbing structures. CU-02-26. Tax Parcel No. 23-005.00-038. Motion Carried Unanimously.

3. 301 Business Park North (northwest intersection of Warwick Road and Middle Neck Road) Amended Major Land Development Plan for a 2.4 million+/- square-foot, single-story e-commerce fulfillment center with an interior mezzanine, which will replace/supersede the previously-recorded plan dated December 6, 2025, at this location. The amended plan

submission contemplates all necessary changes to site improvements, utility infrastructure and stormwater management for this new building. Tax Parcel No. 23-073.00-001.

Alex Escamilla with Bluewater Property Group, a development partner with Amazon, presented the amended plan on behalf of Amazon, the current owner of the property.

- As indicated, the site is located at the intersection of Warwick Road and Middle Neck Road.
- The plan approved and recorded for the site was a multi-story facility, approximately 110 feet high with five stories. The concept used a different type of handling equipment and conveying system.
- Being presented tonight is a new iteration of a facility with the exact same use and functionality, but in a different type of box.
- Amazon's new prototype is a single-story facility with an interior mezzanine. The reason for the change is enhanced worker-safety and less areas for conflict, as well as for a shorter, more standard warehouse.
- The new plan proposes a 1.2 million square-foot facility, approximately 50 feet high.
- The employment numbers are approximately 750 full time employees with an average salary of \$22.50 per hour.
- A conceptual rendering was presented.
- The total impervious ratio is generally the same; parking spaces and trailer spaces are slightly reduced; fewer trips during the a.m. and p.m. peak hours are proposed.

Jenn Parrish questioned the 1.2 million square-foot facility versus the 2.4 million on the agenda. Ms. Escamilla indicated the foot print for the building is 1.2 million and the mezzanine inside the building gives a total of 2.4 million+/- square-feet.

Frank Bailey asked if the two water tanks on the property will be necessary with the height reduction.

Ms. Escamilla said the tanks would be required because of the sprinkler system inside the building, they tanks provide redundancy as well as make sure enough water is held onsite for any event to be completely taken out before a fire truck arrives.

Frank Bailey questioned the elevator access to the mezzanines. He asked if those "kinks" have been worked out with this plan.

Ms. Escamilla indicated the bulk of the mezzanine use is non-occupiable area and will have to be ADA compliant and provide other ways to access that area. The primary access will be stairs. She asked if the concern was primarily for emergency personnel access.

Chief Bailey said the issue is getting a stretcher to the area; there is no elevator at the Merrimac Road facility, it's all stairs. The thought was to have an elevator like the Boxwood plant.

Ms. Escamilla indicated they will have to meet ADA requirements. She said she would get back to him about the exact locations of the elevators; that will be addressed at building permit stage. The mezzanines are primarily occupied on the perimeter rather than the middle.

Chief Bailey asked if this new prototype, the GEN 14, is finished anywhere.

Ms. Escamilla said not this particular iteration, but something very similar has been built in several locations. The main difference is a higher functioning technology inside. Amazon has a lot of bulk warehouses with interior mezzanines. The one in Middletown is an older iteration, probably in the "9" Generation.

Joe Pontak asked Chief Bailey if he was okay with the elevator situation.

Chief Bailey said it was discussed in detail when they visited the Boxwood plant. He said he looks forward, as the plan is being developed, to figuring out the access and what can be done to make it work.

Ms. Escamilla asked Chief Bailey if his concern is primarily for public safety and access.

Chief Bailey responded his main concern is bringing injured workers down; the tool elevator at the Merrimac facility isn't suitable. Almost all the mezzanine area had access to the elevator at the Boxwood plant.

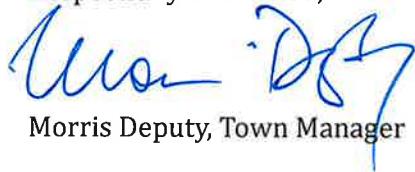
Ms. Escamilla indicated she would follow up.

Moved by Chuck McCausland and seconded by Gretchen Rachko to recommend Mayor and Council approve 301 Business Park North (northwest intersection of Warwick Road and Middle Neck Road) Amended Major Land Development Plan for a 2.4 million+/- square-foot, single-story e-commerce fulfillment center with an interior mezzanine, which will replace/supersede the previously-recorded plan dated December 6, 2025, at this location. The amended plan submission contemplates all necessary changes to site improvements, utility infrastructure and stormwater management for this new building. Tax Parcel No. 23-073.00-001. Motion Carried 7 - 0. Keith Thompson recused himself.

We believe these minutes accurately reflect what transpired; however, we will appreciate comments involving a different understanding of what occurred. Unless we are notified in writing to the contrary within 10 days after receipt, we will assume all in attendance concur with the accuracy of this transcription.

Moved by Gretchen Rachko and seconded by Don Dibert to adjourn. Motion Carried Unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Morris Deputy, Town Manager

Ry - 1/22/26
Cc: Mayor & Council
P & Z Members
All Attendees
Verdantas