



**RESOLUTION 2025-23**  
**ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**  
**of the TOWNSHIP OF VERONA**

Application 2025-10 546 Bloomfield Avenue (a/k/a 10 Park Place) Block 1703, Lot 68  
Zone: TCMU

WHEREAS, Palmetto Venues (the “Applicant”) made an application to the Verona Zoning Board to allow the Applicant to use a portion of the building on the property known as 546 Bloomfield Avenue, Verona, New Jersey (the “Property”) to continue the operation of approximately 3,000 square feet of the building on the Property (the “Premises”) as a private event-rental venue with related assembly space and kitchenette facilities; and

WHEREAS, the Property is located in the TCMU Zone on the Township of Verona zoning map; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to § 150-17.14(A) of the Verona Zoning Code, an event rental venue is not a permitted use in the TCMU Zone, and therefore the Applicant sought a use variance under N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70(d)(1) to permit such use; and

WHEREAS, the Application was heard by the Zoning Board of Adjustment at a duly noticed public meeting held on October 16, 2025, at which time Board Attorney Gregory Mascera confirmed that statutory notice and publication requirements were properly satisfied and that the Application was complete for hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Applicant was represented by counsel, Nicholas Palma, Esq.; and

WHEREAS, Departmental reviews were received by the Board from the following Township officials, all dated September 19, 2025:

- Chief of Police Christopher Kiernan,
- Fire Official Matthew Gifford, and
- Construction Official Thomas Jacobsen

WHEREAS, Robert Louis and Nancy Louis testified as owners and operators of the Applicant and the Applicant presented testimony from Samuel Bellamy, P.P., AICP, professional planner with Dresner Robin; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Louis and Dr. Louis testified that they have backgrounds in healthcare, cancer research and event planning. They informed the Board that they followed procedural protocol to obtain approval from the Township in 2023 for use of the Premises as an event space

and that the approval was subsequently revoked by the Township because the approval was, among other things, an ultra vires act of the then serving zoning official.

Mr. Louis informed the Board that he and Dr. Louis had secured a \$250,000 loan for renovations to the Premises in 2023 when approvals were first granted by the Township and that the renovations were completed soon thereafter.

Mr. Louis testified to the Board that either he or Dr. Louis is on site at all times during events. He further testified that the Premises consists of two ballrooms each with a kitchenette, bathrooms and security cameras. He testified that no food is prepared on site and that all activities during events are monitored by security cameras.

Mr. Louis acknowledged that the Applicant has received noise complaints and that the complaints were addressed by adjusting speaker placement and volume and that event holders are required to end music by 11p.m. He testified that the Applicant had hosted between 80 and 100 events between initial occupancy and February 2025 and that no citations had been issued for noise or other violations. He further testified that events are private and that occupancy is controlled by contract. Mr. Louis testified that the Applicant controls occupancy by restricting chair and table set ups. The Applicant further testified that the Applicant required users to hire a licensed bartender for all events in which alcohol was served; and

Thereafter, Dr. Louis testified about the operation of the business, the manner in which event holders were interviewed and screened prior to entering into contracts to utilize the space and the general nature of the business. She further testified that the Applicant recommends local caterers to event holders to attempt to advance the welfare of local businesses.

In response to questioning from the Board, Dr. Louis confirmed that the event Premises are sometimes used by event holders who sell admission tickets at the door. Dr. Louis testified that it was the responsibility of the event holder to limit the number of tickets sold and to restrict admission as per the terms of the event holders' contract with the Applicant. Dr. Louis otherwise supplemented Mr. Louis' testimony.

WHEREAS, thereafter Mr. Bellamy, accepted by the Board as a qualified planning expert, after being duly sworn, submitted three exhibits prepared by Dresner Robin dated October 16, 2025, marked A-1 through A-3, consisting of a photo log, an aerial photograph of the site, and an aerial photograph of the surrounding area. Mr. Bellamy testified that the Property contains approximately 3,000 square feet of floor area and is located within the TCMU Zone, that the existing space consists of two ballrooms with small kitchenettes and accessory bathrooms. He informed the Board that one of the two owners is on-site during events, and that security cameras are utilized at all times during events. He testified that based on a parking standard of 1 space per 100 square feet of assembly area, 30 parking spaces would normally be required to accommodate the Applicant's use, but no dedicated off-street parking exists for the site. He informed the Board that there is no off-street parking requirement in the TCMU zone. Mr. Bellamy further testified

that the Applicant's use of the Premises was consistent with other businesses in the Bloomfield Avenue corridor, citing nearby venues such as Richfield Regency, La Bella Princess Café, and Sabor Restaurant.

Mr. Bellamy opined that the proposed use was compatible with the Master Plan goals for revitalization of the downtown area and that the Applicant's had met their burden regarding the positive and negative criteria for a use variance; and

WHEREAS, members of the public including but not limited to Dex Polizzi, Emily Polizzi, Sharon O'Donnell, Thomas Monroe, and Dan Kaufmann questioned the witnesses after each witnesses' testimony and thereafter upon completion of the Application, made comments to the Board regarding the merits of the Application which were in all instances disfavorable. During such questioning it was revealed that the Police Department had responded to multiple noise complaints arising from use of the Premises and that there had been numerous complaints regarding late-night parking, loitering, crowd control, alcohol service, and the adequacy of security measures, and a serious disturbance occurred on March 15, 2025, involving gunfire in the parking area following an event; and

WHEREAS the Board established the following findings:

1. The Applicant is seeking a use variance to operate as an event rental space, which is not a permitted use in the TCMU Zone.
2. The prior zoning approval granted in March 2023 was inconsistent with zoning regulations and was rescinded by the Township as being wrongfully issued thereafter.
3. The Property is in a densely populated area close to residential zones, with access to a municipal parking lot but no dedicated on-site parking.
4. In addition to the non-conforming use, there are concerns about lack of windows, window tinting, absence of soundproofing, emergency exits, and compliance with building and fire codes for assembly use.
5. Mr. Bellamy's testimony was credible but did not adequately address concerns about parking, traffic, noise, security, and impact on the residential neighborhood.
6. The testimony offered was particular to the event rental use.
7. The Applicant did not meet its burden of proof regarding the use variance. The Applicant failed to prove the negative criteria – that the use could be granted without substantial detriment to the public good.
8. The Applicant did not meet its burden to prove the positive criteria – that the use promotes the general welfare or is particularly suited to the site given its proximity to residential areas and history of complaints.
9. The Board expressed concerns about noise, trash, traffic, parking, loitering, altercations, and lack of support for local vendors, and the potential for this approval to open the door to similar uses in mixed-use spaces near residential zones.

10. The proposed use would require 30 dedicated parking spaces for assembly use (1 space per 100 sq ft of gross floor area based on 3,000 sq ft), but relies entirely on the municipal lot and adjoining streets with no guaranteed availability, leading to simultaneous arrivals and departures that exacerbate traffic and parking issues.
11. No professional noise study was conducted, and the Applicant's reactive measures (e.g., moving speakers, turning down volume after complaints) are insufficient to prevent ongoing violations of Verona's noise ordinances, as evidenced by the Police Chief's review noting persistent and willful neglect.
12. The venue lacks security guards, metal detectors, or external cameras, and relies solely on internal cameras and on-site owners, which is inadequate for events with up to 151 occupants, especially given the March 15, 2025 shooting incident in the adjacent municipal lot.
13. The Applicant's operation does not substantially support local TC Zone vendors, as patrons arrive for private events, consume catered food, and depart without patronizing nearby businesses.
14. The site's location is in a mixed-use building with apartments above and adjacent to residential units.
15. The Premises have tinted windows with no soundproofing which creates an incompatible intensity of use that disrupts the quiet enjoyment of neighboring properties.
16. Comparable venues cited by the planner (e.g., Richfield Regency) have dedicated parking or valet services, and are not situated in mixed-use buildings near residential zones, rendering the comparisons inapplicable.
17. The Applicant's failure to enforce strict occupancy controls (relying on tables/chairs rather than door counting) poses risks to public safety and code compliance.
18. Events advertised on social media as "pay at the door" with late-night buffets contradict claims of strictly private events and raise concerns about unvetted attendees and alcohol service oversight.
19. The Board finds that granting the variance would substantially impair the intent and purpose of the TCMU Zone Plan and the Verona Master Plan, which seek to balance commercial vitality with residential compatibility; and

WHEREAS, upon deliberation, the Board found that the Application failed to satisfy the positive and negative criteria of N.J.S.A. 40:55D-70(d)(1). The Board determined that:

1. The proposed use is not inherently beneficial and does not advance the purposes of zoning under N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2;
2. The Property lacks adequate on-site parking and loading, creating substantial detriment to the public good;

3. The Applicant's operations generated repeated noise and disturbance complaints, demonstrating an adverse effect on neighboring residential properties;

4. The use would substantially impair the intent and purpose of the TCMU Zone, which encourages pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development and not high-occupancy assembly venues; and

5. The Board was not satisfied that appropriate safeguards or professional management measures were in place to ensure ongoing compliance with Township regulations

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Zoning Board of Adjustment of the Township of Verona, County of Essex, State of New Jersey, that the Application of Palmetto Venues (Robert and Nancy Louis), Application No. 2025-10, seeking a use variance to permit the continued operation of an event-rental venue at 546 Bloomfield Avenue (a/k/a 10 Park Place), is hereby DENIED for the reasons set forth above; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board's decision is based upon the testimony, exhibits, and the entire record of the hearing, and that a copy of this Resolution shall be provided to the Applicant, the Township Manager, the Township Council, and the Township Clerk in accordance with law.

**MOTION TO APPROVE:** Mrs. DiBartolo

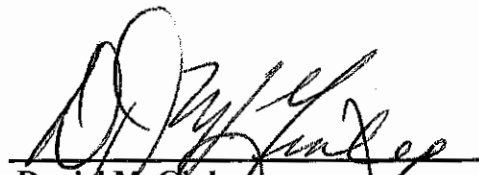
**SECOND:** Dr. Ries

**Roll Call Vote:**

	AYES	NAYS	ABSTAIN	RECUSED	NOT ELIGIBLE
Mr. Tully	X				
Dr. Ries	X				
Dr. Cuartas	X				
Mr. Ryan					X
Mrs. Murphy-Bradacs					X
Mr. Mathewson			X		
Mrs. DiBartolo	X				
Vice-Chair Weston	X				
Chair McGinley	X				

**THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND EXACT COPY OF A RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT OF REGULAR MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 16, 2025.**

  
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**Dolores Carpinelli**  
**Acting Board Secretary**

  
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**Daniel McGinley**  
**Chairman**