

Memo

To: Planning Board Chairperson Pearson and Secretary Carpinelli
Verona Planning Board

From: Plan Review Committee of the Verona Environmental Commission

c: Verona Environmental Commission Chair

Date: September 12, 2025

Re: **Case # 2025-02**
1 Wedgewood Drive [Block 1712, Lot 1]
Verona, New Jersey

Zone: A-1 (Low Rise Multi Family)

The Plan Review Committee of the Verona Environmental Commission (VEC) reviewed a three-page drawing set dated August 20, 2025 with drawings sheets titled, "existing conditions and tree removal plan," "tree replacement planting plan," and "details and notes," for 1 Wedgewood Drive in Verona submitted by Benjamin Ross Heller, which we received on September 11, 2025.

We understand that the Applicant is seeking remove more than two (2) healthy, mature trees in one calendar year, which, according to [§493-24](#) requires a review by and approval from the Planning Board. We note that the Applicant's revised plan proposes to remove 17 trees of varying sizes, had already removed 6 according to Verona's Forester Report on February 13, 2025, and damaged and removed at least two trees during construction. The comments below are provided for the Board's consideration:

- 1) We note that Mr. Heller is not listed as a Licensed Tree Expert (LTE) or a Licensed Tree Care Operator (LTCO) by the Official site of New Jersey's Board of Tree Experts, as required in [§493-26B](#). A properly registered and licensed LTE or LTCO should be engaged to prepare the Tree Replacement Plan with their license number documented on the Planning Board Application.
- 2) We also note that there is a table included on the Applicant's Page 3 drawing sheet titled, "Tree Table Per Arborist Report," without any citation information to the source or the source author's qualifications. We recommend that this issue be resolved before the Applicant goes before the Planning Board including the submission of the full arborist report. We ask for the credentials of the individual who prepared the arborist report.
- 3) We note that the tree protection, removal, and replacement article of §493 [amended in its entirety on February 6, 2023 by Ordinance No. 2023-06] does not excuse Applicants from replacements of trees deemed to be in "fair" condition. Likewise, the Ordinance does not give Applicants discretion to alter the number of tree replacements as set forth in [§493-28A](#). That section clearly states:

For each deciduous tree to be removed, that is:

- 1) 6 inches DPM but less than 16 inches, replacement shall be by a single replacement tree;
- 2) 16 inches DPM but less than 24 inches, replacement shall be by two replacement trees;
- 3) 24 inches DPM or greater, replacement shall be by four replacement trees.

For each coniferous tree to be removed, that is:

- 1) between 10 feet and under 25 feet in height, replacement shall be by a single replacement tree;
- 2) 25 feet and over in height, replacement shall be by two replacement trees.

- 4) Accordingly, replacement values as listed within the table titled, "Tree Removals" on Applicant's Sheet 1 show multiple trees having diameters of 24 inches or greater, with less than 4 replacement trees. This should be corrected according to the VEC Table 1 included with this memo.

- 5) The trees, as numbered on the Applicant's tables exhibit DPMs that do not correspond to the DPMs shown on the maps, according to the tree numbers on the site plans. These measurements appear to be the original and incorrect measurements as submitted by the Applicant in January 2025, and prior to Richview's corrective submission in February 2025.
- 6) The trees listed on the Applicant's table were measured and examined by Verona's Forester, Richview and corrected DPM's and health assessments were put forward by these experts. Many of the trees listed as being in "fair" condition were found to be in "good" condition by Richview in February 2025, yet continue to be listed as in "fair" condition by the Applicant. What has happened in the past few months that has lent to this change in tree health across the board? Likewise, the DPM's, in some cases, are less than they were listed only a few months ago.
- 7) Regardless, the tree replacements values should be reworked to conform to Verona's Tree Protection, Removals and Replacement Ordinance, [Chapter 493, Article II](#). We restate that trees, whether in good or in poor condition, require replacements according to the schedule cited this memo's second paragraph.
- 8) It is also our understanding that at least two (2) trees, one near the rear of structure #28-34 Wedgewood, and one behind the center building parking area on the Claremont side, near structure #45-47 Wedgewood were irreparably damaged due to a lack of tree protection during construction, and were subsequently removed. This violates [§493-20](#) and the VEC feels that those trees should also be listed for replacement on the Applicant's table according to their DPMs prior to removal.
- 9) Finally, prior to the Applicant making a formal application, having a hearing, or gaining approval, multiple trees slated for removal were spray-painted by the Applicant's tree contractor, thus violating [§493-19\(2\)](#). The VEC wonders if the Applicant was fined for this violation and how they may protect those trees from potential future harm.
- 10) We estimate that the Applicant should be replanting no less than 49 replacement trees on the site, awaiting review from Verona's experts as to the DPM sizes of the 2 damaged trees that were removed during construction. The Applicant lists an inapt requirement for 36 tree replacements but then shows a chart that only lists 22 replacement trees; the same conflict of information that was presented in the Applicant's first submission in January 2025. These replacement values are not in accordance with Verona's Ordinance, and must be corrected as per VEC Table 1 included with this memo.
- 11) Finally, we recommend that the Applicant ensure a planted buffer that complies with better screening and includes a healthy mixture of shade and evergreen trees to provide essential screening between the properties off site. We note that the Applicant has not provided any planting details for the buffer zone where trees #38 and #46 through #50 once existed in their January submission. We had recommended that the Applicant prepare a tree planting plan for this buffer area with the list of planned plantings and be prepared to give testimony regarding the buffer area. This was unfortunately not included in their latest submission received on September 12, 2025.
- 12) The Verona Zoning Code provides a list of [recommended plantings](#). We recommend further species, both deciduous and evergreen, should be considered for planting.

Table 1. Existing Tree / Removal List (VEC Interpretation 9/12/2025)

		8/20/2025	2/13/2025		
Label #	Common Name	APPLICANT Condition /DPM	VERONA FORESTER Condition/DPM	Replacement Schedule per Applicant	Replacement Schedule per Ordinance
1	Catalpa	fair / 25	good / 24	3	4
2	Honey locust	fair/ 28	good / 28	3	4
3	Honey locust	fair / 24	good / 24	2	4
4	Honey locust	fair/ 24	fair / 24	2	4
5	Honey locust	fair / 19	good / 19	2	2
7	Honey locust	fair / 20	good / 20	2	2
9	Honey locust	fair / 21	poor / 21	2	2
10	Honey locust	fair / 20	good / 20	2	2
11	Honey locust	fair / 18	fair / 19	2	2
12	Honey locust	fair / 18	fair / 18	2	2
13	Honey locust	fair / 21	fair / 21	2	2
14	Honey locust	fair / 20	fair / 21	2	2
34	Honey locust	fair / 20	poor / 20	2	2
35	Honey locust	fair / 19	fair / 19	2	2
36	Honey locust	fair / 21	good / 21	2	2
37	Honey locust	Fair / 16	poor / 16	1	2
50	White Pine	fair / 37	no data yet	3	3
TOTAL TREES TO BE REPLACED:				36	43

17 Trees to be removed with only 1 tree removal recommended by RICHVIEW.

TREES REMOVED PRIOR APPLICATION HEARING (No health assessment performed)

38	London Planetree	poor	26	--	4
46	Maple (Norway)	poor	10	--	1
47	Black Walnut	poor	14	--	1
48	Red Oak	dead trunk	28	--	0
49	White Ash	dead trunk	28	--	0
50	Red Oak	dead trunk	15	--	0
SUBTOTAL:				0	6
RUNNING TOTAL:				36	49

6 trees removed without replacement.

TREES REMOVED or DAMAGED DUE TO CONSTRUCTION

A	Tree near #24-34				
B	Tree near #45-47				
TOTAL TREES TO BE REPLACED:				TBD	