

PLANNING BOARD TOWN OF MARILLA

Date: January 15, ~~2025~~ 2026 (*typographical error amended by vote of the Planning Board on 5/21/2026*)

Location: Marilla Community Center

Time: 7:00 PM

Present:	Wendy Schoenwetter, Chairman	Cari Jaroslawsky
	Deb Mamon	Debbie Zimmerman
	Shawn Slammon	Max Strasser
	Clarence Wigler	Paula Shatzel, Clerk

Also Present: Supervisor Gingerich, Brian Nolan, Anthony Sebastiano, Matthew Dolegowski, Randy Reichert

Guests: Please see attached.

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Wendy Schoenwetter, Chairman.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chairman Schoenwetter welcomed guests and explained the purpose of the Planning Board is to make recommendations only. There would be no decisions rendered at this meeting. All guests in attendance were given the opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions. Twenty-seven individuals spoke at the meeting. Of the 27 individuals expressing their opinions about the Special Use Permit, 25 were against issuance; one in favor; one presenting additional questions as to the protection of the individuals in the house.

MOTION to approve November minutes Shawn Slammon; SECOND Debbie Zimmerman. All in favor.

III. Public Expression

Supervisor Gingerich explained what a Special Use Permit was. He also explained how he arrived at the figures presented to the public regarding law enforcement coverage, etc. Supervisor Gingerich explained to the public that he could not guarantee a rapid response by emergency services at this time. Supervisor Gingerich stated he had no idea what type of tenants would be housed at 11411 Stolle Road at this time as the organization was not forthcoming with the information required to make an informed decision.

Brian Nolan assured the community there will be a full investigation conducted into the house and its occupants. The public will be informed of the findings.

Chairman Schoenwetter addressed the public, stating the applicants were going to present their case and there would be no discussion during this time. She also stated that there will be a public hearing where the public would be notified and questions could be presented. Supervisor Gingerich stated the announcement will appear in the papers. He will also send out a telephone notification, and it will also appear on Facebook.

Marc Romanowski of Rupp Pfalzgraf representing The William and Diane Hein Foundation for the rooming house. Mr. Romanowski stated the purpose of this boarding house/rooming house is to provide abused women with a quiet, peaceful place to recover. He discussed the Zoning Board of Appeals variance that was granted with considerations. He stated this is not a halfway house. Chairman Schoenwetter asked if this house was going to be a tenant type of situation. Mr. Romanowski stated the individuals typically stay in this arrangement for 12 to 15 months. Mr. Romanowski explained this house would give these women time to recover in a stable environment. Mr. Romanowski stated the applicant agreed to pay all required taxes associated with the property. Mr. Romanowski was unsure if the security being provided in the house would be armed or unarmed and he stated he would report back to the Board regarding that. Currently, Mr. Romanowski stated they were assuming one single security guard to be on site, but he would report back to the Board. Debbie Zimmerman asked if the four employees on site during the day were medically certified to handle small medical incidents and Mr. Romanowski stated they would be trained to handle minor issues without having to call community services. Mr. Romanowski stated this group is more than adequately funded to support themselves. Mr. Romanowski stated he would investigate ways to provide the town with information about the women in the house without jeopardizing their identity. Shawn Slammon asked what other facilities this organization operates that are similar and if they do not, what other organizations operate these facilities, what are they called and where they are located. Mr. Romanowski stated he could not provide any locations due to the nature of the organization. Mr. Slammon asked why these other facilities are being protected and being kept confidential but the Stolle Road project information was public. Mr. Slammon stated that public officials have received phone calls regarding this facility. Mr. Romanowski stated he was not concerned about this location being public and that it was not unusual for this type of facility to engender this kind of public response. Mr. Romanowski stated he would investigate providing the town with information on how other facilities operate and what type of impact they may or may not have. Mr. Romanowski stated he represents a variety of organizations that provide services like this. Mr. Romanowski stated the organization he represents do not currently have a housing facility, but they do operate support services. Cari Jaroslowsky stated this was the first meeting of the Planning Board since a completed application had been received from this organization. that her understanding initially was this facility was to house domestic violence victims. Ms. Jaroslowsky asked about victims of human trafficking being housed at the property. Mr. Romanowski stated there would be a mix of women both victims of domestic violence and victims of human trafficking.

Debbie Zimmerman acknowledged David Eckert, the current property owner, confirmed they (and his wife Maria) had not yet sold the property located at 11411 Stolle Road. Additionally, Ms. Zimmerman discussed the fact that Mr. Eckert's sister, Joanne Eckert, signed as the notary of record and that family members should not be notarizing information pertaining to land due to the fact they could be involved with the property settlement. Mr. Eckert also acknowledged his realtor is a family member. Ms. Zimmerman questioned the validity of a letter from the Erie County Sheriff concerning the organization due to the fact that the name of the organization had never been disclosed or discussed with any member of the Planning Board. Ms. Zimmerman stated that the organization has continuously refused to identify themselves to the Planning Board since the first meeting in 2025. After doing their own research, ~~it came to the Board's discovered the organization was PATH (People Against Human Trafficking)~~ *(typographical errors amended*

by vote of the Planning Board on 5/21/2026) the Board discovered the organization was PATH (People Against Trafficking Humans) and that Julie Palmer was the Executive Director and Founder of the PATH Enrichment Center. This in fact was the organization seeking to reside at the 11411 Stolle Road property. Chad Rush, a board member of the organization, addressed the Board stating why there was cautiousness around the name of the organization given the confidential nature of the organization. Mr. Rush confirmed the organization was PATH. Mr. Romanowski stated that PATH has a facility located at Broadway in Depew. Board members questioned why the name of the organization was not disclosed from the start. Wendy Schoenwetter and Debbie Zimmerman discussed the increase in traffic in the area and Mr. Romanowski stated he would report back to the Board on that. Max Strasser asked what services would be provided to the women in the house and Mr. Romanowski stated he would report those details back to the Board at a future date. Chairman Schoenwetter stated it was difficult to make any recommendations without knowing what services would be provided to the women onsite and offsite, including partner organizations. Shawn Slammon stated through his research and as a matter of public record, the Hein Foundation has been denied entry into other communities. Max Strasser asked Mr. Romanowski whether PATH or the Hein Foundation had approached West Seneca regarding property there. Mr. Romanowski was not sure if that had been done and stated he would report back to the Board regarding that question. Shawn Slammon asked if the foundation would carry liability insurance to cover anything that may or may not happen to the residents and/or their property near the house. Mr. Romanowski stated he would have to investigate whether there was insurance of that nature and report back to the Board. Mr. Romanowski stated the residents of the house will be from the Western New York area. Cari Jaroslawsky asked Mr. Romanowski approximately how many houses PATH has across the country. Mr. Rush responded this would be the first residential home in the Western New York area for this organization. Mr. Rush stated they would provide information regarding other facilities that do the same things at different scales. They have resources, connections and relationships with them and they are all over the East Coast. He stated this was not the first type of investment for the Hein Foundation. Deb Mamon asked if they would have supervision 24/7. Mr. Romanowski stated there would be some sort of supervision, specifically the four staff members there during the day. There would be one guard at night. Shawn Slammon confirmed at night the facility would be relying on local law enforcement and emergency services. Mr. Romanowski stated potentially this would be the case although earlier in the meeting, he had stated the group is more than adequately funded to support themselves. Max Strasser asked if the property would ever be considered tax exempt. Mr. Romanowski stated the property would not be considered tax exempt as per agreement with the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Mr. Romanowski stated he would prepare something in writing, answering all the questions presented by the Board.

Supervisor Gingerich stated the senior group in Marilla are outraged at the idea of this house. He stated it was brought to his attention in December that the organization in question was PATH.

IV. New Business

None.

V. Old Business

None.

VI. CEO Report

None.

VII. Open Board Presentation

None.

VIII. Adjournment

MOTION for adjournment made by Shawn Slammon; SECOND Max Strasser. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Paula Shatzel
Clerk