

TOWN OF ONONDAGA
5020 Ball Road - Syracuse, NY 13215

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

JOHN ELLEMAN, CHAIRMAN
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BÉNÉDICTE DORAN
RONALD RYAN
CAROL SCHATTNER
NADINE BELL, ATTORNEY
VICTORIA ROGERS, SECRETARY

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Minutes of September 2, 2025

Present:

John Elleman, Chairman	Nadine Bell, Esq., Town Attorney
Bénédicte Doran	
Mitchell Carmody	Rosemary Riley, Secretary
Carol Schattner	Victoria Rogers, Secretary
Ronald Ryan	

Attending:
Jeff Herrick, Town of Onondaga Codes Officer
Christopher Ghezzi, Applicant
Lianne Lebron, Resident
Gary Lebron, Resident
Justin Polly, Resident

Chairman Elleman called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

6300-6306 South Salina Street	SPECIAL PERMIT
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The application of Christopher Ghezzi as 100°./4, member of Such a Lush LLC, on behalf of Cornerstone Life Development, Inc., as current owner, for a Special Permit pursuant to §285-1 3(C)(7) of the Zoning Law of the Town of Onondaga to operate a parking facility on property located in the Town of Onondaga at 6300-6306 Salina Street, Tax Map Nos. 42.-02-28.0, 045.-02-29.0, 045.-02-30.0, in the Neighborhood Shopping-Nedrow (NS-N) District.

Chairman Elleman welcomes attending parties to the Town of Onondaga Zoning Board meeting for September 2nd. There is one matter for Such A Lush LLC. It is for 6300-6306 South Salina Street. The record should also reflect that the matter was published in the Post Standard on August 21st. The applicant submitted with his application is short form. environmental assessment indicating that if the requested relief or were to be granted would have no adverse environmental impacts. The matter is required to be referred to the County Planning Board and the Town Planning Board, both referrals of which went out on August 21st 2025, and I think that's it for the preliminary stuff. Chairman Elleman then invites Christopher Ghezzi up to provide more information from the prior meeting.

Mr. Ghezzi greets everyone and gives each board member including the town attorney and both secretaries packets with added information that was requested by the board in the prior meeting. Mr. Ghezzi goes on to state Mr. Ryan had previously criticized the site plan because what he'd provided was not detailed sufficiently. Mr. Ghezzi points out he revised the site plan to show a 1 to 2 year plan. He also provided an updated copy of the survey on page 3 because the previous survey had old information. On the 1 to 2 year plan he shows the existing gravel parking lot. He bases that on the survey for the location and general size and the entrance on South Salina Street is approximately 30 feet wide. He laid out 4 parking spots for employee parking. He has 3 parking spots for a truck, such as an F250 or F150 with a trailer. He has 3 parking zones for a truck trailer combos. He states

he does not own 3 truck trailer combos, but just wants to show the parking zones of where they could be parked. He also shows 2, 50 foot turning diameters – one by the drive and one on the left-hand side showing that there's room for a truck trailer to turn around.

Chairman Elleman responds referring to the informational meeting that was held where Mr. Ghezzi mentioned that equipment would be stored inside and asks if he intends to have open or box trailers.

Mr. Ghezzi states no equipment will be visible from the street due to security and theft concerns. He states the equipment will be secured. He also adds he added the dimensions of the proposed garage – 22 feet by 25 feet – which gives enough space for 2 trucks. In the front of the property would be new landscaping, and halfway on the right side will be new landscaping, and then in the back the first 1 to 2 years, he plans to use these existing 60 foot depth deciduous tree buffer – a 61 foot naturalized area that is edge to edge to low value trees that include black walnut, Box Elder, Dog Bane, Rose Acacia, Sumac and possibly Maple although he did not observe any. Most of the trees are considered weed trees.

Chairman Elleman clarifies that for the first couple of years, the plan would be that the area would remain in its natural state until he starts to get into a more of a long-term plan shown on page 2 of the packet. According to the 5-10 year plan Mr. Ghezzi expects to redo the back area.

Mr. Ghezzi concurs and adds he plans to put up a fence and a screening of blue spruce or similar in the back (approximately only 9-10 trees), along with 20 Cedar or similar trees on the right and left side of the property. The front would be low landscaping, with decorative trees such as Eastern Redwood.

Chairman Elleman asks if Mr. Ghezzi plans to use native plants and Mr. Ghezzi concurs and adds he would use almost 100% native plants. He draws attention to the exhibits he provided in the packet and states he would be a good candidate for this property because the location is not ideal and has historically been vacant and undeveloped. The property currently has 2 large gravel piles about 10 feet high which have remained there over a long period of time. Along with this issue the property has been accumulating trash.

Chairman Elleman acknowledges the large pile of gravel in both the historical and present day pictures and asks whose stone that is.

Mr. Ghezzi responds that he didn't ask the owner where it came from, but he asked him why it's there and the owner said it's used to touch up the gravel on the lot. Mr. Ghezzi states he would use it around his garage. He then calls attention to the history of the lot being used as a parking stop for big rigs. He states he will no longer allow this once he owns the property and he will beautify the property and clean up the trash. He reiterates that they are a low impact business that does not stock plants or materials. They instead install custom landscapes on demand and seek out the plants that are requested or recommended and usually would be native plants. The business would have less than 5 employees (he is currently the only employee) and they'd need a place to park their vehicles while they're working offsite. And then lastly, it would be economics relief to the current owner as the property has been in the market since 2021 and because of the zoning it limits who can buy the property and use it properly. He points out exhibit H, I, and J and compares his property to the properties currently there- the vacant Pizza Hut, Critter Ridders, the National Grid Service Station, the Car Sales place, the Bubble Up Car Wash, and CNY Glass Block. He states he will strive to look better than those businesses and compares the current parking of cars/ traffic at these businesses. Next he draws attention to Exhibit K where local people from the Next Door website gave their input and opinions on his proposed plans and ideas.

Town Attorney Nadine Bell thanks Mr. Ghezzi for the effort he puts into his research and adds the following comment "I understand that this is a special permit for a parking facility and I know a parking facility does allow a structure, but I think when the board as they moved through this process recognizing, it has to have a 239 review -they meet tomorrow- so just for your own information, I'm not sure how much of this was discussed at the last meeting and if I'm repeating things that were shared I apologize for being repetitive, but this board can't act until the 239 review comes back jurisdictionally, that's prohibited. Any decision they would make would be void because

we have to give county planning 30 days to review and respond back. They also have to refer this to Town Planning Board which the chairman noted they already did that. The planning board meets next Monday, so this board can't take any action tonight. I would - but a couple of things: one I would recommend after we hear what the others have to say that the public hearing not be closed simply because once you have any comments back from either county planning or town planning board there may be other things that you want the applicant to provide for the purposes of the record so I would keep the public hearing open. That's number one and the other thing, though it is that a lot of the information that's been shared tonight, because Chris I recognize that you applied for a parking facility but one of the things that the town has historically been very cautious and careful is that there are staging of operations on the site that really is a different commercial use is being conducted like .. do you have an office elsewhere?"

Mr. Ghezzi responds that yes he does have a home office.

Mrs. Bell clarifies "Right, but do your employees come to your home office everyday?"

Mr. Ghezzi responds no.

Mrs. Bell continues with her comment, "But the concern here is my point is that parking facilities allowed for motor vehicles so motor vehicles can certainly be parked here, but I would recommend that the ZBA, if they grant approval that they just make sure that any conditions be attached that are appropriate to make it clear that it is for parking and that there is not the operation of a landscaping business. The parking of motor vehicles is allowed, but the storage of other equipment that is not a motor vehicle is not allowed, or that it doesn't really become by defacto a landscaping service, I know it's not a retail business, you're not selling anything, right?" Mr. Ghezzi replies no. "So you're not engaged in a retail business, and you're not, you certainly don't fall under the definitions of a nursery commercial or a nursery privately – you're not growing anything right – you already said you order the product that's needed for the sites but I think the board just needs to be cognizant of that, because we don't want to create a problem for enforcement purposes for the code office later on. Where they're struggling to enforce what the board has approved does that make sense to the board. So that's more of my comment than a question."

Mr. Ghezzi asks "If I hire employees offsite at like a public place, I interview them in a coffee place, something like that, maybe there's public sharing office space. What my question that I would ask would I be able to store employee files on site?"

Mrs. Bell states "No. So I'll give you this as an example, a totally different municipality that I represent, a guy has a concrete business, does like stampcrete, stuff like that. At his house, he stored all of his stampcrete stuff just in his garage every day, he lived in a small village every day, 5 to 7 guys showed up they all parked their vehicles all in the yard that was the source - that was a business in a residential zone. And the neighbors were all furious, we had a situation here in the Town of Onondaga just last year where there was a gentleman who on his own personal private property residentially zoned had a pole barn indicating, he was going to use it for private purposes, but then all of a sudden, he also had kind of a landscaping/snow plowing business, and at 1 time had like 4 snow plows, just the plows and at the house he had equipment for mowing, he had all that and the neighbors were up in arms, they were furious because it was scattered about and they're like, it's a commercial business. And ironically, during the public hearing, one of the neighbors is like, I can tell you it's a commercial business because I hired him. It was a problem with neighbors, and it was a problem with a code office trying to enforce it so it really can't be like a staging of operations, which a lot of times commercial construction - you're here a type of construction essentially, I know it's landscaping, but whether it's concrete work, whether it's plowing, mowing.. where people just say, Hey, I just need my employees to have a place to park, but then the question becomes well, if you have a day where they're doing maintenance on the equipment, whatever your equipment may be well where are they going to do that? Well they'll do it there, also. Where do you store the stuff to maintain the equipment? Well, I'll just have a little building there and in the garage that's supposed to be for parking I'll just store all this stuff, to maintain the equipment, and all of a sudden, it takes on a life of its own, and it's no longer a parking facility for the storage short-term or long-term for motor vehicles."

Mr. Ghezzi replies "So you're trying to define that gray area, or there's no gray area?"

Mrs. Bell replies “Correct, because his job becomes extremely difficult. And for what it's worth zoning, board of appeals is a Quasi judicial for by statue, they are the board that interprets the zoning code, if there's a question. So if the code officer is trying to figure out how to best interpret what parking facility, allows or doesn't allow the first thing he's going to do is come to this board and ask for the interpretation. So this board is really in the best position to say you've applied for a special permit for a parking facility, we're granting you a special permit for a parking facility, but these are the parameters, and then later on our code office is not trying to struggle to figure out what - and I'm not saying, even just the code office that exists today, because these land approvals run with the land so when this zoning board grants a special permit to allow this, whether it's Such A Lush, or any other company or any other owner who wants to have a parking facility there you can sell the property and that approval goes with the land it doesn't go with you so consequently, it can be 25 years later on when it's a whole different cast of characters, and they're trying to figure out what was approved and what was allowed, they can go back to the resolution and the meeting minutes and say this is exactly what is allowed and what is not allowed.”

Mr. Ghezzi responds “Sure. It's my understanding that the zoning shopping district Nedrow – permitted uses are also office and retail. Now that would require me to build so at some point the future say, a 10 to 15 year plan I add an office or a retail and go through this..”

Nadine interjects, “You may do that. You come back for your approvals. Yes, you can, but you can't under the umbrella of a parking facility say, well, that structure- the structure that you've shown the steelwork structure is now actually going to be, you know, the carport style metal building will now be my office. If that's the game plan, then there should be a site plan approval. Listen, because there's a whole different set of standards there right if it's going to be in office, it needs to have a bathroom facility.”

Ghezzi clarifies that it comes down to how much funds he currently has and states he primarily needs it for parking and exchanging vehicles and that's it.

Mrs. Bell clarifies “And so where it's going to be key is when you say, I primarily only need it for that – this board is only able to grant you that. Any of the other stuff that you want they can't do with a special permit as requested.”

Mr. Ghezzi states “Anything additional to a parking facility. I would propose it and not act on it, and I would request permit. I would file follow the proper procedure. And I would not take it upon myself to go outside those.”

Chairman Elleman opens the floor to resident comments and concerns. Justin Polly a resident of Nedrow came up to speak. Mr. Polly agreed that the condition of the property currently and throughout his history in Nedrow has not been good. He also acknowledges the size of the land also makes it difficult to develop. His concerns reside in the land being developed as a parking facility. Being that the parcel is in a neighborhood shopping district he states whatever is built on that land should be providing a good or service to the residents of Nedrow and that's not what this proposed business is doing. He also acknowledges the state of the neighborhood is in poor condition and does not agree that the neighborhood needs another parking lot.

Lianne Lebron asks if Mr. Ghezzi if he has reached out to the residents directly behind/next to the land to ask their opinion on the matter and Mr. Ghezzi replies that he has not reached out to them. She then expresses her concern regarding snow removal and the chairman clarifies that's an issue that code enforcement would handle.

Gary Lebron had concerns about the driveway area and the sight line and overgrowth of vegetation on the property currently and in the future and asked that it be maintained more often. Mr. Ghezzi stated he would keep that free of obstructions.

Nadine Bell responds to Mr. Polly's concerns regarding the overabundance of parking facilities by acknowledging his concerns but clarifying that parking facilities are allowed by special permit – meaning if someone satisfies the criteria for a special permit, the Zoning Board does not have a lot of discretion to say no to them. She suggests he should take his concern regarding the abundance of parking facilities to the Town Board.

Following the comments from the residents Chairman Elleman says, “All right for this evening, we're going to leave the hearing open as Nadine suggested because of the procedural need to receive recommendations from town planning board and the county planning board.”

Ronald Ryan asks Jeffrey Herrick (Director of Code Enforcement) if the concerns surrounding the property can be addressed outside of the special permit request and Jeffrey Herrick agrees that these concerns will be addressed. Mr. Ryan then turns his attention to Mr. Ghezzi and asks him if he plans to park trailers in this parking facility. Mr. Ghezzi agrees that he does intend to park trailers at this parking facility. Mr. Ryan then makes it clear that a parking facility does not allow for trailers to be parked there and only allows motor vehicles to be parked at the facility. Mr. Ryan asks Mr. Ghezzi, “If we're able to advance this, which I have no problem, advancing this to get the feedback from both the planning board and the county planning and we decide to vote favorably for the parking facility, but make it clear that trailers would not be allowed, would that serve your purpose?” Mr. Ghezzi states he will have to consider this.

Chairman Elleman then adjourns the matter for the next meeting on the 16th after the board has received both recommendations from the town planning board and county planning board and can then have the ability to close the hearing and vote on whether to grant the special use permit or not.

Following the Such A Lush matter the meeting minutes from July 29th where John Elleman and Mitchell Carmody were not in attendance were voted on with Ronald Ryan making a motion and Bénédict seconding the motion resulting in a 3-0. The meeting minutes from July 22nd were voted on next with Carol Schattner making a motion and Ronald Ryan as a seconding the motion also resulting in 3-0.

The meeting was adjourned 8:14 p.m.