



TOWNSHIP OF MORRIS

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

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Brian Morgan

Chairperson

To: Morris Township Planning Board
From: Morris Township Environmental Commission
Re: **PB-05-25, Piccolo Minor Subdivision, Block 3501, Lot 6, 35 Schoolhouse Lane, Morris Township, Zone RA-130**
Date: July 21, 2025

At the June 12, 2025 Environmental Commission (EC) meeting, the application **PB-05-25, Piccolo Minor Subdivision, Block 3501, Lot 6, 35 Schoolhouse Lane, Morris Township, Zone RA -130** was presented.

The EC visited the site on June 26, 2025 and completed the review of the application, and notes the following:

Findings of Facts

- The existing property is 4.5 acres (196,935 sq ft) with a house that is currently under construction. This house is replacing a former house but is of somewhat larger dimension to be completed before November 2025. See Appendix Image #1 of the property from the Highlands Council's Resource Explorer GIS database.
- The applicant proposes subdividing the existing lot into two properties of 2.3 acres and 2.2 acres which is 23% and 27%, respectively, below the 3-acre minimum lot size for Zone RA-130, for which a variance is being requested.
- No wetlands or flood plains are located on or adjacent to the property per a Highlands report for Block 3501, lot 6.
- The property is covered primary in maintained grass with mature evergreen trees and shrubs bordering the property with no visible erosion.
- The plans did not include any information about tree removal, however there appear to be seven (7) trees in the area of disturbance on the existing site plan and those seven (7) trees appear to remain on the proposed site plan.
- There is to be no disturbance in steep slope areas around the property fronting the street containing evergreen bordering.
- The property is served by septic systems.
- A second driveway and house will be implemented by a new owner of the second lot when the lot is ultimately developed.
- As shown Appendix Image #2, the property is included within the Whippany River (Wash. Valley Rd to 74d 33m) subwatershed (HUC14 02030103020020), which ranks High for Forest Integrity Score, Riparian Integrity Score and Watershed Value. An explanation for these categories is provided in the Appendix.

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Findings of Impact

- Although the property owner plans to plant a tree barrier along the new subdividing lot line, no trees or other plantings are proposed in the plans. During the site review, the current homeowner seemed open to avoiding Invasive Plants and considering Native plants.
- Stormwater management through seepage pit design will be provided on each lot as required by Township ordinance.
- The impervious cover will increase from 8,720 sq ft on the existing single lot to a combined total of 23,789 sq ft for the two lots for a net increase of 15,069 sq ft, which while within the allowable RA-130 zone limits for a 130,680 sq ft (3 acre) minimum area requirement, almost triples the existing impervious cover in the aforementioned subwatershed with High rankings.

Recommendations

1. **Trees /Vegetation** - All plantings should comply with the Township's "Do Not Plant" list and plant native species rather than invasive species. The current edition of the referenced **Do Not Plant List and Native Plants List** (both available from the township website).
2. **Storm Management** - Given a new house with driveway are ultimately expected on the second lot, there will be additional significant impervious cover on that lot as well, although no plans for the proposed second lot have been submitted. The plans provided by the applicant indicate in the notes that Seepage Pit Designs for both lots will be implemented. It is recommended that the Seepage Pit Designs carefully route drainage/ run off from the roofs and driveways on both properties to the individual infiltration pits.

General Recommendations:

- The New Jersey Global Warming Response Act 80 x 50 Report (<https://dep.nj.gov/ghg/ghg-emissions-goals/>) calls for conversion of residential and commercial buildings within New Jersey from fossil fuel to photovoltaic and/or electric space and water heating by 2050. Although such measures presently are not mandated by the New Jersey State Uniform Construction Code, the Board should strongly encourage the developer to include rooftop solar panels and electric utilities (space and water heating) in the project as a matter of social responsibility.
- Lighting – The EC recommends that any lighting installed for this project, should be DarkSky compliant according to their guidance listed below (See Appendix Image #3 for more details):
 - Restrict the amount of upward-directed light
 - Avoid glare
 - Avoid over-lighting
 - Utilize dimming and other appropriate lighting controls
 - Minimize short-wavelength (bluish) light in the nighttime environment

[DarkSky Approved fixtures](https://darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/darksky-approved-luminaires-program/luminaires/) can be found at this link: <https://darksky.org/what-we-do/darksky-approved/darksky-approved-luminaires-program/luminaires/>

The Environmental Commission submits this site application review on condition that it be read and discussed at the Planning Board project hearing.

cc: Environmental Commission Members
Township Engineer
Sonia Santiago, Land Use Board Secretary

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Appendix

Image #1 - Block 3501, Lot 6 from the Highlands Council's Resource Explorer GIS system as it appears prior to the current construction.



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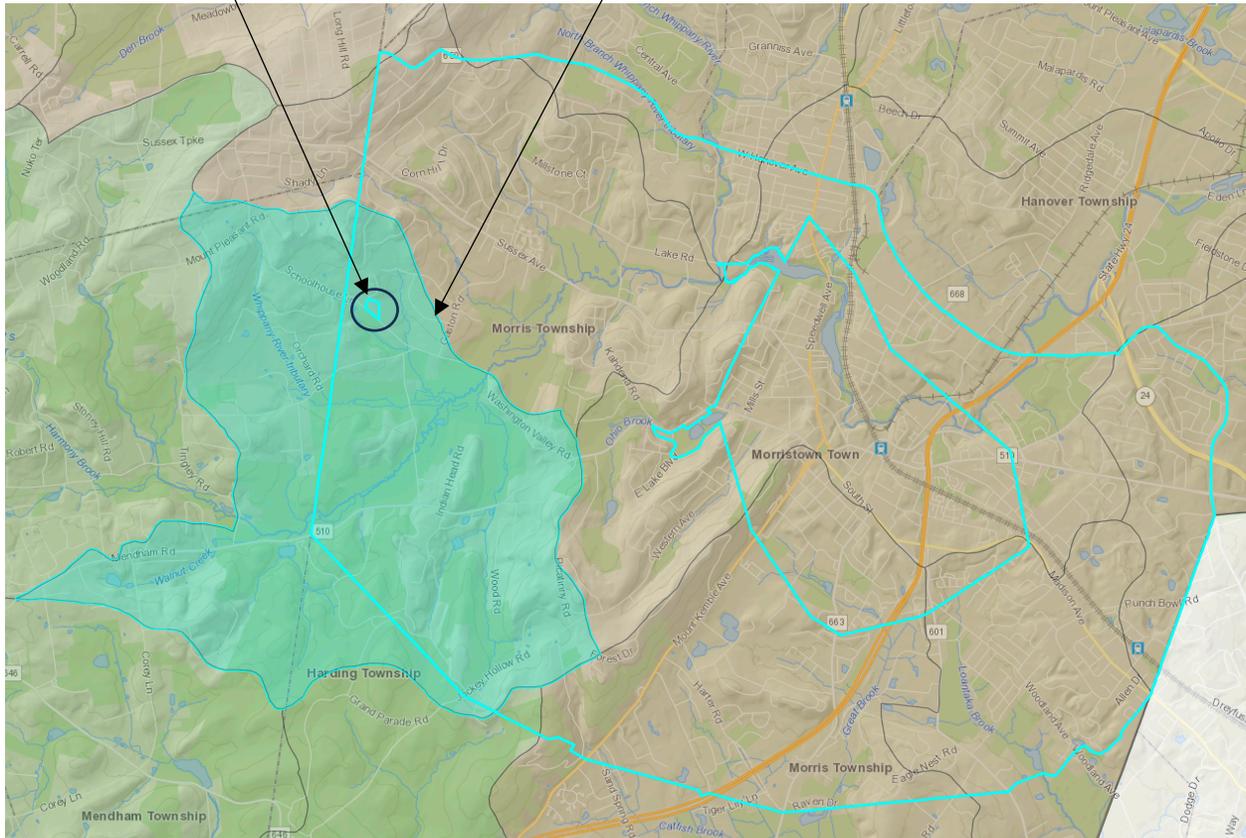
Site Review

Image #2 - Findings from the Highlands Council ERI and REX GIS systems:

This property, Block 3501, Lot 6 is located in the Whippany River (Wash. Valley Rd to 74d 33m) subwatershed (HUC14 02030103020020), as shown in aqua, which ranks High for Forest Integrity Score, Riparian Integrity Score and Watershed Value. See definitions of these terms below.

Block 3501, Lot 6

Subwatershed



Definitions:

Forest Integrity Score

The New Jersey Highlands Council assesses forest cover integrity scores at the subwatershed level (HUC14). Subwatersheds are evaluated based on forest patch size, total forest area, core forest area, mean distance to the closest patch and proportion of total forest. The evaluation of these factors provides an accurate subwatershed rank based on forest integrity values and are provided as “Low,” “Moderate”, and “High”.

High Forest Integrity describes subwatersheds that are predominantly forested, including areas with a high proportion of forest cover consisting of high core forest area, large patch size, and a low distance to nearest patch.

Riparian Integrity Score

The New Jersey Highlands Council assesses riparian area integrity as an area's ability to provide water protection and ecological function. These functions include nutrient and sediment filtration, stream bank stabilization, wildlife migration corridors and habitat, storm water and flood water storage, and stream water quality protection.

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Riparian Integrity Scores are reported at the subwatershed level (HUC14). Subwatersheds are evaluated based on the land conditions that impact the riparian area within the subwatershed and are provided as “Low”, “Moderate”, and “High.”

High Riparian Integrity describes subwatersheds with Riparian Areas that exhibit predominantly natural vegetation, including high quality habitat for water/wetland dependent species, and a generally a low incidence of impervious area, agricultural uses, and/or road crossings.

Watershed Values

The New Jersey Highlands Council assesses watershed integrity as a means of evaluating the integrity and protection needs of the Highlands Open Waters.

Watershed values are reported at the subwatershed level (HUC14). These are by indicators such as percent developed lands, habitat quality, percent total forest, percent core forest and proportion of total forest and are provided as “Low,” “Moderate,” and “High.”

High Watershed Value describes subwatersheds that contain predominantly forest lands and includes a significant portion of the watershed that is high quality habitat. A high value watershed typically consists of limited pre-existing developed land within the watershed.

Source: NJ Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council

Image #3 – [Outdoor Lighting Principles](#) from DarkSky International

Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting		DarkSky	IES Illuminating Engineering Society
Responsible outdoor lighting is	1 Useful	Use light only if it is needed All light should have a clear purpose. Consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and their habitats.	
	2 Targeted	Direct light so it falls only where it is needed Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of the light beam so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.	
	3 Low Level	Light should be no brighter than necessary Use the lowest light level required. Be mindful of surface conditions, as some surfaces may reflect more light into the night sky than intended.	
	4 Controlled	Use light only when it is needed Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.	
	5 Warm-colored	Use warmer color lights where possible Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light to the least amount needed.	

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