



ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Date of Hearing: January 15, 2026
Date of Decision: February 25, 2026

Zone Case: 160 of 2025
Address: 201 S. Pacific Avenue
Lot and Block: 50-R-170
Zoning Districts: R2-M
Ward: 8
Neighborhood: Bloomfield

Request: Home Occupation for Dog Services

Application: BDA-2025-06335

Review	Section 912.05	Review compliance with Home Occupation standards
Variance/Review	Section 912.05.B.5	Noise from home occupation shall not be perceptible beyond the lot line where the home occupation is conducted

Appearances:

Applicant: Shawna Mihelcic, John Kolowski

Opposed: John Axtell, Devon Chodzin, Jennier Haven, Steve Morrow, Nicholas Redondo, Geeta Vasuvedin

Findings of Fact:

1. The Subject Property is located at 201 S. Pacific Avenue, at the intersection with Coral Street, in an R2-M (Residential Two Unit Moderate Density) District in Bloomfield.
2. The area of the Subject Property is approximately 3,200 sf. The Subject Property shares its rear property line with the interior side property line of the parcel at 5210 Coral Street. The structure on the parcel is set back approximately 2.5' from the interior side property line shared with the parcel at 205 S. Pacific Avenue.
3. The parking lot for a grocery store in an LNC (Local Neighborhood Commercial) District is located on the opposite side of Coral Street.

4. A single residential structure is located on the Subject Property. The 6' privacy fence that encloses the rear yard extends along the exterior side property line on Coral Street, without a setback.

5. The Applicant seeks approval to operate a business on the property that would involve overnight dog boarding, daytime dog daycare and dog walking. The Applicant has presented the proposed use as a "home occupation."

6. At the hearing, the Applicant represented that she and her husband propose to provide dog-sitting services at their house, with a capacity of no more than 5 dogs (including their dog) at one time. As proposed, the services provided would include overnight dog boarding, dog daycare and dog walking.

7. The Applicant stated that the business would operate without any non-resident employees.

8. The Applicant presented a series of photographs intended to demonstrate that no change had been made to the exterior of the house to accommodate the proposed use and that the use would not be visible from outside the house.

9. The Applicant explained that the dogs would be kept inside the house and would only be let outside for brief periods throughout the day, and that any dogs that bark or exhibit aggressive behavior would not be allowed outside.

10. The Applicant stated that the business would provide door-to-door transportation for dogs and that clients would not typically pick up or drop off pets at the Subject Property.

11. The Applicant asserted that no noise from the dogs kept on site would be perceptible beyond the Subject Property. The Board did not find this assertion to be credible.

12. The Applicant also asserted that the impact of the business, for no more than 5 dogs, would be similar to a household with 5 dogs, which is the maximum number of animals permitted under Section 633.12 of the City of Pittsburgh Code (titled "Number of Pets Permitted in City Limits; Exceptions).

13. John Axtell and Devon Chodzin, on behalf of the Friendship Community Group (FCG), appeared at the hearing to oppose the request. The FCG representatives testified that the Subject Property has been used for dog kenneling without the required approvals and that neighbors have complained about odors from both the waste and noise associated with the use.

14. The FCG representatives also asserted that the proposed use is incompatible with the residential character of the neighborhood and should be considered an animal care (limited) use and not a home occupation.

15. Jennifer Haven and Steve Morrow, the owners of the adjacent property at 205 S. Pacific Avenue, also appeared at the hearing to oppose the request. Ms. Haven asserted that the Applicant enclosed the rear yard with a 6' high privacy fence to accommodate the proposed use. Mr. Morrow stated that his family often hears dogs from the neighboring house inside their house and in their backyard, and expressed concerns about noise, traffic and the impact of the use on the residential character of the neighborhood.

16. Nicolas Redondo, of the owner of the 5210 Coral Street parcel, appeared at the hearing to oppose the request and noted that the dogs create offensive odors in both the front and rear of his house.

17. The Board finds the testimony regarding noise and odors from dogs on the Subject Property to be credible but notes that it would not be reasonable to assume that any neighborhood or residential property could be entirely free of these impacts.

18. Geeta Vasuvedin, a resident of property at South Fairmount Street which is not immediately proximate to the Subject Property, appeared at the hearing and testified that she has not noticed the business when she walks past the Subject Property. The Board did not find this testimony to be relevant.

Conclusions of Law:

- **Relevant Zoning Code and City Code Provisions**

1. This matter presents the question of whether the proposed use, which includes overnight boarding of dogs, dog daycare and dog-walking, should be considered a “home occupation” or an animal care (limited) use. This requires the Board to review various provisions of the Zoning Code and the City Code.

2. Pursuant to Section 912.05.A, home occupations are permitted, by right, but are to be to “incidental and accessory” to the residential use. The purpose of allowing home occupations is to permit residents to engage in activities that are compatible with residential uses, “to the extent that they do not adversely affect the land use character of residential uses.”

3. The standards for home occupations, in Section 912.05.B, include requirements that only individuals who are residents of the dwelling unit may be engaged in the home occupation; no changes are to be made in the exterior appearance of the house for the home occupation; the home occupation is not to generate more than 6 vehicle trips per day; no addition or entrance to accommodate the home occupation may be visible from the street; and any parking for the use must be off-street.

4. Section 912.05.B.5 provides that any odors or noise from “equipment” used in conjunction with a home occupation must not be perceptible beyond the lot line where the home occupation is conducted.

5. Section 912.05.C sets forth a list of prohibited home occupations and that list does not include any uses related to pet care.

6. The Use Table in Section 911.02 defines the “Animal Care (limited)” use as “a use providing **small animal (household pets) boarding** or veterinary services with no outside runs, not including lab animals.” (emphasis supplied). The “Animal Care (limited) use is not permitted in any residential districts. Where permitted, the design of the structure for the animal care (limited) use is to include features that “acoustically shield any animal noises from being heard outside the property line.” See Section 911.04.A.4.

7. Section 633.12 of the City Code, titled “Number of Pets Permitted in City Limits; Exceptions,” provides:

No person or residence shall be permitted to own, harbor or maintain more than five (5) dogs or cats or any combination thereof within City limits. This section shall not affect any person or residence whose number of dogs, cats or any combination thereof exceeds the limit of five (5) prior to the effective date of this section and upon elimination of dogs or cats by adoption, death or any permanent removal from that person or residence, owners exceeding the limit of five (5) are not permitted to obtain additional dogs or cats. This section shall not affect kennels and catteries that have been granted a kennel/cattery permit by the City Bureau of Animal Care and Control nor shall it affect kennels registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

In Section 633.01, the City Code defines “kennel” as any “indoor housing facility wherein dogs are kept for the purpose of breeding, hunting, training, leasing, buying, boarding, sale, show, exchange or placement as pets or other similar purpose and is so constructed that dogs cannot stray therefrom.”

8. City Code Section 633.09 describes various circumstances where the keeping of dogs, cats or other animals would constitute a “nuisance,” including offensive odors and “frequent and habitual barking, howling, screeching, yelping or baying.”

- **Analysis As Applied to the Components of the Proposed Use on the Subject Property**

9. If the Board determines that the proposed use is a “home occupation,” it must consider whether the use complies with the Code’s standards for home occupations. If the use is an animal care (limited) use, which is not permitted in R2-M Districts, the Board must consider whether the Applicant supported a request for a use variance.

10. The Board is mindful that the Subject Property is in a dense urban area, proximate to a commercial area. The Board is also mindful that the City Code allows for the keeping of as many as 5 household pets in a single residence, which limits any expectation that a neighborhood could ever be insulated from the impacts from the keeping of multiple pets. Keeping of pets is consistent with residential uses. The City Code recognizes, however, that the keeping of pets in a residence can create a nuisance if it involves offensive odors and/or frequent and habitual barking.

11. As described to the Board, the Applicant proposes a use that includes three components – dog boarding, dog daycare and dog-walking. The Applicant does not distinguish among these components and characterizes them, collectively, as being a “home occupation.” The objectors refer to the proposed use, collectively, as a kennel or dog boarding.

12. The “Animal Care (limited)” use definition specifically includes “boarding.” The definition does not include dog daycare or dog-walking. The Animal Care (limited) use is permitted only in non-residential zoning districts and one of the conditions of the use is the inclusion of features that “acoustically shield” animal noises from being heard beyond the property line. The Zoning Code thus recognizes that where “boarding” is permitted, the impacts of animal noise on adjacent properties must be limited.

13. The Applicant asserts that the proposed use for no more than 5 dogs is no different than keeping as many as 5 dogs in a residence, as permitted under the City Code. However, part of the use that the Applicant proposes is “boarding,” as included in the definition of “Animal Care (limited),” and the Applicant does not address that distinction.

14. To the extent that the proposed use includes overnight boarding, that component of the use must be considered an “animal care (limited) use” under the Zoning Code. The Applicant did not present sufficient evidence to support a request for use variance for that component of the proposed use and that use cannot be permitted on the Subject Property.

15. Dog daycare and dog-walking are not included in the “Animal Care (limited)” definition; are not listed as “prohibited home occupations” in Section 912.05.C; and would be “incidental” to the primary use of the Subject Property for a residence. Those activities can thus be considered a “home occupation,” subject to the standards in Section 912.05.B.

16. The Applicant presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate that only individuals who are residents of the house would be engaged in the dog daycare and dog-walking services; that no changes have been made in the exterior appearance of the house; the dog daycare and dog-walking services would not generate more than 6 vehicle trips per day; and that parking would not be typically required for the use.

17. Section 912.05.A provides that home occupations are to be compatible with residential uses and should not adversely affect the land use character of residential areas. The conditions for the use set forth below are intended to address the impacts of the limited home occupation in a residential area.

18. The Board also notes that, pursuant to Zoning Code Section 912.04.K.1, fences in front or side yards where the fence extends closer to the street than the primary structure are to be open or ornamental and are not to exceed a height of 4'. Although the 6' high privacy fence on the Coral Street side of the property does not comply with these requirements, that issue is not currently before the Board.

Decision: The Applicant’s request to allow the proposed use, which includes dog boarding, dog daycare and dog-walking services, is DENIED in part and is APPROVED in part.

The proposed dog boarding service constitutes an “Animal Care (limited) use” and the required use variance to allow that component of the proposed use is DENIED. No dogs shall be boarded overnight on the Subject Property.

The proposed dog daycare and dog-walking services are APPROVED as a “home occupation,” subject to these conditions:

- **Only residents of the Subject Property shall be engaged in the dog daycare/dog-walking services;**
- **No more than 6 one-way vehicle trips are permitted per day;**

- **No more than 5 dogs (including residents' dogs) shall be permitted on the property at any time;**
- **Dogs shall be kept primarily indoors, with structured and limited outdoor time;**
- **Waste shall be promptly picked up and disposed of in sealed containers; and**
- **Dog daycare services shall not begin before 6 a.m. and must conclude no later than 8 p.m.**

s/Alice B. Mitinger
Alice B. Mitinger, Chair

s/Lashawn Burton-Faulk
LaShawn Burton-Faulk

s/ John J. Richardson
John J. Richardson

Note: Decision issued with electronic signatures, with the Board members' review and approval.