



JOHN H. ALLGAIR, PE, PP, LS (1983-2001)
DAVID J. SAMUEL, PE, PP, CME
JOHN J. STEFANI, PE, LS, PP, CME
JAY B. CORNELL, PE, PP, CME
MICHAEL J. McCLELLAND, PE, PP, CME
GREGORY R. VALES, PE, PP, CME

TIM W. GILLEN, PE, PP, CME (1991-2019)
BRUCE M. KOCH, PE, PP, CME
LOUIS J. PLOSKONKA, PE, CME
TREVOR J. TAYLOR, PE, PP, CME
BEHRAM TURAN, PE, LSRP
LAURA J. NEUMANN, PE, PP
DOUGLAS ROHMEYER, PE, CFM, CME
ROBERT J. RUSSO, PE, PP, CME
JOHN J. HESS, PE, PP, CME

Memorandum

MEMO TO: Village of Ridgewood Zoning Board

FROM: Maryann Bucci-Carter, PP, AICP

DATE: May 12, 2020

**Re: 657 Ridgewood, LLC
Preliminary & Final Major Site Plan Approval
Planning Review Letter # 2
Block 4703, Lot 14
657 Franklin Turnpike
Ridgewood Village, New Jersey
Zone OB-2 – Office Building District
Our File: HVRZ4703.01
Application No.: ZBA-19-42**

As per your request, our office has reviewed the above referenced application. The following documents were reviewed for this application:

- Application form;
- Flood zone exemption certification;
- Historic district/site exemption certification;
- Application for Waiver Request;
- Receipt of payment of the required escrow fee and application fee;
- Tax certification;
- One (1) sheet entitled "Amended Sign Variance Plan" prepared by Dynamic Engineering, dated July 8, 2019, revised October 30, 2019;
- Bergen County Department of Planning and Engineering Subdivision and Site Plan Review Committee Report dated February 12, 2012, including the Joint Report Addendum.

1. Summary of Application

The applicant, 657 Ridgewood, LLC., is currently seeking preliminary and final major site plan approval to permit a second sign to identify the Shell Gas Station, gas pricing, and Dunkin Donuts. Bulk variances are requested and necessary for the new sign in order to comply with the zoning regulations. **Currently, signage for the two uses is visible from the Route 17 frontage but not visible along the Franklin Turnpike frontage and therefore being requested for the businesses.**



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The original application placed the second proposed sign next to the “Welcome to Ridgewood” gateway sign causing them to be visible at the same time having a negative impact. The Bergen County road widening easement prohibits placement along the main Franklin Turnpike frontage without Bergen County approval. If sign visibility is needed along Franklin Turnpike, approval to use the county easement must be sought and received. The revised plan included a design supported by the County to place the sign within the easement area.

The Shell Gas Station and Dunkin Donuts on the site have received approval within the last 2 years and they are currently operational. The Subject Site is within the Office Building (OB-2) District. It is surrounded by Residential Districts to the east, south, and west with the Office Building District continuing northwest along Route 17 and Franklin Turnpike. To the northeast across Route 17 there is a large parcel of vacant land. Northwest along Route 17 and Franklin Turnpike, the uses are primarily professional offices and commercial. The Valteau Cemetery is located to the south and west of the Site.

2. Variances Required

§190-122H(3)(f): A maximum of one (1) freestanding sign is permitted. The proposed sign would be the second freestanding sign on the site. ***A variance is required.***

§190-122H(3)(f): A maximum surface area of 10 square feet is permitted. A 15 square foot sign is proposed. ***A variance is required.***

§190-122H(3)(f): A minimum 10 foot setback is permitted. Only 3.2 feet is proposed. ***A variance is required.***

3. Variance Types

“c” variances are being requested for this application. The proposed variances would fall into the category of a “c”(2) Bulk Variance. **It is noted that the setback variance requested has been lessened. Originally 0.3 feet was proposed. Also, the surface area variance requested has been reduced. Originally 18 square feet was proposed.**

The applicant should be prepared to provide testimony regarding the following requests:

“c”(1) Bulk Variance:

- i. Exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of property;
- ii. Exceptional topographic conditions or physical features uniquely affecting the property;
or
- iii. Extraordinary and exceptional situation uniquely affecting the property or the structures lawfully existing thereon.



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“c” (2) Bulk Variance:

- iv. Positive Criteria
 - a. Purpose of Municipal Land Use Law will be promoted by the proposed deviation; and
 - b. The benefits of the deviation substantially outweigh the detriments.
- v. Negative Criteria
 - a. The proposed deviation will not result in a substantial detriment to the public welfare; and
 - b. The proposed deviation will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the master plan and the zoning ordinance

3. Master Plan Compliance

The February 2, 2016 Master Plan Reexamination report recommend that ordinances governing motor vehicle service stations be updated to reflect current trends in the industry including signage and aesthetic consideration relating to same.

The use is characteristic of a highway oriented use, with its primary frontage on Route 17. It shares dual frontage on Franklin Turnpike integrating and connecting it to the fabric of the neighborhood.

4. Comments

- a. The Site Plan should be updated to reflect what has been built on the property. The Site Plan still shows “proposed” for many items which have been built. Changing the site plans will clarify the identification and location of the new proposed sign.
- b. **The Route 17 Shell sign dimension is identified on the plan as a variance. That is mislabeled. It is a pre-existing condition. No change is proposed as part of this application. No variance for that sign is being requested.**
- c. Provide testimony regarding the amount of signage on the site and establish justification for the additional sign adjacent to the Franklin Turnpike frontage of the property.
- d. **The County provided a conditional recommendation in support of the sign provided that the sign not be a monument type and that the owner maintain sight lines along the franklin Turnpike frontage, including maintaining an 8 foot high clearance from the ground, and the removal and maintenance of any obstructions, such as tree limbs, branches and brush.**
- e. **The County required that the sign be removed if and when required by the County for widening.**
- f. Provide testimony regarding the surface area of the signage and establish justification for a greater surface area and sign setback.



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- g. **The proposed placement has been relocated away from the “Welcome to the Village of Ridgewood” sign on the property at the Route 17 entrance ramp. Having these two signs in view at the same plane is not a desirable feature of the design. The new location is superior.**
- h. Instead of a sign at the proposed location, an increase in landscaping to shield the drive-thru aisle, order message board, and utilities on the building would be recommended.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at mbcarter@RidegewoodNJ.net if you have any questions.