

**VILLAGE OF RIDGEWOOD
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2025**

Opening:

The public meeting of the Zoning Board of Adjustment of the Village of Ridgewood was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

The following Board members took the Oath of Office:

Khidir Abdalla, Alternate Member #1

Matthew Swan, Alternate Member #2

Present: Greg Brown, Matthew Bandelt, Jonathan Papietro, Jason Curreri, Jamie Fox, Yelena Raytser, Khidir Abdalla and Matthew Swan. Also present were Allyson Kasetta, Esq., substituting for Bruce Whitaker, Esq.; John Barree, Village Planner; Christopher Rutishauser, Village Engineer; Brian Intindola, Traffic Engineer, and Jane Wondergem, Board Secretary. Diana Ruhl was absent.

Minutes: The minutes from January 28, 2025 were adopted.

Non-agenda items:

Board member comments – There were no comments at this time.

Members of the public comments – There were no comments at this time.

Public hearings:

Old Business:

Mr. Brown announced that the Scoccimarro, 225 North Monroe Street, application was carried to February 25, 2025 without further notice.

New Business:

55 NORTH BROAD LLC – An application to seek use along with preliminary and final site plan approval and bulk variances to demolish the existing two-story structure and construct a new on-story Chase Bank with drive-through with associated site improvements at 55 North Broad Street, Block 3804, Lot 2.01, in a B-1 and B-2 Zone.

Bruce Rosenberg, Esq., entered his appearance on behalf of the applicant and made opening remarks.

Aaron Chan was sworn and his credentials as a licensed civil engineer accepted.

Mr. Chan displayed an aerial photo of the property, which was marked as Exhibit A-1, and a site plan rendering, which was marked as Exhibit A-2. Mr. Chan testified using these exhibits.

Mr. Chan addressed issues in the Planner's report and the Engineer's report. Mr. Chan testified regarding on-site parking. Mr. Chan explained that they are seeking a waiver in regard to the trash enclosure, testifying that due to the nature of the business, much of their trash is shredding which would have a secured pick up, therefore, they do not have a need for trash enclosure. Mr.

Chan testified regarding the on-street parking spaces that will be lost and where they could add spaces. Mr. Chan went over the zoning table and identified the variances being requested. Mr. Chan testified regarding the proposed landscaping and stated that the lighting could be shielded, but it wouldn't be necessary due to the lighting design.

Mr. Barree asked if the freestanding sign would be visible from North Broad Street and if they had considered putting it anywhere else. Mr. Chan explained the purpose of the sign and how that placement is effective, but that they will look at alternate locations. Mr. Barree said a waiver in regards to the waste enclosure would not be necessary if the applicant's testimony is that adequate waste storage is being provided inside the building. Mr. Barree asked if the parking spaces will conform to Village Code and Mr. Chan said they would.

Mr. Rutishauser asked about the proposed shared EV spaces and ADA compliant spaces. Mr. Chan said one of the spaces is proposed to be both EV-ready and an ADA compliant space but that the other can be moved. Mr. Rutishauser asked the Board's counsel to confirm that they can overlay. Mr. Rutishauser went over the recommendations he put in his report regarding the crosswalks, ingress/egress, street parking and lighting.

Mr. Rutishauser asked if the applicant had an encroachment agreement for the buildings to the north and to the south of the subject property. Mr. Chan said they did not and Ms. Kasetta recommended that they get an encroachment agreement for each property.

Mr. Rutishauser asked how they intend to treat the exterior of the wall of the property to the north following the demolition of the existing building. Mr. Chan stated that a structural engineer will be retained and that the applicant has been meeting with both the owner of the property to the north and the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the aesthetics of the exposed wall.

Mr. Intindola asked about the elevation encountered by a pedestrian walking from North Broad Street to Chestnut Street. Mr. Chan went over the elevations. Mr. Intindola asked how someone in a wheelchair or with mobility issues would negotiate to the lower part where the stairs are or if there would be signage. Mr. Chan said signage could be provided to direct those individuals to the sidewalk.

Board members asked if the applicant considered any sustainable solutions in regards to the amount of asphalt. Mr. Chan said that Chase has a green initiative and that the architect will explain what is being done within the building and that in regards to the outside, they look at different types of concrete mixes.

Board members had questions regarding the size and style of the pylon sign and if consideration had been given to a sign more like the other proposed signs and other signs in the Village.

There were no questions from the public.

James Lalli was sworn and his credentials as a licensed architect accepted. Mr. Lalli testified regarding the floor plans and explained the types of services that will be provided at this location. Mr. Lalli testified regarding the number of employees that will be at the location on a regular basis and the hours of business. Mr. Lalli described the drop roof structure on the left side of the building and testified regarding the rendering of the building. Mr. Lalli said that they have discussed the plans with HPC at two meetings and are continuing to work with them. Mr. Lalli said the ATM lights would be on from dusk until dawn. Mr. Lalli testified regarding the signs and said the free standing sign could be changed to match the building signs. Mr. Lalli said the bank would be willing to work with the town as to the use of the lot after hours.

Mr. Barree asked if HPC saw the sign packet. Mr. Lalli said they did not. Mr. Barree asked if the

mechanicals and solar panels would be seen from the street and where the panels would be located. Mr. Lalli stated that they would not and the panels would be on the flat roof. Board members asked if there would be an entrance door in the alleyway and Mr. Lalli said there would only be an emergency exit there. Board members asked how mothers with strollers would navigate the steps. Board members asked about security lighting and cameras. Board members asked about the landscaping.

Mr. Rutishauser asked about the sunshade on the front of the building and if it encroached in the right of way. MR. Lalli said it does encroach. Mr. Rutishauser said they would need an encroachment agreement for that.

There were no questions from the public.

John Corak was sworn and his credentials as a licensed engineer were accepted. Mr. Corak testified regarding the traffic impact study he prepared. Mr. Corak described how he prepared the study and the site visits he made. Mr. Corak compared what is proposed to the existing Blue Foundry bank. Mr. Corak stated that there is a general decline in using banks and that what is proposed would not cause adverse conditions at this location. Mr. Corak described the circulation and parking and stated that the EV make-ready space provided on the ADA compliant space does not count toward accessible space.

Mr. Intindola commented that this bank will be more of a financial services building and would not create significant trip generation. Mr. Intindola said the site was properly marked and overall would be an improvement on what exists.

Board members asked about the level of services and Mr. Corak explained the process. Board members asked about the drive-thru and how many cars could fit and about exiting the parking lot. Board members asked if they would be able to go both ways on exiting the lot and Mr. Corak said they could and there are no concerns regarding that. Board members asked if there could be a condition in the resolution that traffic issues could be reviewed after 6 months if approved. Mr. Rutishauser said they could make the condition and the Police Department could make a report. Board members asked if there would be signs restricting thru traffic.

Mr. Rutishauser asked how Chase would deal with people parking in the lot. The applicant said they would discuss having Title 39 regulations for the property.

There were no questions from the public.

Thomas Ricci was sworn and his credentials as a professional planner accepted. Mr. Ricci testified that he reviewed the Village Master Plan and visited the site. Mr. Ricci described the site and the zones and identified the variances being requested. Mr. Ricci described the site suitability criteria and the positive and negative criteria. Mr. Ricci stated that although a use variance is needed for the drive-thru, the proposed use will create less traffic than what is permitted. Mr. Ricci concluded that there will be no substantial detriments to the Master Plan.

Mr. Barree said he generally agrees with Mr. Ricci's testimony. Mr. Barree asked about the site obstruction due to the portion of the building at the intersection of Franklin Avenue and Chestnut Street. Mr. Ricci said the sidewalk at that corner is wide, but they would look at that.

Board members asked about the signs and lighting on the Franklin Avenue side. Mr. Ricci said the signs would be internally illuminated and the signs could be put on dimmers. Board members asked if the lighting issues could also be reviewed after 6 months.

There were no questions from the public.

Public comment:

Arthur Neiss, Esq., represents the property owner on the corner of North Broad Street and Franklin Avenue, and said that his client has come to an agreement with the applicant regarding what has been discussed with architect.

Mr. Lalli, architect, said they would not install the solar panels next to 65 North Broad Street, but would be placed about 20 feet from the building edge and will be angled south toward the back of the parking lot. Mr. Lalli said the height of the building immediately next to 65 North Broad could be lowered.

Following a discussion with Mr. Neiss regarding the height of the building and how it may block the view from the windows of 65 North Broad Street, Mr. Lalli said he will look at how he can lower the height and prepare an updated rendering.

The hearing was carried to March 11, 2025 without further notice.

Resolution memorialization: The Halpert, 225 South Pleasant Avenue, Block 4304, Lot 1, was memorialized.

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 10:42 P.M.

Minutes submitted by: Jane Wondergem, Board Secretary

Date Approved: March 25, 2025