

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

Opening:

The public meeting of the Zoning Board of Adjustment of the Village of Ridgewood was called to order at 8:00 p.m.

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

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:

Mr. Brown announced that the Fox, 325 Crest Road, application was carried to March 25, 2025 with further notice.

Old 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. (Continued from February 11, 2025 without further notice)

Bruce Rosenberg, Esq., present on behalf of the applicant, briefly recapped the prior meeting.

Aaron Chan, civil engineer, was previously sworn and testified regarding the revised site plan he prepared. Mr. Chan went over the gains and losses in regards to the parking and the soil movement calculations. Mr. Chan said that the 2 foot overhang for the canopy protection over the Franklin Avenue side of the building would require a front yard setback variance. The North Broad Street opening has a small brick wall.

Mr. Rosenberg shared the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) report with the Board.

Board members asked about the steps in the walkway and Mr. Chan explained that they cannot be eliminated due to the 5 foot difference in the grade which would make the sidewalk too steep. Board members asked about existing fiber optic lines in the parking lot. Mr. Chan stated that they are for an adjacent building and that they will work with the utility authorities. Board members asked about the existing roof drain which empties into the plantings. Mr. Chan said the PVC pipe goes into the landscaped area and they are proposing to connect to the underground system.

There were no questions from the public.

James Lalli, architect, was previously sworn and testified regarding the renderings he prepared. Mr. Lalli explained how they addressed the concerns of the HPC and will continue to work with them. Mr. Lalli said they cut back the gable roof and revised the signage putting the freestanding

sign at the North Broad Street entrance. Mr. Lalli said they will work with HPC and the owner of the adjacent building in regards to the southern wall of that building.

Mr. Rutishauser asked how the street lights would be powered and if they would be the responsibility of the town or the bank. Mr. Rosenberg said they would be the responsibility of the bank. Mr. Rutishauser asked that they pick the same pattern used by the town to match the rest of the Village.

Board members were concerned about drivers cutting through the parking lot as it is already an issue. MR. Intindola said that cutting through is an enforceable violation. Mr. Rutishauser said the applicant would have to work with the Village to address that concern. Board members would like to see a report from the Police Department. Mr. Rutishauser suggested a six month look back to address traffic and other concerns.

Board members questioned the need for the pylon sign. Mr. Lalli said it is proposed to be placed in that location so drivers would not miss the entrance on South Broad Street. There was Board discussion regarding the pylon sign and the justification for it as it would need a variance.

John Corak, traffic expert, was previously sworn, and testified in regards to the site plan. Mr. Corak explained how a traffic 'jog' was created to slow down the traffic on the site and while cut-through traffic cannot be prevented entirely, the site was designed to keep speeds low. Board members asked if they had considered a speed bump. Mr. Corak said they did not consider a speed bump because the drive-up portion needs to be clear and to avoid conflicts with parking spaces and driving maneuvers. Board members asked about other alternatives to prevent cut-throughs. Mr. Corak described how they study the property and the benefits to the proposed design.

Mr. Intindola said that eliminating the driveway from Franklin Avenue and moving it to a side street follows State policy. Board members continued to have concerns regarding cut through traffic. Mr. Intindola pointed out that the applicant created the jog in the traffic and placed a stop bar in the middle of the site. Board members asked if drivers could be ticketed for cutting through. Mr. Rutishauser said if the applicant grants authority to the Village to enforce motor vehicle regulations on the property under Title 39, drivers could be ticketed. Mr. Rosenberg said the applicant would work with the Village to do that.

Mr. Corak said the applicant would agree to restrict left turns out of the drive-thru and would review the traffic issues after six months with input from various Village authorities.

Mr. Rosenberg said the applicant would remove the pylon sign from the plans.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Mr. Rosenberg made closing remarks.

Following Board deliberation, Mr. Brown made a motion to approve the application with the conditions discussed, Ms. Ruhl seconded and the application was approved, 5 to 2.

Ms. Kasetta left the meeting.

Michael Lubin, Esq., joined the meeting as Board Counsel.

KEVIN & COLLEEN ST. JOHN – An application to permit the construction of a one-story front addition, one-story front open portico, box window, a two-story rear addition, second story addition, and modifications to the existing patio, which would result in a front yard setback to the addition of 37.3 feet, where 40 feet is required, to the portico of 33.8 feet where 35 feet is required, and coverage by above grade structures within 140 feet of the front lot line of 21.39%, where 20% is permitted at 199 Spencer Place, Block 2301, Lot 4, in an R-2 Zone.

Kevin and Colleen St. John, homeowners, were sworn.

Jeffrey Gasnick was sworn and his credentials as a licensed architect accepted. Mr. Gasnick testified regarding the plans he prepared, describing the series of additions being proposed. Mr. Gasnick identified the variances being proposed. Mr. Gasnick described the property hardships, stating the lot has nonconforming width and area, a nonconforming existing location of the dwelling and a sub optimum placement of the garage.

Mr. Gasnick described the floor plans and the need for an entry area. Mr. Gasnick said they tried to keep the coverage by above-grade structures within what is permitted, but the location of the existing garage within the first 140 feet made it difficult. If the garage had been built back further, they would not be asking for a coverage variance.

Mr. Gasnick said the rear additions will not be visible from the street and that gross building area and coverage by improvements conform. Mr. Gasnick said other dwellings on Spencer Place also encroach into the front yard setback and what is proposed conforms with the character of Spencer Place. Mr. Gasnick said they had explored other options, but the property hardships were too imposing for other options to make sense and what is being proposed is necessary to improve the functionality of the existing home.

Mr. Barree asked if any of the attic space would exceed 7 feet. Mr. Gasnick said the maximum height in the attic is 6 feet.

Board members asked about the cantilevered addition on the front left side. Mr. Gasnick said the first story fireplace juts into the space so they proposed the 2 foot cantilever to expand the second floor space. Board members said that street scape is important and the cantilever throws off the balance of the house. Mr. Gasnick said there is a tree in front of that part of the house. Board members suggested a trellis or lattice, or a fake wall or to bring out the lower level to match the second floor. Board members asked if the windows on the first floor and second floor could align.

Mr. Gasnick said they would extend the first story portion to match the second floor and the windows would align.

There were no questions or comments from the public.

Following Board deliberation, Ms. Ruhl made a motion to approve with the condition that the first floor will match the second floor, the windows will align and they would never enclose the front porch in any way. Mr. Fox seconded and the application was approved. Mr. Gasnick will submit revised plans to be reviewed by the site plan committee.

Resolution memorialization: The following resolutions were memorialized:

- Scoccimarro, 225 North Monroe Street, Block 1816, Lot 26
- Jackson, 396 Godwin Avenue, Block 2501, Lot 4
- Pilchik, 309 Windsor Terrace, Block 1813, Lot 10

Discussion – Zoning Board of Adjustment Annual Report. Mr. Brown asked if anyone had any comments, questions or additions to the Annual report. Mr. Swan asked about the process and Mr. Barree explained.

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 10:38 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Jane Wondergem, Board Secretary

Date Approved: April 8, 2025