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MINUTES OF
PLANNING BOARD/BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
OF HIGH BRIDGE BOROUGH

Meeting Date: July 21, 2025 - **Meeting Time:** 6:30 P.M.
Meeting Location: 40 Fairview Avenue, High Bridge, NJ 08829

1. CALL TO ORDER:
This is a regular meeting of the Planning/Zoning Board of the Borough of High Bridge. Adequate notice of this meeting has been given in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act in that a Notice was published in the Hunterdon Review and The Star Ledger on July 9, 2025. Notice of and agenda this meeting were posted on the bulletin board in the Borough Hall.

2. FLAG SALUTE: Led by presiding officer.

3. ROLL CALL:
Brosnan, present; Conroy, present; Koffman, present; Lee, present; Mart, present; Musnuff, present; Ryder, present; Suozzo, present; Yu, present. Also present were Planning Board Alternates, Tom Osborne and Amanda Regan, Board Attorney Kevin VanHise, Board Planner Darlene Green, Board Engineer William Burr, Planning Board Secretary, Barbara Kinsky and 35 members of the public.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS: It is the policy of the Planning Board that all public comments on an issue shall be limited to 3 minutes per person and no person may make more than one (1) comment per subject. Comments may be made on any subject pertaining to Board issues. Comments pertaining to Public Hearings should be saved for that section of the agenda. No debating between residents. Comments should be addressed to the Chairman and Board members at the public microphone. NONE

5. READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 16, 2025
Motion to dispense with the reading of the prior meetings' minutes:
Motion/Second: Suozzo/Brosnan Voice vote: Nine yes votes, motion passes.

Motion to approve June 16, 2025, meeting minutes. Motion/ Second: Mart/Lee
Brosnan, yes; Conroy, yes; Koffman, yes; Lee, yes; Mart, yes; Musnuff, yes; Ryder, yes; Suozzo, yes; Yu, yes.
Nine Yes votes, motion passed.

6. **NEW BUSINESS**: Public Hearing for PBapp-01-2025 Preliminary & Final Site Plan for 100 West Main Street, High Bridge, New Jersey 08829. Block 24, Lot 16. Owner/applicant: SE High Bridge LLC.

Motion to open Public Hearing for PBapp-01-2025: Ryder Second: Koffman
Voice vote: Nine yes votes, motion passed.
Mr. Kevin VanHise, Board Attorney, confirmed the applicant's compliance with notice and publication requirements. Board Chairman Musnuff asked if there were any recusals and Board Member Tom Osborne asked to be recused as he lives within 200 feet of the property.
The applicant's attorney, Frederick Zelly gave a brief history and description of the property and outlined the proposed project:

- Size: Approximately 4.3 acres
- History: Former Exact Level and Tool manufacturing site (1930s–1980s); currently in disrepair with code violations and structural collapse
- Redevelopment Plan: Within boundaries of the 100 West Main Street Redevelopment Plan
- Project Type: Four-story, 98-unit multifamily residential apartment building.
- Unit Breakdown: 4 studio units, 40 one-bedroom units, 50 two-bedroom units, and 4 three-bedroom units.
- Affordable Housing: 20 units designated as affordable
- Parking: 170 spaces (18 EV-capable)
- Amenities**:** Fitness center, co-working space, outdoor recreation area, pool, clubhouse

The following witnesses were sworn in:

- Chris Class – Architect
- John Ferranti – Engineer
- Gary Dean – Traffic Engineer
- John McDonough or Matt Flynn – Professional Planner
- Nana Duncan-representative for owner.

Mr. Class was presented as an expert in the field of architecture. He stated he has approximately 12 years of professional experience designing buildings of similar size and scope in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The Board accepted his qualifications without objection.

Mr. Class detailed the specific goals and requirements of the project, which is to provide a structure that aligned with the redevelopment plan.

- Building Specs: A four-story building with 98 dwelling units and approximately 124,000 square feet of building area.
- Affordable Housing: 20% of the units are designated as affordable. The units are broken down into 4 one-bedroom, 12 two-bedroom, and 4 three-bedroom units. These units are further categorized by income: 3 very low-income, 7 low-income, and 10 moderate-income.
- Ground Floor Amenities**:** The ground floor includes a primary lobby, fitness center, co-working space, and a clubhouse/event space. These facilities are exclusive to tenants and their guests.

Mr. Class detailed how the project meets the parameters of the redevelopment plan utilizing large-scale plan sets that are the same as provided to the Board and Boards professionals except for a modified sheet showing revisions and updated renderings. This was marked Exhibit A-1.

Mr. Class continued his presentation by describing the design of the ground floor. He stated that the front of the building was designed to have a commercial feel, featuring larger glass panes and openings. To achieve this, key amenities like the lobby, fitness center, co-working space, and clubhouse were placed at the front. Behind these public areas are a series of residential units with the affordable units dispersed throughout the building. Mr. Class provided the square footage for the units and confirmed that the affordable units are the same size as the market-rate units. All units comply with the minimum size requirements of NJC 54 -2.4.

- Studios: 522–586 sq. ft. (min. 550 sq. ft.)
- One-Bedrooms: Approximately 770 sq. ft. (min. 600 sq. ft.)
- Two-Bedrooms: 986–1,140 sq. ft. (min. 850 sq. ft.)
- Three-Bedrooms: (min. 1,150 sq. ft.-additionally noted that within these units, one bedroom is no less than 150 sq. ft., and the remaining bedrooms are no less than 100 sq. ft.

Mr. Class presented the floor plan (page A-2) which depicts a typical residential level design layout for the second, third and fourth floors. As part of the redevelopment plan requirements, the fourth floor features a mansard roof. It functions as a wall-facing material that gives the appearance of a lower building and does not reduce the size of the units. The mansard roof extends around the entire building and does change depth of projection towards the back, but the aesthetic is essentially the same. Class noted that this is a typical architectural design move that conforms to the neighborhood's aesthetic.

Mr. Class explained how the building design conforms to the redevelopment plan's requirement for three distinct bands for the building with a strong base, midsection and cap.

- Base: The bottom of the building features a commercial feel with open glass and is primarily made of brick.
- Cap: The mansard roof serves as the cap, meeting the plan's requirements.
- Midsection: The use of brick continues upwards in various sections to break down the building's scale. This, along with varying materials like fiber cement and wood-look fiber cement, is intended to create a more pedestrian-friendly feel.

Mr. Class provided a new site plan sheet to demonstrate the building's visual impact from adjacent properties. The primary focus was on the views from Beaver Street and Dennis Avenue. Mr. Class stated that the building is difficult to see from the street due to the site's elevation, which is significantly lower than the street level (site elevation 232 ft. vs. Beaver Street at 248 ft.). Existing vegetation also provides substantial screening throughout the year, except for some visibility during winter months. Mr. Class also noted that the civil engineer will provide testimony regarding new landscaping plans designed to further increase the density of the screening

- Mr. Class responded to comments pertaining to architecture in the Board Planner's and Board Engineer's review letters dated July 16, 2025.
- Affordable Housing Revisions: The revision includes 2 two-bedroom units designated for very low-income households and 1 one-bedroom unit.
- Unit Sizing: The affordable units will be the same size as the market-rate units and will comply with **NJAC** 5:43- 2.4f. Minimum square footage requirements are as follows: studio units: at least 550 square feet; one-bedroom units: at least 600 square feet; two-bedroom units: at least 850 square feet; three-bedroom units: at least 1,150 square feet; and at least one bedroom in each unit will be no less than 150 square feet.
- Residents of the affordable units will have access to all on-site amenities at no additional charge.
- Patio Details: In response to a previous comment regarding the size of the patios, the following details were confirmed: patios will measure 5 feet by 7 feet; they will be accessible and will provide the required maneuvering clearance; and a 3-foot-deep canopy, spanning the full width of the patio, will be installed over each one.
- Patio Function**:** The patios are intended to be a private outdoor space for the exclusive use of ground-floor residents. They will have a walk-out door from the unit but will not have public access via a separate gate.
- Plan Revisions: It was noted that the current site plans do not show fencing or railings for these patios. The project team agreed to revise the plans to show the fences and to provide a detailed drawing of the railing.
- Leasing Office Use: It was clarified that the leasing office is intended for tenant use on a per-appointment basis and is not a public function.
- Mr. Class addressed the depth of architectural projections. The redevelopment plan required a minimum of 8 inches for projections. The project is providing a typical depth of at least 12 inches, exceeding the minimum requirement. The project team confirmed that the projection would be applied to all sides of the building.
- Mechanical Equipment: the maximum height of mechanical equipment at 5 feet, condensing units will be approximately 4 feet tall and will be centrally located on the rooftop to minimize visibility from the ground. If any equipment may be visible, screening will be provided with material matching the roof.
- It was agreed that a detailed roof plan showing the location of all HVAC equipment, elevator overruns, and other roof-mounted items should be submitted as a condition of approval.
- Mr. Class addressed the calculation for building height and average grade: The building's grade elevation will match the first floor's "zero" elevation.
- Mr. Class clarified the project's plan for managing trash and recycling. Each floor will have trash and recycling chutes. All items from the chutes will go to a compactor room. Bins will be provided in the trash rooms for oversized items. These items will be handled by staff and brought to an outdoor dumpster for collection. The trash company will pick up compacted trash from a designated loading space near the trash room, and they will also collect oversized items from the outdoor dumpster.
- Mr. Class showed samples of the bricks that will be used. They were identified as Exhibit A-3.

Following the architect's presentation, the Board and the Boards Professionals conducted an extensive period of questioning, focusing on the project's potential impacts on the surrounding neighborhood and ensuring compliance with all regulations.

- Rooftop Equipment & Screening**:** A primary area of concern for multiple Board members was the visual and acoustic impact of rooftop mechanical equipment. Members repeatedly questioned the screening for the 98 individual HVAC condensers, elevator overruns, and other equipment. The questioning underscored the Board's focus on mitigating the

impact on adjacent residential properties, particularly those on Dennis Avenue and Beaver Street, which are topographically elevated and would look down upon the roof. The consensus among the Board was that a detailed roof plan showing the precise location, specifications, and screening method for all equipment would be required as a condition of any potential approval.

- Affordable Housing & Unit Plans**:** The Board sought to confirm strict compliance with affordable housing regulations. As a condition of approval, the Board requested that the applicant provide detailed floor plans indicating the specific square footage for each of the 20 affordable units. A question was also raised about an interior-facing studio unit; Mr. Class clarified that its design complied with all light and air requirements.
- Waste Management**:** In response to questions about solid waste, the applicant's team clarified the process: tenants will use interior trash chutes for both trash and recycling, which lead to a compactor room. This room will be serviced by a private hauler. A separate outdoor dumpster will be available for oversized items. The applicant's representative stated a goal of daily pickup, likely in the late afternoon, and agreed to a condition of approval requiring compliance with all Borough regulations regarding pickup times.
- Historical Acknowledgment**:** A Board member requested that the applicant consider incorporating a display case or plaque in the building's lobby to memorialize the site's history as the Exact Level and Tool factory, noting its contributions during World War II. Ms. Duncan, representing the owner, indicated they would not be opposed to such a feature. This exchange highlighted the Board's interest in integrating the new development into the historical and cultural fabric of the community.
- Building Aesthetics & Industrial Heritage**:** A Board member commented on the building's aesthetics, noting that the updated renderings had a more industrial feel than he initially anticipated, which he found favorable. He inquired if the applicant had considered any further design elements to pay homage to the site's industrial past. Ms. Duncan, who was confirmed for the record as the owner's representative, responded that the design team's goal was to balance the site's history with the character of the surrounding residential neighborhood. She explained that features like the breaks in the facade were intended to reduce the building's scale and create a feel more akin to single-family homes, which a more overtly industrial design might not achieve.
- Security and Access: The Board inquired about building security. The applicant clarified that tenant access to the two primary entrances would be controlled by key fobs and a phone application. All emergency stairwells would function as exit-only. A daily on-site staff presence is planned, with on-call support for after-hours emergencies.
- Building Lighting**:** Board members distinguished between site lighting (to be addressed by the engineer) and light emanating from the building itself. Mr. Class testified that facade-mounted lights would be limited to doorways, down-shielded to prevent glare. He also stated that hallway lighting at the ends of corridors would be minimal and designed to prevent significant light spill into the surrounding wooded area.

The Chairman opened the hearing to questions from the public. Members of the public were directed to state their name and address for the record.

- A resident whose property is adjacent to the site expressed concern about a drainage river near his home and inquired about the proposed privacy screening. These questions were deferred to the site engineer's testimony.
- **Tom Creelman (22 Sunset Drive):** Mr. Creelman questioned the architect's visual impact analysis. He performed a quick calculation of the elevation difference between Beaver Street and the proposed roofline and expressed concerns that the building would be substantially more visible than the applicant's rendering suggested. He also asked for clarification on the definition of a "co-working space" and questioned the architectural effectiveness of the mansard roof in reducing the building's perceived height. Creelman also inquired about pool safety for the public pool.
- **Dave Goessling (19 Mountain Avenue):** Mr. Goessling raised concerns about pedestrian safety, noting the lack of sidewalks on West Main Street connecting the site to downtown or the future transit hub. The Board acknowledged this as a broader infrastructure challenge involving a county road. Mr. Goessling also suggested naming the building in a way that honors its industrial history.
- **Christopher Graham (84 West Main Street):** Mr. Graham asked about the anticipated timeline for demolition and confirmed that all 170 parking spaces would be contained on-site with no on-street parking proposed on West Main Street (County Route 513).

- **Michael Estrada (6 Michael Lane):** Mr. Estrada asked if the mansard roof was a design choice to circumvent height ordinances. It was clarified that this feature was a specific requirement of the redevelopment plan. He also inquired about how to access the project's environmental and traffic impact studies and was advised they are public records available for review at Borough Hall.
- **Carol Creelman (22 Sunset Drive):** Ms. Creelman asked about the maximum occupancy of the building and common areas, the policy on pets, the tenant screening process, and the building's insurance coverage. The applicant stated that maximum occupancy would be determined by building code, a pet policy would be developed but is typically one pet per unit, all tenants would undergo credit and criminal background checks, and the building would be fully insured.
- **Elizabeth Barton (15 & 17 Beaver Street):** Ms. Barton, an adjacent property owner, voiced strong concerns about future residents trespassing onto her property and asked if a fence would be installed along the property line. She also questioned the potential for noise pollution from the 98 individual rooftop HVAC units. Mr. Class responded that the units are small, quiet, and centrally located, and that sound would be further dampened by the building's parapet walls.
- **Susie Supnet (49 Beaver Street):** Ms. Supnet asked if the 98-unit density was already approved and questioned why the developer chose to build to the maximum density allowed by the redevelopment plan. The Board clarified that the redevelopment plan set the maximum allowable density, and the applicant's representative stated that pursuing this density was necessary for the project's financial feasibility.

8:05pm, Chairman Musnuff called for a break. The recording was stopped, and the meeting will resume in 5 minutes.

8:10pm, Meeting resumed.

Mr. John Ferranti was presented as an expert in the field of civil engineering. He holds a Bachelor of Science from Newark College of Engineering and a master's from the New Jersey Institute of Technology. He has extensive experience presenting similar applications before boards throughout New Jersey. The Board accepted his qualifications without objection.

Mr. Ferranti's testimony was based on revised drawings dated May 20, 2025 (Exhibit A4).

Mr. Ferranti described the existing conditions of the site. The property is a 4.3-acre, unused industrial "brownfield" site, part of the 100 West Main Street redevelopment plan. The project requires no variances as it meets all requirements of the redevelopment plan. While the site is 4.3 acres, calculations were based on 4.122 acres to account for a right-of-way easement requested by the county for County Route 513. The property is not located in the South Branch River flood zone, as confirmed by the FEMA flood map on sheet SP-01. The proposal is well within the redevelopment plan's limits; with 54.5% impervious coverage (80% allowed) the building coverage is 19.6% (60% allowed). The site is lower in elevation than the surrounding properties. Dennis Avenue to the west is roughly 5 to 6 feet higher. Beaver Street to the north is approximately 12 to 15 feet higher. The site has some minor steep slopes to the north, but the limit of disturbance will not impact them. The site has 163 existing trees. Trees in the proposed building and parking lot areas will be removed, but perimeter trees and those in the northeast corner will be maintained. The site is a contaminated former industrial site currently under NJDEP oversight with a Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP) in charge. A deed notice for soil contamination exists on the southern quadrant of the property, which will be modified post-redevelopment based on the new engineering controls (asphalt, soil cap). A classification exception area will be established for groundwater contamination, which has a time limit for natural attenuation to clean the water. Existing monitoring wells will either be abandoned or converted to flush-mounted wells to be even with the new pavement.

Mr. Ferranti continued his presentation and spoke about:

Required Permits;

- including Highlands exemption (received exemption #4)
- tree removal permit
- County Planning Board (preliminary approval received)
- County driveway and road opening permits
- DEP Treatment Works Approval

- DEP non-applicability permits due to a 300-foot riparian buffer that intersects a paved corner of the site.

Proposed Site Plan and Features:

- Access and Parking include: Two, two-way driveways are proposed for greater flexibility, located near the two existing curb cuts. 170 total parking spaces will be provided, which meets requirements.Twenty-nine spaces will be electric vehicle (EV) ready with one-third being functional at the time of the Certificate of Occupancy. EV spaces are private and will be assigned by management The site plan allows for emergency and waste vehicles to navigate the site without backing out onto West Main Street. The circulation model assumes a fully parked lot. The dead-end lot on the left has a striped turnaround area, while the lot on the right allows vehicles to loop around
- Recreational Area: The plan includes a recreational area with a pool, which will be enclosed by a six-foot fence. A 300-square-foot ground-floor area for pool storage will be added to the plans. As a condition of approval, the developer will add more details to the plans, showing amenities like tables etc.
- Stormwater Management: The design meets all state and local requirements for a major project, including standards for green infrastructure, TSS removal (80%), and water quantity for a 100-year storm with added safety factors. A waiver for groundwater recharge is being sought due to the site's contamination, an exception allowed by the DEP. An underground concrete vault detention system and a grass swale around the perimeter are proposed. One of the green infrastructure components is identified as a bio pod/bio filter.
- The existing drainage swale at the perimeter will be enhanced and partially piped underground, with no negative impact on neighbors.
- Utilities: All utilities are available on West Main Street and will be connected underground. The building units will be all-electric; natural gas service will not be used.
- Lighting: The lighting plan uses shielded, dark-sky compliant, 3000K fixtures on 20-foot poles and mounted on the building. Calculations show zero light spillage at the property line. Most lights will be on a timer, shutting off around 10 p.m., with 5-10% remaining for security, focused near the building.
- Waste Management: A trash enclosure for bulk items will be located in the north corner of the site. Regular trash and recycling will be handled by an internal compactor and serviced by a private carting company two to three times per week. A designated loading zone will accommodate waste trucks, delivery vehicles (like Amazon and DHL), and moving trucks.
- Grading and drainage: The site's grading plan ensures the building height remains below the required 48 feet. An existing drainage ditch that runs along the property's perimeter will be piped underground and connected to the existing county infrastructure that flows to the South Branch Raritan River.
- Contamination of Site: The property is a contaminated site currently under the oversight of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).A Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP) is managing the site's remediation. There’s a deed notice for soil contamination in the south corner quadrant of the site. The property owner must maintain engineering controls, specifically a soil cap, over the contaminated area. For groundwater, a classification exception area will be established, which has a time limit for organic contaminants to naturally clean up. After redevelopment, the deed notice will be modified and refiled with the county to reflect the new "as-built" conditions, like the new asphalt parking lot.
- Traffic Circulation: A traffic study confirms that emergency vehicles and waste trucks can maneuver the site safely. A key feature of the design is that these vehicles will not have to back out onto West Main Street. Comments from the local fire department have not yet been received. The project team plans to coordinate with the Board of Education to add a bus stop for children. They are also agreeing to add a sidewalk along West Main Street, which will be coordinated with the county.
- Parking: The project will have 170 parking spaces, which meets all requirements. 29 spaces will be EV ready, in compliance with the law. These are private spaces for residents, not for public use. The EV spaces will be phased in over six years after the building is completed. If there aren't enough residents with electric vehicles, management will assign the spaces based on need, so they don't go unused.
- Fencing and Trespassing: A 6-foot-high lattice fence is planned for the pool and recreational area. No perimeter fence is proposed for the entire site. Trespassing onto neighboring properties is considered unlikely due to a steep slope and existing vegetation acting as natural barriers.
- The project received a conditional approval "not to construct" from the Hunterdon County Planning Board on May 1, 2025.

- Conditions include executing right-of-way easements, providing a sight distance analysis, obtaining maintenance easements, making minor pavement and drainage improvements, relocating a utility pole and fire hydrant, and paying an off-tract contribution.
- A key unresolved issue is the county's request for site easements from neighboring properties for sight triangles, which the county may require in lieu of street trees.

Following the engineer's presentation, the Board and the Boards Professionals conducted an extensive period of questioning, focusing on the project's potential impacts on the surrounding neighborhood and ensuring compliance with all regulations.

- Emergency Access: Board members requested the applicant consult the local fire department regarding emergency vehicle specifications and access, particularly to the farthest corner of the building. The building will be fully sprinklered.
- Contamination & Disclosure: A question was raised as to whether tenant leases must disclose the on-site contamination; the applicant's team will provide an answer at the next hearing.
- Demolition: In response to questions about protecting neighbors during demolition, Mr. Ferranti explained that a demolition plan would be prepared, including a hazardous materials assessment, abatement procedures for things like asbestos, and air/dust monitoring.
- Transformer: The potential need for a pad-mounted electrical transformer was discussed. The applicant agreed to show a potential location and associated screening on the plans, pending final determination from the utility provider after approval.
- Backup Power: The owner has indicated no emergency generator is planned. The elevator will have a battery backup system.
- Location and impact of Snow Storage if needed: Snow from the parking lot will be stored in the numerous green spaces on the property. The plan is to store snow without affecting the number of available parking spaces. In the case of a very severe snowstorm, the snow would be trucked off-site. Building management will be responsible for identifying appropriate areas for snow accumulation while being respectful of landscaping and fencing.
- Fire Hydrants on site: confirmed a hydrant in front of site.
- Signs for EV parking: agree to remove.

The Chairman opened the hearing to questions from the public. Members of the public were directed to state their name and address for the record.

- **Nicole Longo (13 Dennis Ave)**: Raised concerns about increased water runoff, potential flooding, and tree removal affecting her property. She also questioned if the 170 parking spaces were sufficient for 98 units.
- **Tom Creelman (22 Sunset Drive)**: Questioned the design calculations for the proposed drainage swale, suggesting it was too flat and could cause water to spread to adjacent properties. He also pointed out discrepancies in the steep slope analysis and plan details. He asked about the maintenance access for the underground stormwater vaults.

Public Hearing will be carried to the August 18,2025 at 6:30pm, location TBD. (most likely The High Bridge Firehouse)

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS: It is the policy of the Planning Board that all public comments on an issue shall be limited to 1 minute per person and no person may make more than one (1) comment per subject. Comments may be made on any subject pertaining to Board issues. Comments pertaining to Public Hearings should be saved for that section of the agenda. No debating between residents. Comments should be addressed to the Chairman and Board members at the public microphone. NONE

8. ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn: Koffman Second: Lee Voice vote: Nine yes votes, motion passed.

Next Meeting Date: August 18, 2025
Meeting Location: Rescue Squad Building, 95 West Main Street, High Bridge, NJ 08829
Meeting Time: 7:30 P.M.