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

Meeting Date: September 15, 2025 - **Meeting Time:** 6:30 P.M.
Meeting Location: 7 Maryland 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 September 3, 2025. Notice and agenda for 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 present Board Attorney Kevin VanHise, Board Planner Darlene Green, Board Engineer, William Burr, Planning Board Secretary, Barbara Kinsky and 36 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.
Al Schweikert from 90 Mine Road: Dr. Al Schweikert stated that he has hired expert witnesses to review the Application on the agenda but has been unable to obtain all the necessary documents. He formally asked the Board to allow his experts time to testify at the next meeting. The Board's attorney acknowledged the request and clarified that it needed to be made during the public hearing to be officially on the record.

5. READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES: August 18, 2025
Motion to dispense with the reading of the prior meetings' minutes:
Motion/ Second: Lee/ Brosnan Voice vote: 9 yes votes. Motion passed.

Motion to approve August 18, 2025, meeting minutes. Motion/ Second: Mart/Koffman
Brosnan, yes; Conroy, yes; Koffman, yes; Lee, yes; Mart, yes; Musnuff, yes; Ryder, yes; Suozzo, yes; Yu, yes.
9 Yes votes. Motion passed.

6. OLD BUSINESS: Continuation of 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 re-open Public Hearing for PBapp-01-2025: Suozzo Second: Mart 9 yes votes. Motion passed.

Dr. Al Schweikert, 90 Mine Road requested that his expert witnesses be allowed to testify at a future hearing regarding an application. He argued that his team had not received all necessary documents, such as a final version of the redevelopment plan and the affordable housing plan, despite filing Open Public Records Act (OPRA) requests. In response to a question about missing documents, the Board's attorney stated that the redevelopment plan is available to the public and that the affordable housing plan is not directly relevant to the current review.
A Board member then added that the final redevelopment plan has been available on the Borough's website Since September of the previous year.

The Board's attorney, Mr. Van Hise, clarified the Board's purview: to evaluate if the site plan application complies with the requirements of the Borough's ordinances and the previously adopted Redevelopment Plan.

Frederick Zelly, applicant's attorney, introduced the witnesses for the evening: John Ferrante (Engineer), Elizabeth Dolan (Traffic Engineer), and John McDonough (Landscape Architect/Planner). New witnesses were sworn in and returning witnesses were reminded they are still under oath.

John Ferrante, P.E., was recalled as the applicant's engineer. Mr. Ferrante testified on the following topics.

- Fire Department Review Letter (Dated August 14): Mr. Ferrante addressed the potential water main capacity issues and said that the applicant would agree to install a looped fire protection system, add two additional fire hydrants on the southwest and northwest sides of the property and install two 10,000-gallon underground water storage tanks for supplemental firefighting capacity. Mr. Ferrante explained that the turning radii in the plans were designed using a larger firetruck model larger than the one used by the High Bridge Fire Department, confirming access is sufficient. He also addressed concerns about a dead-end parking area and stated that the applicant will modify the western side of the site to create an access lane for fire trucks using structure reinforced grass. This would allow vehicle access while maintaining a grass appearance. Mr. Ferrante also stated that islands in the parking area will be modified slightly to improve turning ability for fire apparatus.
- Environmental Status and remediation: Mr. Ferrante explained that the contaminated site is being managed by a Licensed Site Remediation Professional (LSRP) under the jurisdiction of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), a process separate from the Board's approval. He testified that a Remedial Action Permit for soil is in place, which includes a deed notice for an "earthen cap" on the southwest corner of the site. The proposed new development would disrupt this, requiring a new, amended deed notice reflecting more protective engineering controls, including the building's concrete slab, asphalt pavement, and a two-foot cap of certified clean fill in all landscaped areas. Mr. Ferrante also explained that groundwater is contaminated with Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), including trichloroethylene. The proposed remediation is "natural attenuation." A Classification Exception Area (CEA) will be established, prohibiting the installation of drinking water wells on the property. Mr. Ferrante explained that vapor intrusion has not been identified as a concern, but the applicant will proactively install a passive sub-slab depressurization system (like a radon system) beneath the building. This can be converted to an active system with fans if future monitoring indicates a need.
- Utility Capacity: The project will require Treatment Works Approval from the NJDEP. Pending approval, a study will be conducted to measure existing sewer flow to confirm capacity. The design will maintain a safety factor, aiming for pipes not to exceed 70-75% capacity. The project requires a water extension permit from the NJDEP. Pending approval, a hydrant flow test will be conducted to confirm pressure and capacity for both potable water and the fire sprinkler system. The project will be all-electric. A "will serve" letter will be sent to the utility provider (JCP&L) to coordinate power requirements.

Questions from the Board members:

- A question was asked regarding the stormwater piping will have gasketed joints to address the concern about potential intrusion from the contaminated site into the stormwater system and subsequently into the Raritan River. Mr. Ferrante confirmed that joints will be gasketed. The groundwater on the site is reported to be at a depth of five to ten feet. The plan is to keep the stormwater pipes as shallow as possible, above the groundwater level, to prevent intrusion.
- A question was asked regarding how deep the incoming electric lines would be. Mr. Ferrante replied that in his experience with utilities like JCP&L, electrical lines are typically buried two to three feet below grade.
- A question was asked regarding how the modification to add fire engine access on the left side of the building would affect the landscape plan, specifically the number of trees being removed versus replaced? Mr. Ferrante replied that in discussions with the fire department, the plan is to have the access road stop short of an existing tree and with minor tweaking, the plan can accommodate a 20-foot-wide lane without cutting down trees and without triggering any new variances from landscaping standards.
- A question was asked regarding how a fire engine will get to the proposed access road when there are parking spaces in the way. Mr. Ferrante explained that a curb will be depressed. The design will take advantage of an existing cross-thatched "turn-around" area to create the access lane. This will be shown in the plan revisions.
- A question was asked regarding what the added fire access road will be made of? Mr. Ferrante explained that the materials will not be pavers. It will be made of plastic, honeycomb-style reinforced grass area with a proper sub-base that allows a fire truck to drive on it while looking like a normal grass lawn. A follow up question was asked

regarding if the grass pavers should be treated as an impervious surface for stormwater calculations? Mr. Ferrante replied that although the surface is technically permeable and will only be used rarely for emergencies, to err on the side of caution and avoid potential issues with state NJDEP and Highlands regulations, the applicant will agree to recalculate their stormwater plan treating the grass paver area as impervious.

- A question was asked regarding the reclassifying of the fire lane as an "impervious surface" and would this require a revised Highlands Exemption Permit? This question was raised for the Board's professionals to confirm. The initial opinion was that since the project was not borderline, the small change in impervious area would likely not be an issue, but it needs to be officially verified.
- A question was asked regarding snow removal for this area and Mr. Ferrante stated that it will be plowed for fire safety.
- A question was asked regarding plans for mitigating the risks during demolition of the building, considering the groundwater issues and the surrounding residents? Mr. Ferrante explained that demolition would be highly regulated. Before demolition, a hazardous waste assessment would be performed to identify materials such as asbestos, lead, mercury switches, and PCBs in expansion joints. Any hazardous materials found would be removed first, following stringent New Jersey regulations. The process includes perimeter air monitoring for dust, using wind screens, and having meteorological stations to monitor wind direction in real-time to protect the community.
- A question was asked regarding whether the project team has considered where the utility company, JCP&L, might require a grade-mounted transformer to be placed? Mr. Ferrante acknowledged this is a valid concern. He responded that based on experience with similar buildings, the project team has a good estimate of the future power requirements and can generate the necessary load letter for the utility company. They understood the warning that failing to proactively plan for the transformer's location could be a costly mistake.
- A question was asked regarding the stormwater plans for this property. Mr. Ferrante explained that this is a major project under NJ DEP rules. The applicant will request an exemption from groundwater recharge requirements, which is allowed for contaminated sites, to avoid pushing contaminants into the groundwater. They must treat stormwater runoff to remove 80% of total suspended solids from the parking lot. This is achieved using green infrastructure and other treatment devices. We must manage the 2, 10, and 100-year storms so that the water leaving the site after development is reduced to 50%, 75%, and 80% of the pre-development flow rates, respectively. This is done by detaining water and releasing it slowly. Mr. Ferrante also explained that there are new DEP rules that require use of an additional factor of safety, essentially designing for a "200-year storm," by multiplying the 100-year storm flow by 1.3 to account for climate change.
- A question was asked about if the location of the known groundwater contamination was considered when placing the apartments on the site plan? Mr. Ferrante stated the contamination is concentrated in a specific area of the property, which corresponds to the proposed parking lot in the new site plan, not where the residential building will be. They offered to provide groundwater contamination maps to the Board for review.
- A question was asked regarding if the existing building will be demolished before the final building permits for the new construction are issued? The demolition is not dependent on the issuance of building permits for the new structure. However, a separate demolition permit based on an approved demolition plan must be secured before demolition can begin.
- A question was asked regarding whether the two new fire hydrants and the two 10,000-gallon underground water storage tanks are definitely being added to the site plan, or is their installation contingent on a future assessment of the existing water main capacity? Mr. Ferrante stated that both are being added. The two 10,000-gallon underground storage tanks will be installed regardless of the watermain capacity, as they serve as a standalone water source for firefighting. The two additional fire hydrants are also confirmed, with their final placement to be determined in coordination with the fire department.

Questions from the Board's Professionals:

- Board engineer, Mr. Burr asked for clarifications regarding the letter from the Fire Chief's memo and if the applicant does plan to address all the comments in the memo. Mr. Ferrante confirmed that the applicant has agreed to address all comments related to the building's interior. For the site plan, while they are not providing 360-degree access, they have added grass pavers to create access on three sides of the building (west, south, and east), which the Fire Chief indicated would be an acceptable solution.
- Mr. Burr asked if the contaminated site can be redeveloped for residential use without causing harm or safety issues for future residents? Mr. Ferrante replied that yes, absolutely. It was stated that with the implementation of appropriate and revised engineering controls, the site will be made safe for residential use.

- Mr. Burr asked about the specific engineering controls, besides a soil cap, that are planned to be implemented to ensure resident safety from contamination. Mr. Ferrante replied that a passive sub-slab depressurization system will be installed under the building's foundation. This system, which is like a radon system, includes perforated pipes and an impervious barrier to prevent any potential vapors from contaminated groundwater from entering the building.
- Mr. Burr asked for the reasoning for a depressurization system being installed if the LSRP (Licensed Site Remediation Professional) determined there is currently no vapor intrusion risk? Mr. Ferrante replied that it is being installed as a proactive and protective measure. By installing the "passive" infrastructure now (without the fans), the system can be easily converted to an "active" system by adding exhaust fans in the future if groundwater conditions ever change and create a vapor intrusion risk.
- Mr. Burr asked about the process for monitoring this in the future and activating the system if needed? Mr. Ferrante replied that the site will be subject to a remedial action permit for groundwater, which requires regular (e.g., biannual) inspections and monitoring. If future testing shows that contamination levels have changed to a point that triggers a vapor intrusion concern, the LSRP would immediately notify the building owner, who would then be required to retrofit the passive system into an active one.
- Mr. Burr asked if the specific, safe demolition process described would be used for this project? Mr. Ferrante answered that what was described is the standard process used on similar sites, the applicant's attorney formally stipulated that the demolition would be "fully consistent" with that testimony and agreed that the Board's professionals could monitor the process to ensure compliance.
- Board Planner Ms. Green asked if future tenants will be notified that the site is contaminated. Mr. Ferrante answered that the applicant confirmed that all tenants will be advised of the site's history. This notification will likely be included directly in the lease agreement.
- Ms. Green asked how wide the new fire access lane is, and will it negatively impact the landscaping plan or require new variances? Mr. Ferrante answered that the lane will be 20 feet wide to accommodate a fire truck's outriggers. The team believes they can achieve this width with "minor tweaking" to the landscaping plan and stated they will do so without creating the need for any new landscaping variances.
- Ms. Green asked for an update on the status of the potential removal of street trees as requested by the county in a May 9th letter. Mr. Ferrante replied that the project team has discussed this with the county, and the applicant's traffic consultant will provide a specific update on that topic later in the hearing.

Questions from the public:

- Al Schweikert, 90 Mine Road asked the following questions: if it is true or false that only the Licensed Site Remediation Professionals (LSRP) can present their own data of the site to this Board? If there could be more than one LSRP on a project? Where would the soil that is contaminated with mercury be taken for disposal? How the applicant plans to get under limit of .2ppm/water for trichloroethylene? What is the time frame of review for the DEP? Mr. Ferrante answered that he was paraphrasing a letter and not acting as the LSRP and that there may be another LSRP working on the project, but there is one official LSRP. Mr. Ferrante stated that contaminated soil would be taken to a regulated facility that has a permit to accept contaminated soil. Mr. Ferrante deemed the question regarding trichloroethylene as invalid for the Board, explaining that their role is to approve the site plan, whereas the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) oversees the actual remediation. Regarding the time frame for DEP review, Mr. Ferrante replied that the DEP is dysfunctional and could take forever, but the Board can approve the project while environmental work is still going on.
- Ted Sutkowski, 10 Sunset Drive asked the following questions: If there has been a determination made regarding how deep the contamination has gone through the dirt? If it was a possibility for the contamination to rise to the surface? If the property is in a flood zone and if the topography of the ground changes and would flooding occur? Mr. Ferrante replied that the LSRP created engineering controls (like the deed notice and fencing) based on the property being undeveloped. The amount of soil that needs to be excavated depends on the final redevelopment plan and elevations. Engineering controls like a 4-inch concrete building slab, 4 inches of asphalt, or two feet of clean fill with a barrier are all acceptable caps to the DEP. These decisions will be made during the engineering phase with the LSRP. Mr. Ferrante explained that soil contamination stays bound with the soil, so it does not come up to the surface. Mr. Ferrante also stated that all flood maps were reviewed, and the property is not in a flood zone and water will be retained on the site and let out via underground pipes.
- Jeanne Sacks, 26 Beavers Street, asked the following questions: How deep underground are the two underground water tanks planned to be? If there are questions regarding the trichloroethylene levels who would handle those inquiries? Why is the impact on sewer and water of the 90+ unit building done after the building is demolished? Mr.

Ferrante replied that this depends on the size of the tank, but if a very skinny tank is used it could be less than five feet deep. To answer questions regarding trichloroethylene one would need to speak with the LSRP of record. Regarding the utility capacity Mr. Ferrante replied that the applicant has gone through a "will serve" process to confirm that utility capacity is available. Demolishing the existing building does not impact this process, and no new construction will begin until the detailed utility design is complete and approved. There are checks and balances still along the way.

- Nicole Longo, 13 Dennis Avenue asked the following questions: Has a demolition plan been presented? Will there be notice of when demolition will take place? During construction should there be any air quality concerns would notice be given to those within 200 feet of the property? Mr. Ferrante stated that a demolition plan has not been presented, but notice will be given to the residents once demolition begins and based on other projects, perimeter air monitoring stations can be set up.
- Sarah Swatsworth, 21 Cregar Road asked the following questions: If the LSRP has issued a RAO (response action outcome)? Is the water pressure that was mentioned referring to water pressure or water capacity from wells? What is the reasoning for opting for all electric utilities? Mr. Ferrante doesn't believe that an RAO has been issued as the groundwater working is still ongoing. Board engineer, Mr. Burr confirmed that there is enough water capacity for this project, but the applicant has agreed to additional flow test to confirm that the pressure is the way it should be. Regarding the all-electric utilities, Mr. Ferrante replied that this was a decision made by the owner.
- Dennis Ferrere, 1 Chestnut Court asked the following question: On an annual basis what is the net financial result financially for the town as compared to flattening the property and creating a park? The applicant's attorney replied to this and explained that this is outside the Board's jurisdiction as the Borough Council has already considered the project's benefits when they approved the redevelopment plan
- Jessica Biehl, 115 West Main Street asked the following questions: How will the contaminated soil be removed? Will the trucks used be utilizing tarps so the soil does not get out? How will the contaminated water underground be treated? With added concrete and pavement is there a plan to deal with water runoff? What is the timeframe for the working hours for construction, and will the workers be union or non-union workers? Mr. Ferrante replied that the truckers that would be doing the remediation must follow certain rules and must have a 901 license which the DEP controls. The contaminated groundwater will be addressed by the LSRP and the DEP. Mr. Ferrante stated that stormwater management regulations require the project to control water coming off the property. The amount of water released after development for the 2, 10, and 100-year storms must be significantly less than pre-development levels (50% less for the 2-year storm, 80% for the others). Water will be contained on the property and released slowly through pipes, not as sheet flow across the road. The hours for construction will comply with the Borough's noise ordinance which can be obtained from the Clerk. Mr. Ferrante was unclear as to whether workers would be unionized.
- Mike Gronsky, West Main Street asked the following questions: Have site borings been done to determine capacity for footing and foundations? With the amount of uncontrolled fill what the potential for pilings is or footing conditions to require additional disturbance and excavations? Could there be a possibility of liquefaction of the soil? Mr. Ferrante replied that a Geotech study has not been completed yet and only a soil study can determine if a pile solution for footings and foundations will be required. Mr. Ferrante stated that as a civil structural engineer, liquefaction requires very specific conditions (loose sand, vibration). vibration). The foundations for this four-story building are not expected to be massive enough to require intervention, but the Geotech study will provide the final answer.
- Tom Creelman, 22 Sunset Drive asked the following questions: Is HDPE pipe that is being used going to be watertight? Has any revised plan regarding the swales and stormwater calculations been supplied by the applicant to the Board and shouldn't those be addressed prior to any approval? Mr. Ferrante confirmed that the piping will be watertight. The applicant's attorney, Mr.Zelly replied that those types of revisions will be made as a part of compliance subject to approval of the Borough engineer.
- Frank Pumillo, 22 Hillcrest Lane asked the following questions: When analyzing the water pressure can flow tests also be conducted in the evening hours and is the analysis being done based on 100% capacity or 75% or somewhere in between? Mr. Ferrante replied that typically shoot for 75% and while morning flows are typically the most stringent but there is no reason analysis cannot be done in the evening as well.
- Joe Dispenza, 7 Thomas Street, asked the following questions: Have there been any discussions with the applicant regarding tax abatements? Considering the environmental challenges, how does High Bridge benefit from this project? The Board's attorney, Mr. VanHise, replied that these questions are outside the Board's jurisdiction and should be addressed with the Borough Council.
- Pat Bielcik, Woodland Terrace asked the following questions: Is the vapor intrusion system like a radon system? Is there a measurement that indicates an impact to air quality and is there radon on the site? Mr. Ferrante replied that the vapor intrusion system exhausts vapors into the air and the DEP provides limits it's very low concentration, but

there are limits. It has not yet been determined if an active system is needed; for now, a passive system is being installed as a precaution. At this point it is unknown if a radon test has been done but the proposed system would also take care of potential radon.

- Liz Barton, 15 Beaver Street asked the following questions: If drums are found during excavation what will be done with them? Where will the roof water and water that runs off the black-topped area be captured? Mr. Ferrante answered that the LSRP and DEP would be notified if drums are found during excavation and DEP will be on site. Water runoff will be captured in underground detention tank that will be located under the parking lot. The water will then be released slowly.
- Keith Milne, 4 MacArthur Street, asked the following questions: How can water runoff be less on a developed site as compared to an undeveloped site? How did 90+ units get approved? Is there familiarity with the basement drainage at the building across the street from this property? Is this project too much for High Bridge? Mr. Ferrante replied that the site was developed historically. Board Planner, Ms. Green, responded to the question regarding the number of units and explained that the Borough Council approved this through the Redevelopment Plan. The applicant's attorney Mr. Zelly asked that the public to be reminded as to what the Board's prevue is in relation to this application.is not to outline how it benefits the borough but if it conforms to the redevelopment plan approved by the Borough Council.
- Jacek Durka, 105 Cregar Avenue, asked the following questions: How much sewer capacity will the proposed development take away from the town's total capacity? Will this project use up all the remaining sewer capacity, leaving none for future development or for existing homes on septic to connect? How will trash and recycling be handled on site and will this increase traffic to and from the site? Will Route 513 be shut down during construction? Are there zoning ordinances that limit the hours of construction? Regarding capacity Mr. Ferrante replied that the project is calculated to capacity,050 gallons of sewage per day, which equates to about 13 gallons per minute. The Board's engineer also explained that High Bridge has a total contracted sewer capacity of 402,000 gallons per day, which is sent to the Town of Clinton for treatment. While current usage numbers were not provided, Mr. Burr stated that the town has "plenty of room" to service this project and has not come close to its 402,000-gallon limit and there will still be capacity available after this project is completed. Mr. Ferrante addressed the trash and recycling by stating the building will have a designated trash room. An outdoor trash enclosure is likely reserved for bulk items; a private hauler will pick up trash and recyclables. The frequency is stipulated to be two to three times per week, but the building owner can adjust this based on the amount of trash generated. The traffic and potential road closure questions will be deferred to the traffic engineer

Elizabeth Dolan of Dolan and Dean Consulting Engineers was sworn in and accepted by the Board as an expert in traffic engineering. Ms. Dolan presented the findings of her Traffic Impact Assessment report, dated March 7, 2025. The analysis was based on industry-standard practices.

- Traffic Counts: Actual traffic was counted on West Main Street on Thursday, November 21, 2024, during the morning (7-9 AM) and evening (4-6:30 PM) peak hours.
- Existing Traffic: The study found a volume of approximately 600 cars per hour on West Main Street during these peak times.
- Projected Traffic: Using data from the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), the 98-unit development is projected to generate 32 trips in the morning peak hour and 39 trips in the evening peak hour.

Ms. Dolan testified that these volumes are well below the 100-trip-per-hour threshold that would be considered significant by the state. Therefore, the project is not expected to have a measurable negative impact on traffic operations. An analysis of the site's driveways and adjacent intersections shows they will operate at acceptable levels of service meaning minimal delays. The project's traffic does not meaningfully change existing conditions. The project provides 170 parking spaces, which Ms. Dolan confirmed is adequate and meets the Residential Site Improvement Standards (RSIS), including provisions for visitor parking. Ms. Dolan does not anticipate a full closure of West Main Street during construction. At most, flaggers may be used to reduce traffic to a single lane for required road widening work.

Questions from Board members:

- A question was asked regarding whether the project could function with one driveway instead of two. Ms. Dolan replied: Yes, the traffic volume is low enough that one driveway would function acceptably, but the two-driveway design is better for distributing traffic.
- A question was asked regarding any potential problems with the traffic generated by the maximum number of trash trucks and other service vehicles. Ms. Dolan replied that she does not anticipate issues as the traffic counts used for the analysis include all vehicle types entering and exiting the site throughout the day, not just

resident vehicles during peak hours. This data accounts for refuse trucks, delivery vehicles (like UPS and mail), and any other service vehicles. The total daily volume is projected to be just over 200 vehicles entering and 200 exiting, which incorporates all these trips.

- A question was asked regarding whether West Main Street will be shut down during construction. Ms. Dolan replied that a full shutdown of the road is not anticipated. While the county is requiring road widening along the site's frontage, this work would likely be managed by using flaggers to reduce traffic to a single alternating lane. The road is not expected to be closed in its entirety.
- A question was asked about the plan for school buses and the traffic associated with buses. Ms. Dolan replied that if there is a need for a school bus stop at this location, the plan would be coordinated with the Board of Education later, after the project receives approval.
- A question was asked regarding the tree in the northernmost site triangle. Ms. Dolan replied that the tree appears to be outside the county's required sight triangle. Visibility meets safety standards.
- A question was asked regarding whether the site has adequate parking and does not require offsite parking for residents of visitors. Ms. Dolan replied that the project provides adequate parking to meet the legal standard, which includes visitor spaces.
- A question was asked regarding the impact of an at grade transformer. Ms. Dolan replied that a solid, boxy unit like a transformer would not be permitted within the sight triangle and would have to be located elsewhere.
- A question was asked regarding whether the intersection of Arch Street was analyzed. Ms. Dolan replied that the analysis is focused on the immediate site driveways and frontage, not off-site intersections.

Questions from the Public:

- Karen Futternecht, 27 Patton Street asked the following questions: Did the study account for fewer people working from home and for parents driving children to local schools that lack buses? Ms. Dolan replied that the data is current and accounts for all types of trips and varied work/school schedules.
- Nicole Longo, 13 Dennis Avenue asked the following question: Are overflow lots being considered for parking? Ms. Dolan replied the project meets the legal parking requirement. It was suggested that the property lease agreements could be used to control on-site parking and prevent residents from parking on private property.
- Keith Milne, 4 MacArthur Street asked the following questions: How many cars are expected to be on the site, and if traffic is underestimated would it trigger the need for a traffic light? What would an estimate be for the number of cars that might line up in the morning during rush hour? Ms. Dolan replied the traffic generated by 98 units is not high enough to ever meet the warrants for a traffic signal. The analysis projects a queue of only one to two cars waiting to exit during peak hours.
- Jessica Biehl, 115 West Main Street asked the following questions: Did the traffic study account for the newly renovated gas station and would the speed limit need to be changed? Ms. Dolan replied that the impact from the gas station is covered by the study's growth factor. Any change to the speed limit would be a decision for the municipal governing body, not the applicant.
- Tom Creelman, 22 Sunset Drive, asked the following questions: Did the study consider commuters who leave for work before 7 AM? Was a specific visibility analysis performed for the northern driveway of the proposed site? Ms. Dolan replied that the counts began at 7 AM per standard practice. The recorded peak hour was between 7:15 and 8:15 AM. Ms. Dolan also explained explains there are two different standards being considered: the county's specific "clear area" requirement and the traditional AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials) standard based on speed. The project team acknowledges they still need to address the county's comments. Their plan is to clear all obstructing vegetation within the sight triangle on their own property and to make a "best faith effort" with the county to clear any obstructions on the neighboring property to satisfy the requirement.
- Jacek Durka, 105 Cregar Road asked the following questions: Will there be a left-turn lane, sidewalks, or a crosswalk? Ms. Dolan replied that a left-turn lane is not planned unless mandated by the county. It was confirmed by the Board's professional that the applicant has stipulated installing a sidewalk across the property frontage. The required road widening will create a shoulder. No crosswalk is proposed, as it would lead to a location with no connecting sidewalk.

The Board called John McDonough. Mr. McDonough was sworn in and accepted by the Board as an expert in landscape architecture and professional planning.
Mr. McDonough presented the project's landscape plan, marked as Exhibit A-6. He explained the plan was designed

with three primary components to beautify the site and provide buffers for neighboring properties.

- Perimeter Landscaping**:** A 35-foot-wide buffer will be installed around the property's perimeter. It will be heavily planted with a diverse mix of native species, including 19 large shade trees, 20 ornamental trees, and 64 evergreen trees to serve as a "green fence" for year-round privacy and screening.
- Parking Area Landscaping**:** To break up the pavement, the plan includes 12 landscaped islands, which is three more than the nine required by ordinance.
- Foundation Plantings**:** A variety of shrubs, ornamental grasses, and flowers will be planted around the building's foundation to soften its architectural lines and help it blend into the natural environment.

Mr. McDonough stated that the plan uses a wide variety of native plants to ensure seasonal interest, color, and texture, while respecting the ordinance and the character of the surrounding area.

Questions from the Board:

- A question was asked regarding tree removal to accommodate the required fire lane. Mr. McDonough replied that we can install the lane without impacting the existing trees. We will stipulate to increasing new plantings if this turns out not to be the case.
- A question was asked regarding whether perimeter fencing will be installed. Mr. McDonough replied that there will be a privacy fence along the perimeter.
- A question was asked for clarification on the landscape plan regarding the tree count. Mr. McDonough replied that he will refine the tree removal count as a condition of approval. Based on current information, there is a shortfall of 112 replacement trees. Mr. McDonough proposes to satisfy the ordinance by making a $33,600 payment to the township's tree fund, calculated at $300 per tree in the deficit. A lengthy discussion ensued, and Mr. McDonough will submit a revised landscape plan prior to the next meeting.
- A question was asked regarding whether the trees planned near driveways and in locations where a transformer box might be placed would be removed to accommodate sight lines or utilities? Mr. McDonough replied that for the sight triangles, the new trees will be large and can be pruned so that the lowest branches are seven feet off the ground, ensuring a clear line of sight for drivers underneath the canopy. We will coordinate the final placement with utilities.
- A question was asked regarding the plans for an irrigation system. Mr. McDonough replied that they have selected drought-tolerant and disease-resistant native plants to minimize the need for irrigation.
- A question was asked as to what measures will be taken to ensure the 89 trees designated to remain are not accidentally removed during construction? Mr. McDonough replied that they will agree to a condition that a site walk be performed with the Environmental Commission. All trees to be saved will be clearly marked and have tree protection fencing installed around their root systems before any construction begins.
- A question was asked regarding whether the planting of trees will help with the recharge of groundwater. Mr. McDonough replied that this will not have effect.
- A question was asked about having the 19 required replacement trees clearly marked or color-coded on the plan so they are easy to identify, and Mr. McDonough said he would comply with this.
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Questions From Board Professionals:

- Board engineer Mr. Burr asked if all proposed plantings are native species. Mr. McDonough replied that the goal is to use native species, but some may be "naturalized," which is a step up from exotic or foreign plants. They are also chosen to be deer-tolerant, and the speaker is willing to work with the board's professionals on the final plant list.
- Mr. Burr asked if the street trees that will be pruned up to seven feet refer to the street trees along the county road. Mr. McDonough replied that all proposed trees will be pruned up to seven feet. A note can be added to the plan to do the same for existing county trees if required.
- Mr. Burr asked, are street trees and low-growing shrubs proposed along the property frontage, or did the county's review change that plan? Mr. McDonough replied that the plan still includes about a dozen shade trees and a row of hip-high plants along the county frontage. The county did not appear to have an issue with this.
- Mr. Burr asked for confirmation of the number of trees that are to remain protected on the property. McDonough replied that 89 trees will be protected. This number may be inaccurate, and Mr. McDonough agrees to check the number prior to the next meeting.

- Board Planner Ms. Green asked if a variance would be required for not providing three-foot-tall shrubs to screen the parking along the county road. Mr. McDonough replied that they will need that relief subject to the county.
- Ms. Green asked if they could eliminate the deviation for one of the landscape islands three square feet too small? Mr. Ferrante replied that they can increase the size of the island and still maintain proper circulation.
- Ms. Green asked if the evergreen trees could potentially count toward your replacement number if they have a caliper of at least 1.5 inches. Mr. McDonough replied that measuring an evergreen by caliper is not standard practice. We believe the borough would prefer a more diverse landscape plan rather than just planting the minimum number of large trees.
- Ms. Green stated that the plan requires parking within 50 feet of an adjacent residential use to be screened by a staggered double row of evergreens at least three feet high. One area on the plan does not meet this. Can this deviation be eliminated? Mr. McDonough replied that they can eliminate this deviation and the landscaping will comply.
- Ms. Green asked since the plan requires half of the landscape islands to contain both a shade tree and other landscaping and several islands on the drawing only show a shade tree. Can this be corrected to eliminate the deviation? Mr. McDonough stated he can comply. That is likely a graphic confusion on the plan; there are shrubs intended for those islands.
- Ms. Green stated that the redevelopment plan requires loading areas to be buffered from residential uses by either a six-foot-tall solid fence or two staggered rows of plantings. Does your plan meet this requirement for the residential property to the east of the loading area? Mr. McDonough replied that there is a six-foot-high fence proposed, which should meet the requirement, but we can certainly work to supplement that with additional plantings as well.

Questions from the public:

- Tom Creelman, 22 Sunset Drive, asked the following questions: Two trees on the north side of the large parking lot are shown to remain, but they are located directly behind the proposed new curb line and may not survive. Can this discrepancy on the plan be resolved? What will the height of the newly planted trees at planting, after five years, and at full maturity? Has the landscape design been coordinated with the site grading plan to ensure the new plantings in the drainage swale will not block the flow of water? What is the location and extent of the proposed fence? Has consideration been given to adding more trees to the open area to provide more of a buffer for the homes on Lots 13, 14, and 15? Mr. McDonough replied that the plan discrepancy will be addressed. Shade trees at the time of planting will be 12-14 feet tall and in 5 years they will be 18 feet tall and will reach a mature height of 40-80 feet in 20-3- years. The evergreen trees will be planted 6-7 feet tall and in five years they will be around 12 feet tall. The swale is designed to be vegetated, and the plantings will not impede the flow of water. The fence is intended to buffer the residential areas. It will be placed closer to the parking lot rather than on the property line, especially on the east side where the neighboring properties are at a higher elevation. This preserves a more natural tree buffer for the neighbors. Regarding adding trees to the open area, Mr. McDonough stated that they could try to work in a few more trees into that area.
- Jessica Biehl, 115 West Main Street, asked the following questions: The plan specifies "gum trees." Will these drop the spiky gum balls? Given the high-water table in this area, are the selected plants and trees native to high-water environments and able to survive with "wet feet"? Mr. McDonough answered that the plan calls for a seedless variety of Black Gum trees not the ones that produce the spiky gum balls and they tried to select trees that are highly adaptable to a wet environment.
- Nicole Longo, 13 Dennis Avenue, asked the following questions: A resident expressed concern about the applicant paying into a $33,000 tree fund instead of planting the required trees. Is this the case? Who is responsible for maintaining the trees and landscaping after the two-year guarantee period is over? A Board member replied that the Board's preference is that the trees be planted on the property. The applicant has agreed to work with our professionals to maximize the number of trees planted on-site and reduce any potential payment into the fund. Mr. McDonough replied that This will be a rental property, so the building's ownership will be responsible for all ongoing maintenance.
- Karen Futterknecht, 27 Patton Street asked the following question: How will you ensure plants survive without an irrigation system? Mr. McDonough replied There is a two-year maintenance guarantee. By that time, the plants should be substantially established. We have specifically chosen plants that are disease-resistant, drought-tolerant, and deer-resistant to the extent practical.
- Mark Loozen, 9 Timbercroft Road asked the following questions: Will the fence have anti-graffiti treatment, and will the owner be required to maintain it? And did the plans also stipulate that the owner is responsible for

regulation regularly, ensuring that the site triangle is not being encroached on by tree or shrub growth? Were white pines considered instead of hemlocks? Mr. McDonough replied that an anti-graffiti treatment was not specified. However, the owner would be responsible for maintaining the property, which would include handling any potential graffiti, just as they are responsible for maintaining the landscaping. The owner will ensure that the site triangle is not encroached, and they can work with the Board's professionals to refine the tree species chosen.

- Jacek Durka, 105 Cregar Road, asked the following questions**:** Are there any site amenities like benches or bike racks proposed? Is decorative lighting proposed? Is the sidewalk going to be poured concrete and will landscaping spill over into that area? Mr. McDonough replied that There will be internal bike storage for residents, but no external benches or bike racks are currently proposed. No decorative lighting is proposed, and they can investigate pocket plantings.
- Liz Martin, 15 Beaver St. asked the following question: Will the fence compromise the existing trees that are being saved. McDonough replied the fence is being placed closer to the parking lot specifically to preserve the existing trees along the property line. Residents will be looking at a buffer of mature trees, not directly at a fence.

At this point the Board Chairman asked to carry the public hearing to the next meeting. The Board's attorney, Mr. VanHise asked the applicant's attorney to grant any necessary extensions to continue the hearing at the next meeting. The applicant's attorney agreed to any necessary extensions.

The applicant requested an earlier "special meeting" date to avoid waiting until the next regular meeting. The Board and professionals discussed several potential dates and due to various scheduling conflicts among Board members, a consensus on an earlier date could not be reached. The Chairman officially announced that the hearing is carried to Monday, October 20, at 6:30 PM. It was noted that no additional public notice from the applicant will be required. The hearing was then suspended.

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.

- Al Schweikert, 90 Mine Road, High Bridge, NJ: Dr. Schweikert asked for confirmation that his experts and attorney would be permitted to cross-examine and provide testimony at the continued hearing on October 20. The Board's Attorney, Mr.VanHise, stated that comments should not pertain to the hearing that had just been suspended. Mr.VanHise explained that Dr. Schweikert can attend the next meeting and make his request at that time.
- Keith Milne, 4 MacArthur Street, stated that the Board works for the residents and accused the Board of not listening to public opposition regarding a proposed housing project. Board and Council member, Coleen Conroy responded, that the Board is obligated to follow the legal process and procedure, just as Mr. Milne (a former board member) was required to do during his term.
- Tom Creelman, 22 Sunset Drive, asked for procedural clarification, seeking confirmation that the public will have an opportunity to ask questions of the Board and make general comments after all professional testimony is concluded at the continuation of the hearing. The Chairman confirmed that this public comment period will still take place after all testimony is complete.

8. ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn: Lee Second: Conroy Voice vote: 9 Yes votes, motion passed.
Next Meeting Date: October 20, 2025
Meeting Location: High Bridge Firehouse, 7 Maryland Avenue, High Bridge, NJ 08829
Meeting Time: 6:30 P.M.