

**CITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK  
PLANNING BOARD  
NOVEMBER 13<sup>TH</sup>, 2017  
MEETING AGENDA**

**MEETING LOCATION:**  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
CITY HALL, TOP FLOOR  
78 BAYARD STREET  
**7:30 p.m.**

**I. ROLL CALL**

X	Jeff Crum (Chairman)
X	David Fitzhenry
X	Nicole Burgos
X	John Petrolino
X	Robert Cartica
X	Manuel Castaneda
X	Clary Barber (Class I)
X	Chris Stelatella (Class II)
X	Suzanne Sicora-Ludwig (Class III)
	Dale Vickers (Alternate #1)
X	Pierre Checo (Alternate #2)

**II. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT)**

**III. SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

**IV. MINUTES OF THE BOARDS JULY 10<sup>TH</sup>, 2017 MEETING**

Motion to approve: Ludwig

Second: Castaneda

Approved by unanimous voice vote with Mr. Cartica abstaining as he was not on the Board at that time.

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. RARITAN BRUNSWICK, LP, PB-2016-14** Site plan application for the construction of an expanded parking lot located at 1 Chester Circle, Block 703.05, Lot1, Zoning District: R-6

Larry Calli, Esq

The applicant is seeking to expand the parking fields to better meet the parking demand. Lighting and other related features will also be approved. There are no variances.

Bill Lane, Engineer

A-1 Aerial site plan photo of the site and neighborhood

Most of the new parking is planned within the “circle” of Chester Circle. Drainage will be improved, trees will be added along with other new landscaping, and two new light fixtures.

The existing site non-conformities are not changing.

Public:

Charlie Kratovil,

Is there a vehicle connection between Raritan Gardens and the adjacent property, Raritan Heights. Lane – No.

Motion to Approve with the conditions cited: Ludwig

Second: Fitzhenry

	YES	NO
Jeff Crum	X	
David Fitzhenry	X	
Nicole Burgos	X	
John Petrolino	X	
Robert Cartica	X	
Manuel Castaneda	X	
Clary Barber (Class I)	X	
Chris Stellatella (Class II)	X	
Suzanne Sicora-Ludwig (Class III)	X	
Dale Vickers		
Pierre Checo (Alternate #2)		

**B. HIGHWAYWAY HOSPITALITY NB, LLC, PB-2017-05, Site plan and variance application for the construction of a hotel at the property located at 19 State Route 18, Block 710.02, Lot 6.06, Zoning District: C-5**

Tom Kelso, Esq.,

The proposal is a 4-story hotel building with 109 suites and amenities. It is a permitted use. There are 109 parking spaces. The use is permitted in the C-5 zone. The applicant is seeking variances, some of which are existing conditions: lot area, front yard setbacks on both sides, lot width, lot depth, sign setback, sign height (all existing), and some of which are newly created: side yard, total side yard, sign setback, impervious, front yard loading space and parking.

119 parking spaces are required and 109 spaces proposed.

Mitchell Heisler, Applicant

The project is associated with Hilton Hotels through a franchise and will be a mid-rise, all-suite product. The hotel will have a pool and other amenities. They had a market study done through Hilton. They have a 20-year franchise agreement. If the agreement is terminated early, they have to pay a penalty to Hilton. The agreement would flow through to a new owner. Hilton would have to approve the new owner.

Michael Rodrigues, Engineer

A-1 Rendered site plan

The current use is a vacant Bennigans's restaurant. The adjacent properties are a gas station and car wash. The existing ingress and egress drives will be maintained. .

The on-site circulation allows cars to flow through the site and access all parking areas and then the egress driveway. The parking count meets the Hilton standard.

There are two outdoor patio areas.

Trash is collected in an enclosure in the southwest part of the site and will be picked up privately.

The site drainage will remain the same. The impervious surface increases by 5%. Porous pavement in the southwest area will be added to the parking area to mitigate this. They have already received approval from the soil conservation district.

Landscaping will be added along the Rt. 18 frontage.

He reviewed the bulk variances requested for the project.

The parking is 109 spaces, which meets the Hilton standard of 1 per quest room, but does not meet the City standard of 119 spaces.

The existing sign will be replaced by a new sign on the existing pole and will be smaller than the existing sign.

Mr. Crum asked to see how the site circulation will work.

Mr. Fitzhenry asked if the City water and sewer capacity had been certified as sufficient. Mr. Rodrigues said applications had been submitted and they are not anticipating a problem.

Mr. Petrolino asked about tree species and how they relate to sight lines for motorists. Rodrigues said the trees were set back outside of the sight triangles.

Mr. Cartica asked about the design of the drive entrance and its suitability. Mr. Rodrigues said they went to NJDOT about the project and NJDOT issued a letter of no interest about the project. The Rt. 1 ramp is also marked as 20 mph. There is no change from the existing driveway geometry.

#### A-2 Sign Plan

A new sign will be added to the existing pole but will be 2 feet shorter. There will also be a monument sign by the entrance.

Thomas Dever, Architect

A-3 Packet of Exhibits showing the building elevations from different perspectives

- Perspective front elevation: The exterior materials are standard materials required by Hilton.
- Oblique front/side elevation
- A-5 Southwest elevation
- A little bit better view of patio area

Plans from the plan set:

- 1<sup>st</sup> floor plan showing the vestibule, lobby, pool, pool deck and fire pit
- upper floor plans showing the 109 guest suites
- roof plans
- Elevation plans

There are 79 king suites and 30 queen suites. The gross floor area is 65,379 sf

Mr. Petrolino asked about the light on the top of the building. Dever said Hilton has a signature architectural element of a clear box that lightly glows. It is a Hilton brand identity element.

Betsy Dolan, Traffic Engineer

The traffic study was based on trip generation characteristics from ITE and they compared the hotel and the previous restaurant use. They looked at weekday AM, PM peak hours and weekend peaks.

The weekday peak is 58 trips. The former Bennigan's restaurant had a lower morning peak, but the afternoon and weekend peaks were twice as high. NJDOT reviewed the study and the site plan and they issued a letter of no interest meaning the applicant can continue to use the existing driveways as the peak hour volume is less. .

There is a parking variance but they have 1 space per room which is the typical standard. ITE data shows that demand is less than 1 space per room.

Other types of uses that are permitted for the site, such as convenience stores or drive-throughs would have over 100 trips per hour or higher. A WaWa store would be much higher. The hotel use has a lower trip generation than many other permitted uses.

Mr. Petrolino asked if the study takes into account the surrounding uses, particularly the car wash, where cars tend to stack up. Ms. Dolan said the on-site circulation allows cars to get into the site without being impeded and on exiting any back up would be on-site not on the highway.

Mr. Cartica asked if the analysis considered that hotel users are generally coming to the site for the first time. Ms. Dolan said the common use of gps helps with customers finding the hotel site if they are not familiar with it.

Mr. Crum asked if access points were analyzed. Ms. Dolan said there were not many options other than the existing. There is nowhere else to access the site and the number of trips is being reduced.

Mr. Crum said his observation is that the situation is often dangerous on the Rt 1 ramp. Mr. Kelso read from the NJDOT letter stating that proposed use will not generate a significant increase in traffic.

Mr. Fitzhenry asked what a WaWa use would generate. Ms. Dolan said it could generate about 400 trips if it has gas or 125 trips without gas.

Keenan Hughes, Planner

The site is created and constrained by the jug handle which creates difficulties in meeting some of the zoning standards.

The site is a permitted use. It is an appropriate use for the property as many other permitted uses have higher traffic generation.

There are C1 basis for the bulk variances. The property lines are set back from the ROW so it appears to be set back further than it technically is, mitigating the setback variances. The site also has a unique shape with two front yards. The total setback variance is de minimus. The side yard variance is next to a gas station.

The coverage variance is justified as the FAR and height are within the standards and the use of pervious pavement mitigates the excess coverage.

There are no detrimental impacts to the public good or zone plan from these variances.

The parking is sufficient to meet the needs of the hotel as the 1:1 standard is supported by the ITE data.

The signs conform for size and number. The sign setbacks are justified on a C2 basis as it provides better visibility of the signs for persons looking for the site. The existing sign on the Rt 18 side is being reduced in size. It is also setback substantially from the actual roadway. The variances support MLUL a, g and h purposes and there are no detriments to the public good.

He reviewed a number of waivers requested including street trees, landscaping, front yard loading, buffer strip width.

The hotel is a permitted use and is an appropriate use given the restrictions on access. The variances are justified on both C1 and C2 basis and no detriment to the zone plan or public good.

Mr. Fitzhenry asked about the uses permitted in the C-5 zone. Mr. Patterson discussed that it was highway oriented retail type uses commonly seen on Rt 1.

Public:

Joseph Catanese, Jr.

Where will the Rt 1 sign be placed in relation to the driveway. Mr. Rodriques said it was on the far side of the entrance. Rodriques said the sign was not blocked by the landscaping.

Catanese asked about circulation of delivery trucks on the site. Rodriques said all but tractor trailer trucks would circulate.

Catanese asked about the building height: 46 ft. Drainage: maintains the existing drainage pattern.

Robert Gerling,

He feels the C-5 zone is the wrong zoning and any use will be inappropriate. He questioned the adequacy of the parking. How many employees will there be?

Derek Sylvester – Hotel Management Company – Gulf Creek Hotels

He said there would be between 6-12 employees per shift. He said occupancy would average 75-80% occupancy. Sometimes it will be 100%. Some customers may arrive together. He feels the parking is sufficient.

Gerling asked if there was a liquor license. Kelso said no. There will be no restaurant, only a breakfast area.

He asked about the NJDOT approval. Dolan reviewed the NJDOT response.

He feels the added traffic will add to the existing problems. Ms. Dolan discussed the methodology for estimating the trips to be generated. She also discussed that the site plan design takes into account the particular site features and what is needed to design it to safe standards for access and egress.

Mr. Aithal discussed the jurisdiction of the Board to make policy for the City to acquire the land.

Mr. Gerling discussed that the morning traffic would be the main problem.

Marie Tasy

Traffic has increased over the years. Is there something that can be done to help the local residents with the traffic on the circle? Mr. Patterson discussed that the road was NJDOT jurisdiction and therefore the City's power to make improvements was limited. NJDOT had made improvements in the area recently.

Joseph Catanese, III

He asked if the handicapped spaces would be of the required size. Mr. Rodriques responded that the handicapped spaces will be standard van size spaces.

Does the circulation allowable for fire truck access? Kelso said this was reviewed during the technical review process.

Catanese objected to the hours described as “peak”, that they were actually earlier than the study used. He feels the fire department will not be able to access the site at peak hours. He was also concerned that Exxon C-store customers would use the hotel site for parking.

Joy Sheehan,

She asked if the entrance drive angles would remain the same as she said they were problematic due to people entering the wrong driveway. Rodriques said they were angled to discourage this.

She asked if the amenities were accessible to the public. Mr. Sylvester said staff monitor this and it is not typically a problem. She said the Motel 6 “guests” would take advantage of the Hilton breakfast and pool. She is also concerned that the hotel will eventually attract a problematic clientele.

Charlie Kratovil,

Will a tax exemption be applied for? No.  
He thinks the application should be re-thought.

Mr. Patterson read conditions to attach to a motion

Mr. Aithal advised that the Board can’t consider the hotel use as it is a permitted use. Further, the ingress/egress is an issue for NJDOT, which they have already provided a letter of no interest about. The Board can consider on-site circulation and the variances and the proofs for those variances.

Motion to Approve with the conditions cited: Petrolino  
Second: Ludwig

	YES	NO
Jeff Crum	X	
David Fitzhenry	X	
Nicole Burgos	X	
John Petrolino	X	
Robert Cartica	X	

Manuel Castaneda	X	
Clary Barber (Class I)	X	
Chris Stellatella (Class II)	X	
Suzanne Sicora-Ludwig (Class III)	X	
Dale Vickers		
Pierre Checo (Alternate #2)		

**VI. OTHER MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE PUBLIC**

Charlie Kratovil

He inquired about Mr. Castaneda’s vote on NB Cultural Center project as Rutgers was a participant in the project. Mr. Castaneda stated he voted based on advice of board council. When the application was re-presented by the applicant, the advice changed and Mr. Castaneda did not participate.

He asked about Mr. Crum’s vote on the application. He said he did not realize it was a conflict at the first hearing and when it was re-presented he realized it and did not participate.

Mr. Patterson stated that the Board was transparent in the actions it took regarding conflicts related to the approval of the project.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**