

THE BOROUGH OF WILDWOOD CREST
Planning Board
Meeting Minutes – 4 March 2020 5 p.m.

Chairman Davenport called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m., lead the Pledge of Allegiance and read the statement of compliance with the open Public Meetings Act.

Roll call was taken by the secretary: Alvarado, absent; Cava, present; Daniels, present; Davenport, present; D'Antonio, present; Melchiorre, absent; Schiff, absent; Hunt, present; Mettler, absent; Gould, present; Thompson, present; Solicitor Belasco, present; Secretary Rogers, present.

Ms. Daniels moved to dispense with the public reading of the minutes of the meeting of 5 February and approve as distributed, Mr. Cava seconded. Roll call: Hunt, yes; D'Antonio, yes; Cava, yes; Daniels, yes; Davenport, yes; Thompson, yes; Gould, abstain. Minutes approved as distributed.

There was one application to come before the Board:

PB-19-11-01: MAHALO HOTELS, LLC; owner of the property located at 6501 Ocean Ave., a/k/a blk 50.04, lots 3,4,7, & 8, in the M-1A Zoning District; seeking "c" variance relief and preliminary and final site plan approval to renovate existing motel, adding a 6th floor containing 14 additional units, addition of a new sundeck and pool, additional parking. Applicant represented by Frank L. Corrado, Esq. Mr. Corrado approached the Board stating his credentials and outlined the scope of the application. He said the plan to be presented includes the addition of fifteen motel rooms, replacement of the existing pool with a second level pool and water play area, a sundeck, upgrade of the appearance of the motel and adding parking spaces. Eustice Mita, owner of the property, was introduced and sworn in. Aloysius Gryga of CMC Engineering and Steve Tomasetti architect for the project were recognized as experts and sworn in. Mr. Corrado distributed a packet of drawings and plans depicting existing and proposed conditions on the site and conditions on neighboring sites. The packet was marked Exhibit A-1; the same was displayed on the remote screen for the Board and public. Mr. Mita addressed the Board thanking the concept review committee for their time and efforts saying they had taken heed of the committee's comments in developing the plan to be presented which is the sixth iteration of the plans for the site. He related the history of his and his family's relationship to the Wildwoods and the Crest in particular. Mr. Mita listed other hotels owned and operated by his Icona brand saying these are all highly rated on travel websites. He said "Mahalo" is new brand and Wildwood Crest will be the flagship property. Mr. Gryga described the existing conditions on site and showed photos of same. He said there are currently 58 units and 53 parking spaces varying in width from 7.4' to 8.5'. He said the original plan was to add a sixth floor to the motel yielding 83 units with 68 parking spaces. Mr. Gryga showed the various evolving variations of the plan and described the plan being presented. He said it offers 70 motel rooms with 70 parking spaces with improved vehicular circulation adding head-in parking previously accounted for 70% of the onsite parking while the current plan reduces that to 21%. He described the landscaping plan, trash enclosure, bicycle storage area, noting the proposed pool and water play area saying it would be a major upgrade. Pointing out the architectural elevations, Mr. Mita said the color scheme would be a nautical blue and white theme using an "electric" blue shade. In answer to Mr. Corrado, Mr. Gryga said a number of "c" variances are being sought including side and front yard setbacks, signage, building coverage and lot coverage. He said these will be presented under tests of the "c"2 criteria, adding this application is in keeping with the County and State plan for shore town development opining it will improve safety especially in regard to the Rosemary Rd parking as it will be mostly accessed through a drive aisle rather than as head-in; it will improve a substandard motel in the heart of the Borough's motel district; it promotes appropriate development in an appropriate location; the use is conforming in the zone. Mr. Gryga opined the benefits of granting the relief outweigh the detriments. Addressing the sign variance, Mr. Gryga said four signs of 144 sq ft each are proposed; these are illuminated from within for a "halo" effect and pinned to the building protruding approximately four inches from the building. He opined these will promote a desirable visual environment and pose no detriment to the neighborhood or zone plan. Regarding the parking, Mr. Gryga said the proposed plan provides one parking space for each motel room, and much consideration was to pedestrian safety. He said some of the parking spaces are still substandard, but this was a difficult site with limited space and available space contains support columns which cannot be moved. He offered they had provided the maximum parking possible on the site, and this

poses no detriment to the zone plan. Mr. Mita said the amplified music around the pool will be at low level from 10 a.m. until 9 p.m. (or around sunset) adding they are aware of the Borough noise ordinance and will keep the decibels below that level.

At the direction of the Chairman, the Board questioned the applicants in a subject-by-subject manner. The Chairman opened asking for clarification of the "piggy-back" handicap spaces and access to same. Mr. Gryga and Mr. Mita answered saying these will be valet parked and staff will be available twenty-four hours a day for service. Mr. Gryga added these are the least-used spaces on the site. Mr. Davenport asked if there is sufficient space for a vehicle to turn around to leave the four parking spots at the end of the drive aisle or if the driver would need to back out the length of the aisle. Mr. Gryga said that condition currently exists, and most visitors park and leave their cars for the duration of their stay. Mr. Mita offered these spaces can be designated as valet parking, adding there will be van service from the property to adjacent towns and attractions. In answer to Board concerns about the head-in parking on Ocean Ave, the applicant said signs can be put in place to warn pedestrians of vehicles backing out, and also signage reminding drivers to watch for pedestrian traffic. Mr. Davenport noted the previous site had nine spaces on Ocean Ave and head-in parking on Rosemary Rd has been reduced to four spaces. Board Engineer DeBlasio expressed concern about the size of the spaces on Ocean Ave. Mr. Gryga answered these can be designated as compact car parking only to eliminate parking in the right-of-way. Planner Michelle Taylor asked about proposed plant material on Rosemary Rd. Mr. Gryga said these will be chosen to enhance the streetscape and esthetics. Mr. Thompson asked if the curb cut on Rosemary Rd will remain. Mr. Gryga said they intend to raise the curb except where vehicular access is needed. Mr. Davenport asked about bicycle parking. Mr. Gryga showed the area under the structure as a separate room which will accommodate trash and twenty-four bikes. Mr. Mita said as there is no restaurant or coffee shop on site, there will be less trash, noting the concession area shown will have pre-packaged "grab'n'go" items. In answer to Chairman Davenport, Mr. Gryga said relocation of the bike storage is not feasible as every inch of the property is being utilized.

Addressing the bulk requirements Mr. Gryga said the building has three fronts with a side abutting the neighboring motel adding the proposed sundeck has 0' setback on Rosemary Rd and Ocean Ave. In answer to Board concerns he said lessening the size of the sundeck would compromise the size of adjacent guestrooms. The Chairman said it has been the historic position of the Planning Board to preserve the view corridor along the avenues.

Mr. Gryga said the "water play area" is as defined by the industry and is not a water park. Answering Engineer DeBlasio, he said the pool requires variance relief for front yard setback.

Planner Michelle Taylor asked about window placement, particularly on the façade previously designated as a water feature. Architect Steve Tomaselli replied he is working on a plan adding windows in that area. He added it is intended to bring the building to new condition with low maintenance trim and matching color scheme throughout. Commissioner Thompson inquired about the exterior stair with 0' setback, saying both motels use that alleyway for trash removal. Engineer DeBlasio asked if any signs will be installed taller than 10' above the roofline and asked if all signs are 6'X24' in size. Mr. Gryga said all signs will be pinned to the building and that size is correct, reiterating all lighting will be low level and dimmable. In answer to Board concerns expressed by Planner Michelle Taylor, Mr. Mita said lighting facing Beach Ave and Rosemary Rd closest to the beach can be placed on dimmers to react to ambient light. Planner Taylor asked about the lighting in the parking garage saying a waiver should be sought for the foot candles of illumination proposed. Mr. Gryga said there appear to be many fixtures, but these are needed because of the beams and columns in the structure, adding these lights are also dimmable. He said these lights are shaded and recessed and will be buffered to Rosemary Rd by plantings. Mr. Mita said their concern was for safety in the garage.

Engineer Marc DeBlasio read his report (attached hereto and made part hereof) into the record noting variance relief sought and conditions of approval outlined therein including performance bonds and escrow.

In answer to Planner Taylor, Mr. Gryga said all loading and unloading will take place on Beach Ave as with nearby motels. In answer to Engineer DeBlasio, Mr. Gryga said the tree grates will comply with ADA requirements.

In the public portion, Niru Dhruva, 5711 Atlantic Ave, unit 302, said he was present to learn the process and thanked the Board for the work.

Applicant's attorney Frank Corrado summarized describing the project, saying many variances are required but Mr. Mita and his team heard the concept review committee and took their comments into consideration. He said there is a balancing process, but he opined the presentation justified the relief. Solicitor Belasco read the findings of fact into the record, noting the variance relief sought under the "c"2 criteria, adding the waiver for the foot candles of lighting in the parking garage, and conditions as listed by the board engineer. He noted additional conditions of approval as valet service for the tandem handicap parking spaces, warning signs for pedestrians and drivers on Ocean Ave., parking spaces less than 18' in length to be designated as compact car parking, easement required for landscaping in the right of way, the sign on Beach Ave will dim, tree grates will be ADA compliant, and a silt fence will be erected surrounding the project with one compliant sign advertising the project permitted, and noting one member of the public spoke. Mr. Cava moved to accept the findings; Mrs. Gould provided the second. Roll call: Hunt, yes; D'Antonio, yes; Cava, yes; Daniels, yes; Davenport, yes; Thompson, yes; Gould, yes. Findings accepted.

Mr. Mita said this was the best plan possible for the site and will launch the Mahalo brand.

In deliberation, board members agreed issues had been sufficiently addressed to proceed to a motion and vote.

Mrs. Gould moved to approve the application with conditions as noted; Ms. Daniels provided the second. Voting in favor, Mrs. Hunt said the benefits of granting relief outweigh the detriments, and she was pleased with the safety issues being addressed for the Rosemary Rd parking;

Mr. D'Antonio voted in favor, thanking the applicant for a top-notch presentation and agreeing with Mrs. Hunt;

Mr. Cava voted in favor saying the applicant had met criteria for relief;

Ms. Daniels voted in favor saying the 1/1 parking situation will be beneficial;

Mr. Davenport voted in favor saying there is no perfect project, thanking the applicant for their time and effort;

Mr. Thompson voted in favor agreeing with comments, saying the benefits outweigh any detriments;

Mrs. Gould voted in favor noting the quality of the Icona brand operations and expressing confidence it will carry through to the Mahalo brand

Application approved with conditions.

Mr. Mita thanked the Board for their efforts and time.

There were no resolutions memorializing Board actions.

There was one administrative resolution:

PB-20-10: Request Board of Commissioners take action to refund remaining escrow (\$150.50) to Scott Peter for withdrawn application 129 E Columbine Rd was memorialized on motion by Mr. D'Antonio, second by Ms. Daniels and unanimous roll call vote of those member eligible.

Under Old Business, the secretary reported the Green Team had made no recommendation to change the Land Use Ordinance pertaining to suitable ground cover, recognizing variance relief will remain necessary for any property wishing to install synthetic grass.

New Business will be discussed at the next meeting.

No members of the public spoke.

The Board will meet on 1 April at 5 p.m.

On motion of Mrs. Gould, second by Mrs. Hunt and unanimous voice vote, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Deborah Rogers
Planning Board Secretary