

**MINUTES**  
**ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**  
**CITY OF CLIFTON**  
**January 7, 2025**  
**7:00 P.M. REGULAR MEETING**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:**

NOEL PEREZ (2A)  
GRACE ROBOL (1A)  
AVRAHAM EISENMAN  
DAVID BRAID  
MAUREEN O'CONNOR  
VICE CHAIRMAN MOLNER  
CHAIRMAN ZECCHINO

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:**

ALESSIA ERAMO  
GEORGE FOUKAS

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Liana Bolcato, Asst. Zoning Officer  
Joseph M. Wenzel, Esq., Counsel/Secretary  
Nicholas Graviano, Board Planner  
Yasseen Saad, Board Engineer

Chairman Zecchino called the Meeting to Order at 7:00 p.m.; he led the entire assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America. Pursuant to the "Open Public Meeting Law" public notice of the Board's 2026 regular meeting schedule was published in the Herald News on December 4, 2025. All notice requirements were satisfied. Chairman Zecchino announced the time, place, and form of notice as well as advising all applications that formal action may be taken on the matters set forth on the Agenda. Said opening statement is incorporated herein by reference and made a part hereof.

**NEW HEARINGS**

**1. Jhony Arboleda, 95 Huron Avenue, Bl. 43.19, Lot 33, Zone RB1**

Applicant, Jhony Arboleda, was present.

Applicant **Jhony Arboleda** was called forward and sworn in. He explained that he wanted to shift the driveway to the front of the house to make more parking for cars on the property. He is asking for a 0 foot driveway buffer and that the driveway is in front of a house not a garage. Chairman Zecchino asked if he could place some Belgian Blocks in the area in front of the house to prevent vehicles from driving into the home. Applicant agreed as a condition of approval. Vice-Chair Molner confirmed with the Applicant that the driveway apron is not being expanded.

No interest parties appeared on this matter.

Commissioner Eisenman moved to approve. Commissioner Perez seconded the motion.

*Commissioners Perez, Robol, Eisenman, Braid, O'Connor, Vice-Chair Molner and Chair Zecchino voted in favor. Motion passed 7-0 and the application was approved.*

2. **409-413 Crooks Ave LLC**, 409-413 Crooks Avenue, Bl. 5.02, Lots: 1 & 3, Zone M-2

Counsel, **Mahdey Salhab, Esq.**, appeared and presented the application and gave an opening statement about the intent of the project.

Applicant's engineer, **Patrick McClellan**, was called forward, sworn in and qualified as an expert in the field of engineering. Engineer explained the current layout of the property as one lot being used by the restaurant facility and the other lot is vacant land. The home on the other lot was demolished and the Applicant is now seeking approval to place a parking lot on the site. There will also be an increase to the outdoor seating area. Engineer explained that currently customers park on the street and this causes congestion. The new lot will alleviate that and improve the neighborhood. Engineer noted design and RSIS waivers were needed for this lot. The parking stalls are 9 foot by 17 foot which is smaller than the required 9x19 space size. The driveway aisle is also smaller than the required 24 foot as it is 22 feet wide. Engineer stated that the smaller sizes are related to the current normal size of vehicles and traffic will continue to flow freely through the lot.

Commissioner Eisenman questioned the restaurant's current operating hours and the lack of parking. Engineer also answered questions from the Board concerning office space on site and the increase in size to the restaurant due to the outdoor seating.

Chairman Zecchino then opened the floor for public questions. Member of the public questioned the position of the trash container and how parking will work to reduce on-street parking. Engineer noted that the trash container will be in a solid enclosure and agreed to that as a condition of approval.

Vice-Chair Molner and Board Planner Graviano also stated that the enclosure should be solid fence material. Planner Graviano added that the trash enclosure should be at parking spot 11 to reduce impact on neighbors. Applicant agreed to that location as a condition of approval.

Applicant owner was called forwarded and sworn in. He testified on the operations of the business and the need for additional parking. Board members asked about the outdoor seating and the parking area.

Matter was opened to the public and the same interested party appeared and asked about protections to prevent cars from striking nearby structures. Parking curbs will be installed.

Board Planner Gravino asked that the Applicant consolidate the lots. Applicant agreed to present

a proposed Lot Consolidation Deed to the Board Attorney and Board Engineer for recording as a condition of approval. Planner Graviano also asked for landscaping to be added where possible.

Engineer McClellan stated that the Applicant had no objection to the Planner or Engineer reports and that Applicant will review the outdoor area for additional landscaping.

Vice-Chair Molner expressed concern that the outdoor seating area would be enclosed by the Applicant. This would result in additional floor area and consequently increase the parking requirement. Applicant agreed as a condition of approval to not enclose the outdoor seating area and otherwise comply with all applicable City ordinances for outdoor seating.

Vice-Chair Molner moved to approve. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion.

*Commissioners Perez, Robol, Eisenman, Braid, O'Connor, Vice-Chair Molner and Chair Zecchino voted in favor. Motion passed 7-0 and the application was approved.*

### **CONTINUED HEARINGS**

3. **Fawzi Abelgani**, 1610 Main Avenue & 80 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street,  
Bl. 9.07, Lot 25 & 26, Zone B-C & M-2

Counsel, **Dominic Iannarella, Esq.**, appeared and presented the application. He noted that the current plans before the Board are different than previously presented only to the extent that the lot adjacent to the property has been added. The house on the lot will be demolished and made into parking lot for the restaurant on the original lot.

Applicant's engineer, **Giovanni Manilio**, was called forward, sworn in and qualified as an expert in the field of engineering. Engineer presented Exhibit A-3 which is a colorized rendition of the changes to the project. Engineer confirmed that the house on the adjoining lot will be demolished and replaced by a parking lot. This will now provide the site with 25 parking spaces which is significantly more than originally proposed. Engineer also noted that the canopy to the left side of the building from the old bank drive-thru will be removed. This eliminates an existing side yard setback variance condition. This will also make it easier for trucks and emergency vehicles to access the site. There will be an exit only onto Main Avenue. Due to the extra space, the dumpster will be moved further back and be enclosed. A six foot high fence will be installed. More landscaping is now being proposed on site. There will be a double row of arborvitae between site and next door property. The Applicant will comply with light spillage conditions and stormwater management controls. Applicant will comply with all requirements in the Neglia report and the site will be ADA compliant. Engineer noted that the revisions still require variance relief for a parking lot not permitted in the M2 zone, number of parking spaces, illumination of sign and pre-existing nonconforming bulk variances. Engineer added that even though there is a variance needed for number of parking spaces, the size of customer area is small and that will reduce the parking. Engineer explained that the ordinance setting the parking number is based upon the total area not the area of seating so it artificially inflates the requirement. Chairman Zecchino agreed that the size of the customer area would reduce the number of vehicles on site.

Chairman Zecchino then opened the floor to the public for questions. Members of the public questioned the Main Avenue exit, congestion in the area, parking lot flow, effect on neighbors, trash pick up and deliveries.

In response to public questions, Engineer noted on behalf of the Applicant that the sign to the rear of the property will not be illuminated as a condition of approval. This will eliminate the need for that variance. Engineer noted that the trash will be handled by a private hauler and the trash area will be enclosed. Applicant will ensure that deliveries are not at unreasonable times. There will not be more than 4 employees present at any one time during the work day. There will be enough parking for customers.

Vice-Chair Molner asked if the Main Avenue egress can be both an entry and exit point. Engineer expressed concern that as Main Avenue is a County roadway, the County of Passaic would not want an entry point so close to an intersection without a traffic control device.

Planner Graviano asked the Applicant to maintain the customer area at no more than 1,200 square feet and the Applicant consented to this as a condition of approval.

Applicant's architect, **Anwar AlKhatib**, was called forward, sworn in and qualified as an expert in the field of architecture. Architect explained the removal of the canopy. He noted that otherwise there were no other major changes to the architectural plans.

Applicant's planner, **Peter Steck**, was called forward, sworn in and qualified as an expert in the field of planning. Planner presented Exhibit A-4 which was a series of photos of the area, an aerial photograph of the site, and a digitized map of the area. Planner explained the zoning conditions at the site and the plans for the demolition. Planner noted that while there is residences adjacent, the zones are commercial. Planner noted in fact that the residences are the non-permitted uses. Planner explained that this restaurant and associated parking are a better zoning alternative than the permitted uses which include industrial. The proposal satisfies the goals of zoning under subsection (a), (g), (i) and (m) under N.J.S.A. 40:55D-2. Planner believes that this site is well suited for this use because of the overall commercial corridor on Main Avenue. Planner noted that on the negative criteria for granting the variances, these are mitigated by the Main Avenue egress and the updated landscaping to the site. The current site is a closed bank branch. This can be approved without a substantial detriment to the public. Planner Graviano agreed and noted that any use other than a bank would require approval of the zoning board.

Chairman Zecchino opened the meeting to the public for comments.

Violet Serekian stated that the traffic in the area is very bad and this type of use will only make it worse. There is limited parking on West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and patrons will take their spaces.

Jada Lassiter stated that the area is full of similar quick stop restaurants. This is ruining the character of the neighborhood. There area is full of trash and will only get worse when these people operate the site.

Mohammed Khan expressed similar concerns about traffic.

Chairman Zecchino reiterated that several conditions of approval would be applicable to this site. These would include signage to direct patrons to exit off onto Main Avenue, additional landscaping, compliance with the design conditions of the Main Avenue Overlay, and consolidation of the lots.

Commissioner Eisenman moved to approve. Commissioner Perez seconded the motion.

*Commissioners Perez, Robol, Eisenman, Braid, O'Connor, Vice-Chair Molner and Chair Zecchino voted in favor. Motion passed 7-0 and the application was approved.*

### **ADOPTION OF MEMORIALIZING RESOLUTIONS/MINUTES**

1. Resolution memorializing the appointment of Friend & Wenzel, LLC as Counsel/Secretary for calendar year 2026.

*Vice-Chair Molner made a motion to memorialize the Resolution. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion; voting in favor are Commissioners Robol, O'Connor, Vice-Chair Molner and Chairman Zecchino. Motion passed 4-0.*

2. Resolution memorializing the appointment of Nicholas Graviano as Planner for calendar year 2026.

*Vice-Chair Molner made a motion to memorialize the Resolution. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion; voting in favor are Commissioners Robol, O'Connor, Vice-Chair Molner and Chairman Zecchino. Motion passed 4-0.*

3. Resolution memorializing the appointment of Neglia Engineer as Engineer/Landscape Architect/Traffic Consultant for calendar year 2026.

*Vice-Chair Molner made a motion to memorialize the Resolution. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion; voting in favor are Commissioners Robol, O'Connor, Vice-Chair Molner and Chairman Zecchino. Motion passed 4-0.*

4. Resolution memorializing the appointment of Laura Carucci, CSR as Certified Shorthand Reporter for calendar year 2026.

*Vice-Chair Molner made a motion to memorialize the Resolution. Commissioner O'Connor seconded the motion; voting in favor are Commissioners Robol, O'Connor, Vice-Chair Molner and Chairman Zecchino. Motion passed 4-0.*

5. Minutes of the December 17, 2025 Regular Meeting.

*Commissioner O'Connor made a motion to memorialize the Resolution. Commissioner Robol seconded the motion; voting in favor are Commissioners Perez, Robol, Eisenman, Braid, O'Connor, and Vice-Chair Molner and Chair Zecchino voted in favor. Motion passed 7-0.*

There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Braid moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner O'Connor, with the unanimous approval of all Board members present, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JOSEPH M. WENZEL, ESQ.,  
COUNSEL SECRETARY