

**RAMSEY PLANNING BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MAY 3, 2022**

**REGULAR MEETING**

**Chairman Iorio** called the regular meeting of the Ramsey Planning Board to order at or around 7:30 p.m. **Chairman Iorio** announced that the meeting is being conducted via teleconferencing due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**Mr. Carey** led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY CHAIRMAN IORIO**

This meeting is being held in accordance with the Sunshine Law. **Chairman Iorio** read the Open Public Meetings Law notice.

<b>MEMBERS</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
<b>Mr. Carey</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Councilwoman Cusick</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Mr. Garbasz</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Mr. Palumbo</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Mr. Strollo</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Mr. Verdone</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Mr. Zabala</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Mayor Dillon</b>		<b>X</b>
<b>Chairman Iorio</b>	<b>X</b>	

<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	<b>PRESENT</b>	<b>ABSENT</b>
<b>Mr. Whitaker, Board Atty.</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Mr. Hals, Board Engineer</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Ms. Lupo, Admin. Secretary</b>	<b>X</b>	

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the minutes of 04/19/2022 was made by Councilwoman Cusick, seconded by Mr. Zabala. All eligible members voted in favor. **Carried.**

**CORRESPONDENCE** - None

**WAIVER APPLICATIONS**

**Applicant:** SMQ Group LLC d/b/a Greek City  
**Location:** 1300 Route 17 North  
**Leased Area:** 2,500 sq. ft.  
**Proposed Business:** Restaurant

The restaurant will be open 7 days a week, Monday through Thursday 11:30 AM to 10:00 PM, 11:30 AM to 10:30 PM Friday and 11:30 AM to 9:00 PM Sunday. The number of employees is 13 F/T and 5 P/T and the number of parking spaces is 40.

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**Applicant:** Globe Shoes Inc.  
**Location:** Interstate Shopping Center  
**Leased Area:** 8,551 sq. ft.  
**Proposed Business:** Retail Shoe Store

The business will be open 7 days a week, Monday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM. The number of employees is 18 F/T and 6 P/T and the number of parking spaces is 43.

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A motion to approve the waivers, subject to the approval of the Construction Official, Board of Health and Fire Official, was made by Mr. Carey, seconded by Mr. Verdone.

**Roll Call: AYES: Mr. Carey, Councilwoman Cusick, Mr. Garbasz,  
Mr. Palumbo, Mr. Strollo, Mr. Verdone, Mr. Zabala  
\*Chairman Iorio**

**NAYES:**

**ABSTAIN: \*Chairman Iorio abstain to Globe Shoes Inc.**

**ABSENT: Mayor Dillon**

**Carried.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS** - None

**COMMENTS OF BOARD MEMBERS** - None

**ORDINANCES** - None

**PUBLIC HEARING**

Chick-fil-A

Block 4705, Lot 6; 726 State Highway 17

Mr. Whitaker said that the applicant had noticed properly, and the hearing could proceed.

Stephen F. Hehl of Javerbaum Wurgaft, 370 Chestnut Street, Union, N.J. appeared on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Hehl presented the following exhibit:

Exhibit A-1 Site plan dated October 22, 2021.

Mr. Hehl said that the applicant is proposing a reconfiguration of the drive-thru area and adding a bypass lane.

**TESTIMONY OF TUNG-TO LAM**

Tung-To Lam of Bohler Engineering was sworn in and deemed an expert in civil engineering. Mr. Lam said that there are no changes to the size of the building or to the NJDOT access being proposed. Mr. Lam said that they are seeking improvements to the drive-thru circulation to improve safety and efficiency. Mr. Lam said that they are adding a bypass lane. Mr. Lam said that previously if you were committed to the drive-thru lane, you were committed in that lane until the car in front of you moves. By adding the drive-thru bypass lane, it gives customers the option to go around the vehicle and leave the lane. Mr. Lam said that the maintenance shed and trash enclosure will be relocated closer to the restaurant to improve safety and efficiency for the employee. Mr. Lam said that the plan was approved with 60 parking spaces with a fully functional two-way drive aisle. Mr. Lam said that once the cars in the drive-thru start stacking beyond the trash enclosure it renders some parking stalls useless. Mr. Lam said that although it was approved for 60 parking spaces, but when there are busy days (cars stacking) due to the inefficiency and the use of the parking spaces, they are down to 39 parking spaces. Mr. Lam said that while the proposal is removing 9 parking spaces, they are adding a double drive-thru lane that extends further doubling the stacking from 20 to 37 vehicles. Mr. Lam said that by having this dedicated drive-thru lane, in place of where the nine parking stalls were, they are now having a true two-way drive aisle that's going to remain functional and open at all times. Mr. Lam said that they are really gaining 12 parking spaces and efficiency. Mr. Lam said on paper it went from 60 to 47, but they are gaining 12 parking spaces in efficiency. Mr. Lam said that they seeking a variance for landscape area where 30% is required, 27% previously approved and they are proposing 20.4%. Mr. Lam said that they are seeking a parking variance where 80 parking spaces are required, 60 spaces were previously approved and they are proposing 47 parking spaces. Mr. Lam said that they are seeking a parking area (drive aisle) in the side yard where 5 feet is required and they are proposing .6 feet. Mr. Lam said that the last variance is for Islands at Ends of Aisles that are required and they are proposing stripe islands to increase the driving radius for delivery trucks, fire trucks and/or trash trucks.

**BOARD QUESTIONS**

Councilwoman Cusick asked Mr. Lam to described the variance being requested for the Islands at Ends of Aisles. Mr. Lam did so. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Lam if the islands are being removed because the site is not big enough for the turning radius. Mr. Lam said that it adds a bit more room and will increase the ease of comfort for a fire truck to circulate the site. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Lam if there are any issues now with the turning radius. Mr. Lam said that sometimes they jump the curb. Mr. Lam said that they would consider a partial reduction. Councilwoman Cusick asked Mr. Lam if there was an issue with emergency vehicles. Mr. Lam said no. Mr. Lam said that the proposal was to remove the curb island and replace them with a stripe island for ease of function for firetrucks and trash trucks. Mr. Verdone asked Mr. Lam if there is any correlation with the fact that the business is drive-thru as opposed to indoor dining. Mr. Lam said yes. Mr. Lam said that the indoor dining is limited in the number of seats. Most of the seats are actually for the outdoor dining. The majority of the customers use the drive-thru and they have noticed queuing issues, which is why they are proposing improvements to the site to make it function better. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Lam to describe the bypass lane. Mr. Lam said that if a vehicle is parked at the pickup window and has a large order and they need someone to go around or move them along, they have an extra 9 feet on the side where they can move to exit. Mr. Lam said the purpose is so you're not locked in the drive-thru until the vehicle in front of you moves. Mr. Lam said they view this as an added safety benefit. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Lam if that bypass would be used to accommodate two cars queuing the entire width. Mr. Lam said no. It's meant as an escape route. Chairman Iorio expressed a safety concern regarding the

bypass lane. Councilwoman Cusick has a similar concern. Mr. Hehl replied that the traffic engineer will provide detailed testimony regarding the function of the bypass lane. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Lam how many spaces are dedicated to the employees. Mr. Lam said that they don't have dedicated employee spaces. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Lam how many employees are typically on site. Mr. Lam said he didn't have the exact number and deferred to the traffic engineer regarding the operations. Mr. Hehl responded that there is offsite parking for employees during peak hours. Mr. Carey inquired about the width of the bypass lane and the drive-thru lane. Mr. Strollo had a concern with the bypass lane. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Lam to respond to Crew's Engineering reports dated April 27<sup>th</sup> and April 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Lam said that they will comply with both. Mr. Carey asked Mr. Lam if the restaurant will be open during construction. Mr. Lam said yes. Mr. Intindola asked Mr. Lam if there currently is indoor dining. Mr. Lam said no. Mr. Intindola asked Mr. Lam if there is a stacking exhibit. Mr. Lam said that can be provided.

**PUBLIC QUESTIONS** - None

**TESTMONY OF JOHN HARTER**

John Harter of Atlantic Traffic and Design, 30 Independence Blvd., Warren, N.J. was sworn in and deemed an expert in traffic engineering. Mr. Harter said that the proposal is to eliminate the safety condition that has been previously described relating to some of the peak times when traffic has queued from the drive-thru onto Route 17 North. Mr. Harter said that queuing grew notably through COVID and parking demand became less and less and indoor dining was closed. Mr. Harter said that the focus of Chick-fil-A is more on drive-thru and mobile order processing and making that as efficient as possible. Mr. Harter said that generally a Chick-fil-A will target about 60 parking spaces on site. The demand has been no less than that. Mr. Harter said that if the site has more width, they would be able to provide two lanes and a three-foot striped area where they would have staff members taking orders in the second lane. But because of the limits of this property and having 19 feet of width of the two proposed lanes, it's not sufficient to properly operate that way. Mr. Harter said they are proposing a drive-thru of two lanes of queuing doubling the queuing capacity as you enter, then as the drive-thru bends around the north corner of the property it will convert to a single lane and essentially remains as a single lane along the building but then have a bypass lane adjacent to that lane. The purpose of the bypass lane is to permit staff to direct vehicles to exit after they were served their food by the pickup window. This configuration can increase efficiency 10 to 15% by processing that many more vehicles. Mr. Harter said that they had filed an Access Permit application for a change of access (from Route 17) and there is not sufficient spacing for an additional driveway. NJDOT did not grant the approval. Subsequently submitted by Bohler Engineering is a Letter of No Interest requesting confirmation that the project does not require any additional access permitting. To date they haven't received a response from the NJDOT regarding the Letter of No Interest.

**BOARD QUESTIONS**

Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Harter if during the last couple of years, the Chick-fil-A found that there's more volume at the drive-thru than there is in the restaurant. Mr. Harter said yes. The focus and the business channel that has the most volume is the drive-thru. Chairman Iorio asked questions regarding the parking and operation conditions prior to COVID and the indoor eating area. Mr. Harter said that through COVID the demands on the site with the drive-thru was redirected through some of the parking spaces on the site. Mr. Harter said that an arrangement was made to lease parking spaces at an offsite location, 535 East Crescent Ave., for 25 parking

stalls for the employees. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Harter if the employees were parking on site prior to COVID. Mr. Harter said yes. Mr. Strollo had a safety concern for the employees who are serving the food by the pickup lane. Mr. Harter described the process of an order with the proposed drive-thru. Chairman Iorio asked Mr. Harter if food will be delivered to the bypass lane. Mr. Harter said no. Mr. Garbasz asked Mr. Harter what is the average queue wait for a customer when they finally get to that line where they get their food. Mr. Harter said their studies indicate from the time placing an order to fulfillment picking up your food can generally range from five to seven minutes. Chairman Iorio had a concern with the bypass lane and people accessing that lane because it's empty. Mr. Harter said that there would be staff available to direct traffic to avoid those situations. Mr. Hehl said he has recognized the Board's concerns regarding the safety of not only the patrons, but the employees and would like the opportunity to provide the Board with a detailed plan showing how the stacking and order pick-up functions at the driveways and peak hour counts. Mr. Verdone asked about the restaurant becoming solely a drive-thru facility. Mr. Hals said the way the business is actually operating and is no longer a permitted use. Drive-thru windows are only permitted as an accessory use to an indoor restaurant. Mr. Hals said with no more indoor and most of the transactions are outdoor, it's actually functioning as a nonconforming use. Mr. Whitaker responded that the code is clear on that. He wasn't aware that there's no indoor seating at this time. Mr. Hals also commented about the stacking lanes. Mr. Hals said that he believes that the site will end up with four stacking lanes rather than two.

Mr. Whitaker said that the application will be carried to June 7, 2022 at 7:30 pm. No new notices are required.

Committee Reports:

Subdivision Committee: Nothing to report

Application Review Committee: Nothing to report

Finance Committee: Vouchers/Performance Bonds/Letter of Credit: Nothing to report

Master Plan & Zoning Committee: Nothing to report

Procedures Committee: Nothing to report

Capital Improvement & Public Lands: Nothing to report

**RESOLUTION** - None

**NEW BUSINESS** - None

**OLD BUSINESS** - None

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by Mr. Carey, seconded by Mr. Palumbo to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:35 P.M.