

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG  
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT  
DANIEL CRONHEIM, CHAIRMAN**

Regular Meeting  
August 8, 2023

**OFFICIAL MINUTES  
Adopted September 14, 2023**

Chairman Cronheim called the regular meeting to order at 7:30 pm. He read the statement indicating the meeting was being conducted according to Open Public Meetings Act, the Municipal Land Use Law requirements, and the recording of the Minutes as required by law.

He then led the flag salute to the American flag, and the Board members identified themselves for the record.

**ROLL CALL**

Mr. DJ Hunsinger  
Mr. Richard Brown  
Ms. Sondra Fechtner  
Mr. PJ Panzarella (Absent)  
Mr. Mitchell Taraschi  
Mr. Daniel Cronheim, Chairman

Mr. George Sopko  
Mr. Alex Xie Alt #2 (Absent)  
Mr. Flynn, Esq.  
David A. Stires, PE  
Tammy Vetusch, Board Clerk

**MINUTES**

On motion by Mr. Hunsinger, seconded by Mr. Sopko, the regular meeting minutes of June 8, 2023, were adopted on voice vote.

**RESOLUTIONS**

CASE NO.: BA 23-R11; PALMER  
133 Skyline  
BLOCK: 6908 LOT: 16  
Represented By: Corey Buckles; Gregory Ralph Architect Design  
RR ZONE  
Approved: 7/11/23

On motion by Chairman Cronheim, seconded by Mr. Sopko, the Board memorialized the resolution based on the following roll call vote:

Roll Call:

Ayes:	Chairman Cronheim, Mr. Sopko
Nays:	
Not Eligible:	Ms. Fechtner, Mr. Brown, Mr. Taraschi and Mr. Hunsinger
Abstain:	
Absent:	Mr. Panzarella, Mr. Xie

CASE NO.: 23-R12; QUICENO

109 Wildwood Terrace

BLOCK: 202 LOT:1

Represented By: Kevin J. O'Connor, Esq.

RR ZONE

Approved: 7/11/23

On motion by Chairman Cronheim, seconded by Mr. Hunsinger, the Board memorialized the resolution based on the following roll call vote:

Roll Call:

Ayes:	Mr. Hunsinger, Mr. Sopko, Chairman Cronheim,
Nays:	
Not Eligible:	Ms. Fechtner, Mr. Brown, Mr. Taraschi
Abstain:	
Absent:	Mr. Panzarella, Mr. Xie

APPLICATIONS

CASE NO.: BA 23-10; CROWN CADILLAC

1584 US Hwy Rt. 22 East

BLOCK: 6101 LOT: 1

Represented By: Jay B. Bohn, Esq., Schiller, Pittenger & Galvin, P.C.

BC ZONE

Expiration: 11/3/23

Application filed is for upgrades to the site including installation of EV charger infrastructure, façade changes, canopies, renovations to the interior of the building, and replacing all signage.

List of variances also applied for:

1. Impervious coverage 80% allowed 88.9% proposed, pre-existing as there is a reduction from 89.2% that currently exists.

2. Maximum height of free-standing sign, 18 feet allowed, 35 feet proposed; existing sign was previously approved at 42 feet.
3. Maximum area of free-standing sign where 50 SF is permitted, and 176.1 SF is proposed; prior approval 225 SF.
4. Directional sign along Route 22 where 2 SF is permitted, and 15 SF is proposed; existing directional sign is 20 SF.
5. Directional sign along Raymond Avenue where 2 SF is permitted, and 15 SF is proposed; existing directional sign is 18 SF.
6. Maximum sign height for façade sign is 5 feet and 6.72 feet is proposed.
7. Sign area for façade sign facing Route 22 where 100 SF is permitted and 106.31 feet is proposed; existing sign is 120 SF.
8. Building coverage is increasing from 29.2% to 30.1 % where 30% is permitted; applicant indicated previous application was approved for 31.3% coverage however was never constructed. Application is to include a request for an expansion of a non-conforming use and the increased coverage over what is permitted.

Mr. Matt Flynn, Esq. advised notice has been timely served. All witnesses including Dave Stires, PE, PP, CME were sworn in mass.

Mr. Jay Bohn, Esq.'s first witness is Mr. Michael Difeo, Dealer Principal at Crown Cadillac for the past 4 years. Mr. DiFeo states that his grandfather has owned Crown Cadillac since 1975, moving it to Watchung, NJ in 1981. The outside of the building has not had any upgrades in 40 years and is proposing to utilize Cadillac's Image Program to re-do façade, change and reduce signage and generally improve the property. Mr. Difeo has in his possession 4 photos and 3 drawings showing different views of the current structure. The proposed changes will not affect employees, hours, or inventory. Mr. DiFeo is currently installing an EV infrastructure update and on 7/5/23 a permit was approved for 1600-amp transformer that will be installed.

Joseph Sterba, AIA; Sterba Associates, PC, accepted as an expert witness.

Mr. Sterba had in his possession the site plans for the property, he explained that the overall project is significant renovations to signage, canopy, circulation, painting, new lighting, EV charging stations. Working thru his plans, Mr. Sterba explains what each part of the building is having done; new car delivery will be fully renovated, ceiling, lighting HVAC interior walls and floors, a small 470 ft addition will be added that will contain a vestibule area for concierge, basically a beautification upgrade. They will be utilizing the footprint that they have. This is a significant investment and upgrade in the building utilizing the guidelines that are provided by the Cadillac Image Plan.

Mr. Joseph Bachi, Engineer, accepted as an expert witness.

Mr. Bachi went over zoning and the Boundary survey; the site is basically rectangular, total area of 1.68 acres and currently comprises a 1 story block and glass construction; 29.2 % building coverage which is under allowable amount and the proposed will be 30.1% which was previously approved.

The site is relatively flat and generally slopes down. There are 3 means of ingress, access in and out on Raymond Ave. and entrance on Rt. 22. The site is 89.2% impervious this will be slightly reduced; this is an existing condition that they are trying to improve. Other improvements include; proposed vestibule, proposed canopy, existing front yard non conformity 18.1 ft. that is proposed to be reduced to 7.56 ft., other ancillary improvements include repaving, cleaning up maintaining ADA accessibility, reconstructing concrete apron and minor grading changes proposed.

Mr. Gabe Bailer, Licensed Planner, Harper Consultants was accepted as an expert witness. The glass portion of the building in front is esthetically pleasing but the rest of the building is in need of improvement. Crown Cadillac is the “gateway” to Rt. 22 and to see significant improvement shows investment in the community.

All C2 variances needed include:

1. Impervious Coverage, 80% permitted 89.2% existing 88.9% proposed (minor reduction)
2. Max Height freestanding sign 18 ft. permitted, existing 42 ft., 35 ft proposed
3. Sign area of Freestanding sign, 50 ft. permitted, proposed 176 ft existing 225 ft
4. Directional Signage at Rt. 22, 2 ft permitted, 15 ft proposed
5. Directional Signage to Raymond Ave., 2 ft permitted, 15 ft proposed
6. New Facade Sign, 5 ft max height permitted, 6.72 ft proposed
7. Sign area of the Façade sign, 100 ft permitted, 106.31 proposed
8. Front yard Variance on Raymond Ave, 18.1 ft existing, 7.56 ft proposed

All signs are corporate branding by Cadillac to keep all Cadillac Dealerships consistent.

In Mr. Bailer’s opinion, there is no negative detriment to the impairment of the Master Plan or the Zone Ordinance. These are improvements to existing conditions. In the 2020 MP Re-exam Report it was stated the Borough should look on improving Rt 22 corridor and be aware of new investment opportunities. Last, the purposes of the Municipal Land Use Law, letter “I”, to promote desirable visual environment, as mentioned previously, this is an increase, an overall aesthetic improvement to the site and sign upgrade to the building. Mr. Bailer feels the variances are not substantial and would like the Board to consider granting them.

Mr. Hunsinger moves to open to the Public. No public comment.

Chairman Croheim moved to approve Crown Cadillac and was seconded by Mr. Hunsinger.

Roll Call:

Ayes: Chairman Cronheim, Mr. Hunsinger, Mr. Sopko, Ms. Fechtner, Mr. Brown, Mr. Tarschi

Nays:

Not Eligible:

Abstain:

Absent: Mr. Panzarella, Mr. Xie

Temporary signage for Chick Fillet approved granted on voice vote, all in favor.

The next regular scheduled Board of Adjustment meeting is 10.12.23 at 7:30 pm.

ADJOURN

The Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tammy Vetusch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tammy" being more prominent than the last name "Vetusch".

Tammy Vetusch  
Board Clerk