

**BOROUGH OF WATCHUNG
PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
August 19th, 2025 | 7:30 PM
15 Mountain Blvd., Watchung, NJ 07069
Adopted On: 9.16.2025**

CALL TO ORDER: Madam Chair called the Regular Meeting to order at 7:28 pm. and read the opening statement indicating the meeting was being held in compliance with N.J.S.A.10:4-6 of the Open Public Meetings Act, the Municipal Land Use Law requirements, and the recording of the minutes as required by law and proper notice had been published in the Echoes Sentinel and Courier News. The Chair led the group in saluting the American flag and the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- present	Mr. Dustin Antonio – (Absent)
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman – present	Mr. Troy Sims – present
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – present	
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman - (Absent)	Mr. Francis P. Linnus, Esq. - present
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – present	Mr. Mark Healey, PP – present
Ms. Karen Pennett – present	Mr. John Jahr, Board Traffic Engineer BVE– Absent
Mr. Stephen Pote – present	Jamie Guarantano, Board Engineer BVE - present
Ms. Jackie Bodnar – present	Ms. Catherine Furlan Board Clerk- present

Madam Chair opened the meeting, noting a quorum was present and asked for waiving of the minutes to be read and for a motion to accept the Regular Meeting Minutes from June 17th, 2025. There was no meeting in July. On motion by Mr. Pote and seconded by Mr. Speeney. Followed by a unanimous voice vote, all were in favor, not voting; Karen Pennett.

Madam Chair announced that PB25-01; American Recycling Technologies would be adjourned until next month, September 16th, 2025 at 7:30pm. Mr. Linnus announced that no further notice would be required for the applicant as the announcement sufficed.

Ms. Spingler called the next applicant.

PB24-02; RAISING CANE’S (Final Site Plan Approval)

Proposed Fast-Food Restaurant with Drive-Thru
Blue Star Shopping Center
Block 6404, Lots 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, & 2.04

The Applicant is seeking Final Site Plan approvals to replace the existing +/-8,616 sf Hibachi Grill & Supreme Buffet pad site fronting on Route 22 with a 4,320-sf Raising Cane's restaurant with a 2-lane drive thru.

Click Access Plans [Click Here](#)

Applicant's council Mr. O'Grodnick From Savo, Schalk law firm approached the podium and provided background on the case for Final Major Site Plan approval and the variances sought. Max Gagneron from Levin/Blue Star was present for questioning. Mr. Linnus, Board Attorney said the board had jurisdiction as he reviewed the notices and found them sufficient. Mr. Streker the Civil Engineer from Bohler Engineering approached the podium and was sworn in. He addressed the changes that were requested from the Board. The first revision was the drainage swale on the south side of the site. Environmental Commission requested a rain garden and 174 additional trees were added. The second revision addressed the 2-tree deficient. More plantings were added on the south west side of the site. More planting on the eastern and southern side from Exhibit A-3 (previously marked) were requested, but the underground utilities limited planting capabilities. Mr. Streker went on to discuss where plants can be placed and where plantings cannot occur.

Other miscellaneous details added to the plans were signage for the outdoor seating area and trash receptacles. Mr. Streker reviewed ADA parking and outstanding approvals. NJDOT approvals should be received within 60 days. Madam Chair asked about item #24 from BVE report regarding revised lightening plans. Mr. Streker said no photometrics have changed. Madam chair also inquired about item #25 for revised traffic impact study. Mr. Guarantano from Bright View Engineering said all items have been addressed. Madam Chair said about item number #26 for hours of operation? Mr. Streker said they would do that. Mr. Guarantano said the board may consider for the EV parking requirement will require a lot of power. It is still not clear if PSEG can provide this power. Mr. Guarantano said prior to any TCO or CO the applicant should install all make-ready parking spaces or provide a letter from PSEG saying they can or cannot provide power. If the applicant cannot install the make-ready spaces, they would be required to come back to the board for relief. Mr. Streker said that is acceptable and Mr. O'Grodnick also mentioned Shoprite would also be coming back before the board. He also mentioned Levin would likely come back and address the EV parking requirement for the site, but this was acceptable to the applicant.

Ms. Pennet asked about the outdoor dining area and if any shrubs would be between the drive thru lanes and outdoor seating? Yes, a green strip would be a buffer between the outdoor dining and drive thru lanes. Mr. Healey said his comments were all addressed. Mr. Healey also brought up the status of the Leven agreement with the Police Department and the honeymoon period. Mr. O'Grodnick said the chief and Levin agreed to 90 days. He went on to discuss the patrols and safety mechanisms in place currently like the flock cameras and license plate readers.

Madam Chair opened it to the public for comment, hearing none, the public portion was closed. Mr. O'Grodnick provided closing statements about Raising Cane's, one of the fastest growing fast-food restaurants.

Roll Call

Chair asked for a motion for Final Approval of **Application PB25-02** and for Mr. Linnus to draft a resolution in the affirmative with conditions. Conditions added were; no TCO or CO granted until applicant fulfills make-ready parking spaces or a letter from PSEG saying they can or cannot provide power for EV spaces. Second condition added was; more trees to be planted were possible. Third condition, 90 days of security and patrols for honeymoon period. **Mr. Linnus said the first action is to approve the final with conditions and the second action would be to memorialize the action.** On motion by Mr. Speeney seconded by Mayor Jubin, 8 ayes and 0 nays.

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye	Mr. Dustin Antonio – absent
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman – Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman - absent	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

Chair asked for a motion to memorialize with a resolution drafted by Mr. Linnus in the affirmative. On motion by Ms. Springler and seconded by Mr. Pote, 8 ayes and 0 nays.

Ms. Tracee Schaefer, Chairwoman- Aye	Mr. Dustin Antonio – absent
Mr. Donald Speeney, Vice Chairman – Aye	Mr. Troy Sims – Aye
Mr. Ronald Jubin, Mayor – Aye	Ms. Jackie Bodnar – Aye
Mr. Robert Gibbs, Councilman - absent	Ms. Karen Pennett – Aye
Ms. Ellen Spingler, Secretary – Aye	Mr. Stephen Pote - Aye

The Chair opened it up to the public for comments, hearing none the public portion was closed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:59pm. The next Regular Meeting will be Tuesday, September 16th at 7:30pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,



Catherine Furlan
Board Clerk