

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING  
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS  
CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
February 20, 2020**

**AGENDA:**

**Old Business:**

**Approval of Minutes of Regular Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting held on January 16, 2020.**

**New Business:**

- 1. 6001 Rockside Road, Holiday Inn** – Requesting the following variances to 1151.08(d)(1): a variance to permit an additional sign on the building (not permitted), a variance of 77.83 sq. ft. to allow an additional sign to have a total sign area of 152.83 sq. ft. (75 sq. ft. permitted, 152.83 sq. ft. requested); and a variance of 3 ft. 1 in. to allow an additional sign to have a total height of 6 ft. 1 in. (3 ft. height permitted, 6 ft. 1 in. in height requested).

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mark Moreal at 5:37 p.m. and the following responded to Roll Call:

**PRESENT:**           **Mark Moreal, Chairman  
Chris Walchanowicz, Councilperson  
Charles Bredt  
Pasquale Monteleone, Jr.**

**ALSO  
PRESENT:**           **Gregory J. O'Brien, Law Director  
Michael Gero, Building Official**

**ABSENT:**           **Carol Fortlage**

Chairman Moreal stated that he would ask the Board if there were any corrections, changes or additions to the January 16, 2020 meeting.

**A motion was made by Charles Bredt, seconded by Councilperson Walchanowicz, to approve the January 16, 2020 Minutes.**

**ROLL CALL:**       **Yeas: Bredt, Walchanowicz, Monteleone, Moreal  
Nays: None  
MOTION CARRIED**

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**6001 Rockside Road, Holiday Inn** – Tom Moore representing Holiday Inn was in attendance.

Chairman Moreal asked Mr. Moore to give his reason for needing the variances.

Mr. Moore stated that the reason was they did a big upgrade to the corner. They took their back building and made it into a new Candlewood Suites. The Board has pictures that Mr. Moore had given. He stated that the reason that he was before the Board was the building currently only has one sign on it, and it faced Rockside Road, the end of the building. He stated that he had no other sign on the building, and with doing the new addition of the hotel, they did the new Independence Conference Center. He stated that the new Candlewood was the old brick building that nobody knew was part of the hotel before. He stated that they redid the entire exterior with the new design package. He stated that they were doing 91 rooms in there.

Mr. Moore stated that what they want to do because they have new signage there, the new hotel with new signage, there was nothing on the front of the building that faces the highway, I-480 and I-77 that would tell you the Holiday Inn was there. He stated that with the new signage, at night it would look beautiful. He stated that the SpringHill Suites were there, the conference center, the Candlewood Suites. He stated that they would like to be able to put in an additional building sign on the building on the column that would face the highway. He indicated on the rendering where the signage was currently located.

Mr. Moore stated that they only have one sign.

Law Director O'Brien asked Mr. Moore if he had that big sign that said Independence Conference Center. Mr. Moore stated that the sign was not on their building. It was on the separate conference center building. It was not located on the hotel.

The Law Director stated that Holiday Inn had a sign out front on Rockside.

Mr. Moore stated that they had a great sign, but there was no sign on the building.

Law Director O'Brien stated that there was a sign out on the highway showing this exit Holiday Inn.

Mr. Moore stated that they replaced that sign with the monument sign that was required when they did the renovation of the corner.

The Law Director stated that he was talking about the sign on I-77.

Mr. Moore stated that they didn't have a sign on I-77.

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The Law Director asked Mr. Moore if he had the ODOT sign that said Holiday Inn.

Mr. Moore stated that they did have that sign, along with every other hotel in the area.

He stated that he was requesting the additional sign for visibility, letting people know that it was a Holiday Inn; and he thought it would make sense with the other signage that was facing I-77 and I-480. He stated that the other hotels that were in the area, the SpringHill Suites had three building signs as well as a monument sign. He stated that the Embassy Suites had two building sign facing both ways so you could see it, which is what Mr. Moore was requesting so that they could be seen on both sides. They also have a monument sign. Mr. Moore stated that the Home2 had three building signs on the building. He stated that the Doubletree had two signs on the building. He stated that he was just requesting one additional sign on the building to give them more visibility to go along with the new hotel to see that there was a conference center, there was the Candlewood Suites and then there was the Holiday Inn. He stated that the only way you would see the Holiday Inn was if you were up on Rockside Road. He stated that you cannot see the sign from up on the highway.

Chairman Moreal stated that Mr. Moore did have three signs on the building. He stated that it was all Mr. Moore's building. Mr. Moore stated that they technically separated the building through zoning or whatever. He stated that the Candlewood sign had two sides on it; one facing north so you could see it from I-480 and then one facing I-77 so you could see it on I-77. He stated that currently the Holiday Inn only has the one sign on the front of the building on the south side facing Rockside. There was no other signage on the building. They used to have a big monument sign right there on Rockside.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked if that was the one on the south side.

Mr. Moore stated that was correct. He stated that there was nothing on the other side. They used to have a big monument sign on Rockside Road that was just the Holiday Inn sign that said entrance and the address. That has been replaced with a sign that has the Candlewood, the conference center, the Holiday Inn, SpringHill Suites; and then they were waiting for Bonefish and Outback. They were required to put Bonefish and Outback on that sign. He stated that it had been replaced and upgraded on the Rockside Road side. He stated that the big monument sign went from 6' x 8' to about 2' x 2' for the Holiday Inn.

Chairman Moreal stated that he wanted Mr. Moore to refresh the Board's memory now. He stated that there was a Candlewood sign on the back side.

Mr. Moore stated that it was on the south side.

The Chairman stated that there was the one the Board was seeing in the picture.

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Mr. Moore stated that was the one the Board gave him permission to put up.

The Chairman stated that it was along with the Independence Conference Center. Then he has the Holiday Inn sign.

Mr. Moore stated that it was on the north side which was on the end building close to Rockside road. He stated that he has nothing on the other side of the sign.

Several people began speaking at once.

Mr. Moore stated that he had no other Holiday Inn sign on the building, and the building that used to be the Holiday Inn, that was the Candlewood Suites now.

Chairman Moreal stated that it was the same building.

Mr. Moore stated that it was connected by a hallway. He stated that it was two complete different business entities. It has a separate front desk. It is just a completely separate hotel.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked if there was one entrance to both.

Mr. Moore stated that there were separate entrances.

Mr. Bredt asked if they were shared or separate parcels.

Mr. Moore stated that he could not remember. He asked the Building Official if he had split the parcels.

Building Official Gero stated that he thought it was all one parcel.

Mr. Bredt asked if the original Holiday Inn had a sign on the porte cochere.

Mr. Moore stated that it did not. It never did. He stated that it just had the little green up lights on the front of it. It did not have a Holiday Inn sign. There was no other hotel there. The conference center was considered the Holiday Inn ballroom at that point.

Mr. Bredt asked if there was any contemplation in coming back and asking for a sign on the porte cochere.

Mr. Moore replied no. He stated that the franchise would not allow that. He stated that the Holiday Inn porte cochere used to be really thick with the big up thing; and they had to cut it down and streamline it. It was part of their renovations for the hotel. He stated that it went from being 8 feet tall to being 2 ½ feet tall.

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Councilperson Walchanowicz asked Mr. Moore if he was going to put the same style sign that was on the south end of the building on the side of the building.

Mr. Moore produced the rendering of the sign that they wanted to install.

Chairman Moreal asked Mr. Moore when he was before the Zoning Board last time, if there was any reason why he didn't ask for the sign at that time.

Mr. Moore stated that they didn't realize the impact of building the Candlewood because the Candlewood did not look like it does now. He stated that it still looked like one building was there, and not three buildings. He stated that now it looked like three buildings were there; and they want to make sure everybody realizes the difference of the Holiday Inn and the Candlewood when they were up on I-77. That was the main reason for it.

Chairman Moreal stated that he thought you would notice from I-77 with the State sign, when you get off on Rockside the first sign you would see would be the front sign that says Holiday Inn. He stated that he thought at the last meeting when the Board gave Mr. Moore the two signs, the conference center and the Candlewood, and he thought that was it. The Chairman stated that he didn't know if Mr. Moore said he wasn't coming back for another sign.

Mr. Moore stated that he did not talk about the Holiday Inn at the last meeting. Again, if he did, he doesn't remember. He stated that they thought from an aesthetic standpoint and from a business standpoint, there was no harm to it. You can't tell that the building is a Holiday Inn from that left side. He stated that it would add, they put \$16,000,000 in the property in the last year and a half; and they just think, the owner would request that they put a sign there so that when people come in. He stated that you can see the new porte cochere in the picture; it has gone from big to nothing. He stated that they would just like some recognition from two different angles instead of one different angle. He stated that even if you would pull off I-480, you would only see the same sign that you would see on south side of the building anyways. He stated that you would not see it from any other direction. He stated that the only way you see the Holiday Inn sign would be if you were coming north on I-77, and you get off at the Rockside Road exit. You would not be seeing the Holiday Inn if you were coming down I-77 south. You would not see the Holiday Inn sign even when you get off the exit because it is underneath the bridge. It is on the other side of the road. He stated that the only way you would see that if you know to make a left; and then you see it from Rockside Road. You would not see it from the highway.

Law Director O'Brien stated that he appreciates it and understands business and Independence is pro business; but Mr. Moore really can't be serious. He stated that first of all, the only way to see Holiday Inn would be to get off the exit, and you would see the Holiday Inn. The sign would be for advertising.

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Mr. Moore stated that it would be for people to know it's there, but again he will disagree with the Law Director. He stated that when you are getting off the exit from I-77 south, you are not seeing the Holiday Inn sign. There is the bridge that is blocking you from seeing anything; and they wanted for people coming into town who don't know it's there. He stated that if you go to the meetings there, they are every week. He doesn't care about the signage; it would be for people who are coming into town, and they would be coming from a different direction. It would be for people who don't know the Holiday Inn was there. He stated that they have conferences there every day from a business standpoint. If they have been there, a lot of people have been to meetings there; he was not talking about it for people who know where they are and know they have been there. He was talking about it from a directional standpoint. You cannot see the Holiday Inn, even if you pulled up, if you would go I-77 south; and you went up to where Bonefish and Outback was, you look at the building, and you see Candlewood and the Independence Conference Center. You would not see the Holiday Inn sign.

Mr. Bredt stated that he was going to help Mr. Moore out a little bit he hoped because today he drove around the complex two different times and circled by going back by the school and going back up on the highway which was actually how he came and got off; and he was struck by the fact that the original Holiday Inn western exposure looked unfinished by comparison to the building which was still part of the same building to the north. He stated that he was personally amenable to having that second sign because he thinks it will make the building look more finished. He stated that it didn't change the fact that there was an awful lot of signs going on there; and the size of the new Holiday Inn sign, he was curious how large it would be in comparison to the Candlewood sign. He asked if it was the same relative size? He would take Mr. Moore's word for it.

Mr. Moore stated that it was not as long as the Candlewood sign.

Mr. Bredt stated that he was thinking more height wise because he thinks the green Holiday Inn logo stands by itself.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked are you going to see the Candlewood sign once that big Holiday Inn sign would be up?

Mr. Moore stated that he thought the Holiday Inn sign, the space of the Candlewood sign, would be longer than the space of that sign because they would be missing the red part to the left of the thing. He stated that they would only be going between the lowest part of the bump down to where the other bump out is on the efface. He stated that the Candlewood sign was actually bigger than the sign that he was talking about here; but he agrees with Councilperson Walchanowicz that was what he was trying to say. He stated that when you look at the building from the side of it, everything else has a new sign; and it was lit up and looks bright. You know exactly what is there. He stated that you don't have that with the Holiday Inn unless you know the Holiday Inn was there, or you approach it from the south side.

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Chairman Moreal asked when you approach it from the south side, what would you pick up on, the monument sign first?

Mr. Moore replied no. You pick up on the end building sign. You could see it from up on the highway. He stated that once you get down low, then the (inaudible) sign is there. He stated that they got rid of the big monument sign that was right there on the highway; and like he said, he has a sign smaller, compared to a 6' x 8' sign lit up at night that showed you where to turn and so on and so forth. The other sign is actually set back, and it can be blocked by the Bonefish/Outback building.

Mr. Monteleone stated that you would miss all three signs basically when you would turn that corner right there; that was all he saw. He stated that they know Holiday Inn is there, but that Holiday Inn sign on the face of the building was probably wasted.

Mr. Bredt stated that you would be looking at it over your shoulder.

Chairman Moreal asked if there was any thought of moving the front sign to the side if they want that sign.

Mr. Moore stated that it was not tall enough. He stated that it was too short and too far out.

The Chairman stated that it would be the sign on the building, remove it and put it where Mr. Moore feels is a better fit.

Mr. Moore stated that then you wouldn't see anything coming the other way.

Mr. Monteleone stated that he didn't go on the highway to see.

Mr. Moore stated that the one on the building you see first before anything coming north. When you are coming south, you don't see anything when you are looking to your left because even when you get down off by the Cleveland Clinic, you can't see anything because the bridges are there.

Law Director O'Brien asked now you are telling me before I get off I-77 going north, he will have time to see the Holiday Inn sign to get off at that exit.

Mr. Moore replied no, but again you would not see the Embassy sign before you get off at the exit. You would not see the Home2 sign before you get off the exit. You will not see the SpringHill sign before you get off the exit. He stated that it was more so for people who don't want to drive through. They would be trying to find where they were going. He doesn't see any reason why when the other hotels in the area have the signs; and he knows they are looking at it, but it would not be one building anymore. It was a separate business. The Candlewood is a

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whole different business entity. It caters to a whole different client. It is extended stay. He stated that they were looking for 30 plus day people to stay in that. It would not be the Holiday Inn people to stay in. It would not be the Holiday Inn people who would stay in the Candlewood Suites. The reason they switched the building, which completely looks different; and again, it was just an old brick building, you didn't even know it was the Holiday Inn, was because they didn't feel that there was a need for a 364 room Holiday Inn in Independence. He stated that when you are at 55% to 60% occupancy, the owners were going how could they gain occupancy; so they split the business. They put the money into it. He stated that they put \$9,000,000 in to Candlewood to change it from a 100 room Holiday Inn to a separate business entity. He thinks that looks great. He stated that the signage looked great. He stated that he thinks if you drive it at night, he thinks it adds to the ambiance of Independence; and he thinks the Holiday Inn is going to even add more to a building that you don't know what's there compared to the other two, including when you are up on the highway, you see the Boneifsh sign lit up on I-77. You see the Outback sign lit up on I-77. You see the SpringHill Suites sign lit up on I-77. You see the Embassy sign lit up on I-77. You don't see the Holiday Inn sign lit up on I-77.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that between Candlewood and the conference center, you put \$16,000,000 into the entire building.

Mr. Moore agreed. He stated that they totally redid the conference center, top to bottom. Mike has been there. They redid the conference center and their ballroom. They gutted the Candlewood down the poured concrete, sprinkled the building, brought it up, put a new front desk in, new lobby. They were currently putting in a new drive back to the lobby for the Candlewood.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that with all the money they put into it, how much have they increased staffing for all that new.

Mr. Moore stated that they haven't increased staffing much because they took 100 rooms away; and from a housekeeping standpoint and things. They will have a new General Manager, that will be a new position. The Front Desk Manager will be a new position; but they basically took 100 rooms from the Holiday Inn and put them into an extended stay.

Mr. Monteleone stated that they were very important nowadays.

Mr. Moore agreed. He stated that was the reason they did it because there was nothing in the market. He stated that the Home2 was kind of an extended stay, but it was more of a week at the most. Candlewood, they will be looking for the crews that come in, the Topgolf crews, or the people building the bridge up on I-480. We went to put them in there and keep them for six months.

Mr. Bredt stated that he agreed that the building didn't look finished.



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Councilperson Walchanowicz asked with the renovation, what did Mr. Moore think the building, the appraisal value of the building, if it went up with all the money they put into it.

Mr. Moore stated that he believed it would probably appraise around \$47,000,000 from \$20,000,000. He stated that they put \$16,000,000 total because they were redoing the Holiday Inn currently right now. He stated that they have to have the pit finished by 2022, by December 31<sup>st</sup>; so technically 2023. He stated that they have done the conference center. They are on the fifth floor right now, but they have to do all the floors, and they have to do the lobby. So, the work is not done yet. They still have to spend a bunch of money to do it; but part of their franchise agreement to extend their license was to do what they did. He stated that from a franchise standpoint, they were very happy to get one of the first dual brands in the same building. He stated that is what they are trying to build, two different hotels in one entity.

Mr. Bredt asked if they had separate Federal ID numbers?

Mr. Moore replied yes.

Mr. Bredt stated that they were truly separate businesses.

Mr. Moore agreed.

Law Director O'Brien stated that he thought there was a TIF over there.

Chairman Moreal stated that a lot of questions have popped up because of the sign because he was a little, and he always has been really good with signs; but right now he has a lot of questions going through his mind, mainly because the Board gave Mr. Moore three signs six months ago. He stated that he didn't want Mr. Moore to quote him, but he didn't expect Mr. Moore to be back for another sign. He stated that it was three signs, and Mr. Moore never mentioned the Holiday Inn looking for a sign. He stated that he thought the Board went above and beyond helping Mr. Moore with the signs. The Chairman asked Mr. Bredt if he was driving around the building and seeing parts of it unfinished. He stated that he thought the sign would be the last thing they should be looking for.

Mr. Bredt stated that he was looking at the picture representing the fact that it was finished, but that part of the building over there looks unfinished from a trim standpoint. The trim in this case would be the sign.

Mr. Moore stated that if he misquoted himself, to him once they separated the building; and once they became separate entities and tax ID's and whatever; it was considered a different building. It would be a different hotel for him. He stated that it would be a new hotel for him. He stated that the hotel right now was brand new. If you would walk into it, it was brand new, the hallways, furniture, sprinkler system, roof, A/C units, from A to Z it's done. He stated that he

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understands the concern; but he does believe that it finishes that corner. He stated that with the City they have invested a lot of time, money and effort into building the SpringHill, making it the campus, paying for part of the upgrade to the street, paying for sidewalks, and sidewalks for the Bonefish and signage. He stated that from an owner's standpoint, he doesn't see any harm other than good finishing that corner with that so you know exactly what is there. He stated that he understands the conference center and the Candlewood that he requested signs for; but that was because that was a new business. It wasn't because he considered it part of the Holiday Inn. He considered it a brand new hotel, and he needed signage out there to let people know that there was a new hotel there.

Mr. Bredt stated that he was just a little surprised, and he would be inclined to accept the request of the variance. So, he didn't want Mr. Moore to get him wrong where he was going; but he was a little surprised looking at the architectural renderings originally that what the Board was looking at right now wasn't recognized back then and somebody didn't say that they needed to have a sign up there.

Mr. Moore stated that he saw Mr. Bredt's point.

Mr. Bredt stated that if there was more discussion, he was prepared to make a motion.

Chairman Moreal stated that he would like to revisit it next month. There was one missing Board member. He didn't know how the vote could go; but right now it would have to be 3 to 1 to win it. He stated that he didn't drive down I-77. He stated that I-77 seems to be an issue. He stated that it was said you can't see it from I-77.

Mr. Moore stated that he understood that, but they were opening the Candlewood technically on March 10<sup>th</sup>, and he was just trying to tie it up beforehand. He stated that he thought he would come before the Board, and there wouldn't be an issue. He might have prepared a little differently; but again, he understands the point of him being here for the Candlewood Suites and the Independence Conference Center, but they proposed those as different business entities than the Holiday Inn. Technically right now the Holiday Inn has one sign on the building, and there were multiple hotels that have at least two signs, and many of them have three along with monument signs.

Chairman Moreal stated that it was basically the same sign for one entity. He stated like Mr. Moore stated, Home2; it was Home2. Mr. Moore had Independence Conference Center. He stated that it looked like one building. There were three different signs on the building.

Mr. Moore produced a picture and asked the Chairman if it looked like one building. He didn't think so.

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Mr. Bredt stated that he did drive around a couple of times because he was actually looking for a break between the two buildings; and the break between the two buildings was the conference center when you get right down to it. There was no passage way between the two buildings. He stated that he respected the fact that an awful lot of improvements and another entity has been brought to the forefront. He stated that he would hate to delay things by a month.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that he originally thought it was a brand new building. He stated that the first time he drove by it, he didn't think it was part of the Holiday Inn.

Several people began speaking at once.

Mr. Bredt stated that the rehabilitation that has taken place on the parcel has differentiated three different entities on that parcel; and the one that was there originally was the one, he can't use the term under signed because the Code states that there is allowed one, but he thinks it merits serious consideration for a second sign.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that his other thought was if you were not from here, and you are a traveler, the Candlewood Suites was fairly large because there is nothing on that side of the building that states Holiday Inn. He stated that if he was getting off the freeway right there by the Crown Centre building, and he would be coming up. He would see Candlewood, and wonder where the Holiday Inn was. You would not know it until you turn onto Rockside.

Mr. Monteleone stated that he agreed with Councilperson Walchanowicz. He stated that he felt for the people coming in.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that you try to think of everything, and it's late at night, people are traveling, they want to get to their hotel or find a place; and the last thing you want to do is start looking around.

Mr. Monteleone stated you would be surprised how many people go to the Shell gas station and can't find the hotel with all the signs out there.

Mr. Bredt stated that they go to the Shell station and ask where's the Shell station.

Mr. Monteleone asked Mr. Moore when he wanted to put the sign in.

Mr. Moore stated that it was ready to go. He stated that it was the same company that put up the new sign out front.

Chairman Moreal asked Mr. Moore why didn't he ask the Board six months ago.

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Mr. Moore stated that the building was not finished, and once it got finished and put the signage up there; it changed the way.

The Chairman stated they didn't have a rendering.

Mr. Moore stated that if the Board remembered the first rendering, it was the old Candlewood Suites, which it was completely different. They changed the front of the building. They put a complete new roof line in. They put efface that originally wasn't supposed to be there. The colors changed from a light tan to a bright blue, red and yellow. He stated that he was not quite sure what the issue was; but he just thinks it closes what he is trying to do for the two separate hotels and the Independence Conference Center now. He stated that the building will have two signs on it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that he could not believe there was never a sign on that side of the building.

Chairman Moreal stated that there was probably one before the renovations.

Mr. Moore stated that there was no sign. It was always that green up light.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that when Chi Chi's was there, there was never a sign there.

Chairman Moreal stated that he just has issues today; maybe he could revisit it next month, he might be okay with it; but for today he personally can't go with it. He stated that was his opinion. He stated that he wished the matter was handled differently last time. He just feels that Mr. Moore is before the Board with another sign.

Mr. Moore stated that he hears the Chairman, but he is not trying to do anything other than what is best for the business. He stated that a sign there would make sense. It would make sense from a business standpoint. He stated that it would make sense from a visitor's standpoint. He was not before the Board to get involved in anything else. He stated that it would not be six signs on one business building. He stated that there was one sign on the Holiday Inn building right now, and there were multiple hotels that have two to three signs on them. He doesn't consider the Candlewood sign part of the Holiday Inn. He doesn't consider any of those signs part of the Holiday Inn. He stated that he got rid of the monument sign out on the street which was a big glowing nice sign that stuck out. That is gone.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated that was one sign that had everybody back there on it.

Mr. Moore stated it was everybody, which he paid for.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated it was a shared sign.

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Mr. Moore agreed.

**A motion was made by Charles Bredt, seconded by Pasquele Monteleone, to approve the variances as presented.**

**ROLL CALL:       Yeas: Bredt, Monteleone, Walchanowicz  
                      Nays: Moreal  
                      MOTION CARRIED**

**There being no further business, the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting of February 20, 2020 was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.**

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**Chairman Mark Moreal**

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**Debi Beal, Secretary**

Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 02/21/20