



SPECIAL MEETING - BOROUGH OF HIGHLANDS LAND USE BOARD

06.25.2026

1 Grand Tour – Henry Hudson Regional High School
Thursday, June 25, 2026 at 7:00 PM

Minutes

The Special Meeting of the Land Use Board of the Borough of Highlands was held June 25, 2026 at Henry Hudson Regional High School, 1 Grand Tour, Highlands.

Special MEETING: 7:11 pm

Chairman Knox called the meeting to order and stated that the meeting is being held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. The “Open Public Meetings Act” compliance statement was read. Chairman Knox had everyone stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Members Present – Chief Burton, Ms. Olszewski, Mr. Sayah, Ms. LaRussa, Mr. Knox, Ms. Tierney, Mr. Zill, Mr. Cramer, Mr. Cody, Mrs. Vickery

Members Absent – Mayor Broullon, Mr. Montecalvo, Ms. Chang

Professionals Present: Attorney Dustin Glass, Board Engineer Cameron Corini, Board Planner, Susan Gruel

Open for Public Comment: *General Questions or Comments not pertaining to Applications*

None.

Approval of Minutes:

None.

Resolutions:

None.

Action on Other Business:

None.

Communication and Vouchers:

None.

Hearings on New Business:

LUB 25-06: Highlands Landing Corp., B100 L27, 326 Shore Drive

Attorney, Sal Alfieri Esq., representing the applicant, Highlands Landing Corp., reviewed the previous submission. He explained the plans have been revised since the last Special Meeting held in December of 2025. He introduced the applicant’s Engineer, Brad Thompson P.E. of Najarian Associates, to explain the plan being presented. Mr. Thompson was then sworn in by the Board Attorney and proceeded to hand the Board Members and Board Professionals a colorized Site Plan Rendering dated 6/23/26. He also had the

plan on display for the audience. The plan, which showed site layout, lighting, and landscaping, was marked into evidence as "Exhibit A-1".

Mr. Thompson described that the plan shows the proposed modified parking layout and traffic flow. In the Northeast section of the parking lot, the car lift structure was removed and replaced with (70) double stacked, at-grade valet parking spaces. There are also thirteen (13) ADA spaces by the pier and four (4) ADA spaces by the food truck area. In the Southwest section of the parking lot, the lighting brightness has been reduced while the East section remains the same brightness. The site will have thirty (30) light poles throughout the lot with each pole being 15' in height. He went on to describe how the traffic flow is proposed to be a one-way entrance at the Southern property line and a one-way exit at the Northern property line. The plan also shows a 5' wide pedestrian sidewalk starting at the Southern property line entrance to the pier at the rear of the property. The site includes proposed landscaping along the front and side property lines which adds to the site's overall pervious coverage. Mr. Thompson and the applicant believe this will also deter parking in those areas.

The applicant's engineer also provided testimony as to the existing operations of the two sites. He explained the Seastreak Ferry parking lot use is to stay the same as is the auxiliary parking lot use. The main site also includes the Sandbox public beach and beach bar use. This seasonal use includes open seating, beach activities such as volleyball, food trucks, live music, and employs seventy-five (75) people with a maximum of twenty-five (25) employees on site at any given time. The hours of operation are 11am – 9 pm Sunday through Thursday and 11am – 10pm Friday and Saturday with peak days being Saturday and Sunday. On the days when music is played, it ends at 10pm. However, Mr. Thompson was unsure of the time the music starts. He stated, though, that the site, which has an occupancy capacity of 1500, abides by local noise ordinances.

Mr. Thompson reviewed the proposed variances the applicant is seeking. Firstly, the public access beach use as it is not a permitted use within the zone and it is proposed to remain. Secondly, off-site parking on the auxiliary lot where all parking on site is required. Thirdly, the minimum number of parking spaces where 1,863 spaces are required and 955 are proposed (734 in the main lot and 221 in the auxiliary lot.) Fourthly, the front yard setback for parking spaces on the auxiliary lot where half the required front yard setback or 10' is required and 0'-1' is proposed. Fifthly, the light intensity where maximum 0.3 footcandle by residential properties is permitted and .5-.7 footcandle is proposed. Lastly, the maximum impervious coverage where 70% is permitted and 83.1% is proposed.

Mr. Thompson continued his testimony and reviewed the proposed design waivers the applicant is seeking. Firstly, they are requesting the existing 8.5' x 18' angled & 8'x16' compact angled parking spaces to remain where angled spaces are required to be 9'x18'. The parallel spaces conform to the required 8' x 21' width. Secondly, they are requesting to not install the required 30" wood bumper in the parking spaces. Lastly, they are requesting to not install the required make-ready EV and ADA EV parking spaces.

Mr. Thompson went on to advise the Board members and Board professionals of the proposed drainage system on site. He stated that the applicant had received permits from both NJDEP (CAFRA) and Freehold Soil on the plan presented. While the previous plan showed stormwater runoff was directed to the bay with cleaned inlets and 8" plastic pipes, he advised that with water runoff currently going to Shore Drive, if they installed 15" pipes and connected them to existing inlets, they would actually let more water in to Shore Drive during high tide. Instead, they are proposing to install more inlets with runoff directed to Shore Drive. With this design, they can catch more water and send over less or similar run-off to Shore Drive.

Mr. Thompson went on to explain that this design was modeled for the future 2, 10, and 100 year storm events. He stated that under the 2-year storm event, the site currently produces 14.92 CFS (cubic feet per second) discharge and the proposed plan produces 14.84 CFS; showing a slight reduction. For the 10-year storm event, the site currently produces 23.06 CFS and the proposed plan produces 22.93 CFS. For the 100-year storm event, the site produces 41.53 CFS and the proposed plan shows 41.36 CFS; again showing slight reductions.

Multiple Board Members and the Board Professionals had questions about Mr. Thompson's testimony.

Regarding the use of the lot, Mr. Sayah questioned if the Sandbox use had any storage containers and/or storage areas for the beach bar's items during off season. (I.E. where are the chairs/benches/tables/volleyball nets/etc. stored during the off-season?) Mr. Thompson replied that he was unsure and would reach out to the applicant directly to get that information.

Regarding parking, both Mr. Zill and Ms. Tierney discussed how the ridership of the Seastreak ferry is projected to increase. Mr. Zill questioned why the number of parking spaces is proposed to be reduced? Additionally, Ms. Teirney inquired that with the anticipation of increased ridership and the possibility of larger ferry boats, shouldn't the number of parking spaces be increased? Mr. Thompson responded by stating that the goal of the parking lot is for overall improvement of parking as well as the circulation flow, but also to try to lessen the existing impervious coverage. In order to achieve this, landscaping on site was added, which led to a slight decrease in the number of parking spaces.

Chief Burton questioned how the required number of parking spaces was calculated to which Mr. Thompson advised that he did the calculations himself based on previous plans and discussions. Chief Burton also inquired about parking in the food truck areas. He asked when the food trucks are present, do those vehicles take up the required parking spaces in that area? Mr. Thompson confirmed that they did. Chief Burton went on to ask if the double-stacked parking spaces would be an effective system and how many valet attendants would be manning the area? Mr. Thompson stated that, yes, the double-stacked spaces work and are effective in similar parking lots. He was unsure how many valet attendants would be working in that area, but would ask the applicant for that information. Chairman Robert Knox followed up, asking would the valet attendants also be directing parking and traffic flow? Mr. Thompson was unsure.

Mr. Sayah asked if there would be designated parking spaces for Seastreak parking and for Sandbox parking. Ms. Teirney followed Mr. Sayah's question by also asking if the food trucks take up the twenty-four (24) required spaces in that area, would the area be blocked off from early ferry riders to avoid parking there and being blocked in by the trucks? Mr. Thompsom stated that the site would not have designated parking areas, but would look into blocking off the food truck area for early riders.

Chairman Robert Knox inquired about the maintenance of the graveled portions of the parking lot and how often it occurs. Mr. Thompson stated he believed it occurred twice a year. Chairman Knox advised that it would be beneficial to have regular maintenance to ensure the striping in those areas doesn't fade and make individual parking spaces more difficult to see. Board Attorney Glass advised the Board that, should the application get approved, they can request maintenance be done on both lots every six (6) months or more frequently as a condition of approval. They can also coordinate appropriate dates/times when the lots should receive maintenance. Chairman Knox also inquired about why they did not want to install parking bumpers as they make it easier to identify parking spaces. Mr. Thompson's opinion on bumpers was that they do not comply with ADA requirements and were a tripping hazard.

Board Engineer, Cameron Corini, asked if the entrance drive isle could be tightened in order to have both the pedestrian sidewalk and light poles along the Southern property line be moved to conforming locations and avoid the variances. Mr. Thompson advised that if the drive isle width was reduced, it may impact the turn radii for emergency vehicles. Additionally, if the width was reduced, light poles in those areas would need to be relocated closer to parking spaces which may require more spaces to be eliminated. Mr. Corini advised to still revise the layout to verify if could be reduced or not.

Chief Burton asked if a barricade or “do not enter” sign for the proposed entrance way could be installed to deter drivers from trying to exit the lot in that area. Mr. Thompson stated that he believed that to be a good idea and would look into it with the applicant. Chief Burton also asked for the applicant to revisit the line of sight at the egress of the sight and think about opening the curb radius.

Regarding site lighting, Chairman Knox asked if the lights closer to the residential areas can be put on timers and can those timers be adjusted during the different seasons? Mr. Thompson advised that yes, they can be set to timers and can also be put on timers to dim the lights as opposed to being off completely. The lights will be LED with inserts so there will not be any glare onto the neighboring properties. Chief Burton asked about the light poles’ footings and bollards. He asked what the measurements of each light pole bollard would be and whether those bollards would impact the vehicles parked in those spaces with the poles. Mr. Thompson advised that the bollards are to be designed by others, but would be about 2’-3’ in height and 10”-12” in diameter. The spaces are to be 8.5’ wide with average cars measuring 6.5’, so there would be little impact to vehicles parked in those areas. Mr. Sayah asked about larger vehicles like trucks, would they be impacted? Mr. Thompson advised that they would only slightly be impacted as parking is less frequent; so less in & out, door openings and closings.

Mr. Sayah inquired about the lighting on the auxiliary lot. Would there be any improvements or changes with lighting on the second lot? Mr. Thompson advised that, at this time, there are no proposed changes for the auxiliary lot. Mr. Sayah advised that if improvements are being made to the main lot, those same improvements should be made to auxiliary lot as well.

Regarding drainage, Chairman Knox asked if the proposed plan would help alleviate some of the storm water runoff to Shore Drive, would it be the same, or would it make it worse? Mr. Thompson advised that the drainage as proposed would only make it slightly better, but would likely stay the same. Chief Burton asked Board Attorney Glass if the Board can require the applicant to do more for drainage. Mr. Glass advised that the site would have to meet the legal standards. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Alfieri both advised that the plan as shown was approved by NJDEP and met their requirements.

Mr. Corini also asked if the applicant and/or Mr. Thompson had done analysis on a pump station. Mr. Thompson advised that they have not as pump stations are not a NJDEP requirement and would be a substantial added cost to the applicant. Additionally, it would be highly possible that a pump station would be rendered useless if sand from the bay were to get into the system. Mr. Corini agreed that a pump station could become cumbersome and expensive, he advised that one could be possible on site if it was elevated 6’ above grade with a generator to power it. He asked that the analysis on the pump station be done.

The applicant’s Engineer then reviewed the reports from both the Board Engineer and Board Planner. Mr. Thompson, going in numerical order, went through the general comments on the Board Engineer’s report. He advised that they will comply with comments #1, #3, #4, #6, and #7. For #5, he advised that the existing gas easement (from a previous hotel) has not yet been vacated, but they will look into doing so. For #8,

they will provide more grading information and will raise the grate on the existing lower inlet. For #9, they will locate the dumpsters on the plan and the existing employee parking lot is to remain and is not included in the parking calculations. For #10, they will include bike racks on the plans. Additionally, Mr. Thompson advised that pedestrian crosswalks can be added to an extent along major drive isles.

Mr. Thompson quickly went through the Board Planner's report overviewing the dual use variances, parking space deficiency, ridership & peak hours with drivers/drop offs/bike riders, compact & angled parking stalls sizes, and EV parking station requirements. As was discussed during the hearing, the Board Attorney will review the state requirements for EV and ADA EV parking stations and advise the Board members and Board professionals. He went on to advise that they will still request a waiver for the bumpers as they do not believe they are beneficial to the parking lot.

Multiple members of the public had questions regarding the testimony presented.

Jerry Serghis of Mathews Street asked if the drainage system can be revisited. He stated he is a Licensed Master Plumber and is familiar with the area and how it drains. He believes if several rows of 15" pipes are installed and directed towards the bay it can be an effective way to reduce stormwater runoff on Shore Drive. He also believed a pump station can be an effective tool as well. He again asked that these items be revisited by the applicant's engineer.

James Bemis of the Twin Lights Condo Association asked if the applicant can revisit the installation of EV charging stations especially in the area of the Sandbox bar. Board Attorney, Dustin Glass, advised that if EV parking stations are required by law, they will need to install. Mr. Glass advised that he will look into the state requirements and advise the Board as such.

Elroy Darden of 330 Shore Drive advised that the proposed double stacked valet parking spaces are in front of his home. He asked if a privacy fence is to be installed. Mr. Thompson advised he will speak with his client about installing a fence in that area.

John Valkas who manages properties around Seastreak questioned if the applicant did the public notices correctly. He stated many of the properties he manages around Seastreak did not get notice. Mr. Alfieri advised that, according to state law, he is required to submit notice to every property on the 200' list which is generated by the Tax Assessor. Mr. Glass advised that he reviewed their public notice documents and it was done correctly. If Mr. Valkas is questioning whether certain addresses are not shown on the 200' list that should be, he should speak to the Borough tax Assessor directly as that is the person who produces those lists. Mr. Valkas also asked for a clarification on the term "stack" parking spaces. Are cars stacked one on top of the other or next to each other. Mr. Thompson clarified that the vehicles in the double stacked parking spaces would not be stacked one on top of the other, but one in front of the other.

Patricia Uber of 15 Beach Boulevard asked when the public comment portion of the hearing would begin. Mr. Glass advised that the public comment portion comes once all testimony and cross examination is done. This is the second special meeting for the applicant and the engineering testimony has not yet been finished. It's hard to say if the testimony of not only their engineer but the testimony of the applicant's other professionals – Traffic Engineer, Professional Planner, and Seastreak representatives – would be completed by the next special meeting. Board Chairman Knox advised that this is the legal procedure of the Board and stated that once all testimony is completed, the public will have their opportunities to speak.

Gary Kiena of 8 King Street asked if there were going to be plans for the auxiliary lot. Mr. Alfieri advised that at this time they did not have plans for that lot, but based on the Boards requests at this meeting, they will look to revisit it.

Cindy Zipf, Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action and of 4 Mountain Street inquired about plans being available for public view as they were only posted to the website a few days before. She advised that if she had more time to review the plans, she would have more questions about what was presented tonight. Due to time, Chairman Knox advised to review the plans presented and save the question(s) for the next special meeting.

The Board members were unable to agree on a July meeting date. The applicant agreed to re-notice when a definitive date and location is decided. The Board Secretary advised she will reach out to the Board Members and Professionals for available dates in both August and September.

Meeting Adjournment:

A motion was made by Ms. Vickery for adjournment of the Land Use Board Special Meeting, all were in favor. Meeting adjourned 10:09 pm.