BEFORE THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING BOARD OF THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

IN RE:

WAWA ADELPHI/ PRELIMINARY SUBDIVISION PLAN 4-17036

ZP No. 139, LLC /APPLICANT

STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION IN SUPPORT OF VARIATION TO SECTION 24-121(a)(3)

ZP No 139, LLC ("ZP"), the Applicant and owner of the property forming the subject matter of Preliminary Plan 4-17036, hereby files this request for a variation pursuant to the provisions of Sections 24-121(a)(3) and 24-113 of the Subdivision Ordinance. Specifically, ZP requests that the Planning Board approve a variation to allow direct vehicular access onto a roadway of arterial or higher classification. Section 24-121 of the Subdivision Ordinance addresses planning and design requirements. Specifically, Section 24-121(a)(3) provides as follows:

(3) When lots are proposed on land adjacent to an existing or planned roadway of arterial or higher classification, they shall be designed to front on either an interior street or a service road. As used in this Section, a planned roadway or transit right-of-way shall mean a road or right-of-way shown in a currently approved State Highway plan, General Plan, or master plan. If a service road is used, it shall connect, where feasible, with a local interior collector street with the point of intersection located at least two hundred (200) feet away from the intersection of any roadway of collector or higher classification.

As will be discussed in greater detail *infra*, the property owned by ZP presently has frontage on Edwards Way, MD 212 (Riggs Road) and Adelphi Road. This request is to allow a restricted right-turn into and right-turn out of its property from Adelphi Road. Adelphi Road is a County roadway of arterial or higher classification, designated in the Master Plan of Transportation as A-10. In order to authorize said access, a variation must be approved by the

Planning Board pursuant to the provisions of Section 24-113 of the Subdivision Ordinance.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

ZP owns a 4.13± acre triangular parcel of land which an island surrounded by Edwards Way, MD 212 (Riggs Road) and Adelphi Road.. In 2011, ZP processed and obtained approval of a Preliminary Subdivision Plan for its property, designated as Preliminary Plan 4-10019. At that time, ZP proposed access to the property would be obtained from Md 212 and Adelphi Road for the construction of a CVS Pharmacy and additional retail development totaling 22,288 square feet. A variation was requested at that time to permit access to Adelphi Road, which variation was approved. A copy of PBCPB No. 11-63(C) embodying that approval is attached hereto as Exhibit "A".

At approximately the same time as the approval of the prior subdivision application, a Comprehensive Design Plan ("CDP") application and a Specific Design Plan ("SDP") application was approved. While the approval of the prior preliminary plan of subdivision was not appealed, the CDP and SDP applications were the subject of litigation. In 2015, the Court of Appeals of Maryland affirmed the Planning Board's action in approving the CDP and SDP. By that time, however, CVS had abandoned the site and a search began for a new use. ZP has located a new tenant, WAWA, which proposes to construct a food and beverage store with a gas station on the property.

The currently preliminary plan of subdivision approved a single lot for development.

This approval remains valid. However, the subdivision was approved subject to Condition 2, which reads as follows:

"2. Total development within the subject property shall be limited to uses which generate no more than 23 AM and 268 PM peak-hour vehicle trips. Any development generating an impact greater than this amount shall require a

new preliminary plan of subdivision with a new determination of the adequacy of transportation facilities."

Despite the fact that the proposed development will have less square footage than the previously approved development, the proposed development will generate more AM and PM peak hour trips (230 AM and 280 PM trips). This preliminary plan of subdivision is submitted to obtain a new determination of adequacy and includes this request for re-approval of the variation.

ANALYSIS OF VARIATION STANDARD

As noted above, Section 24-121(a)(3) of the Subdivision Ordinance establishes design guidelines for lots that front on arterial roadways. That section provides that in general, such lots are to be developed so as to provide vehicular access to either a service road or an interior driveway.

Notwithstanding this general requirement, the Subdivision Ordinance recognizes and acknowledges there may be certain situations when strict conformance with the provisions of the Ordinance should not be required. For that very reason, variations from the normal Subdivision Ordinance requirements are permitted pursuant to the provisions of Section 24-113. Section 24-113(a) provides as follows:

"(a) Where the Planning Board finds that (1) extraordinary hardship or 2 practical difficulties may result from strict compliance with this Subtitle and/or that the (3) purposes of this Subtitle may be served to a greater extent by an alternative proposal, it may approve variations from these Subdivision Regulations so that substantial justice may be done and the public interest secured, provided that such variation shall not have the effect of nullifying the intent and purpose of this Subtitle and Section 9-206 of the Environment Article; and further provides that the Planning Board shall not approve variations unless it shall make findings based upon the evidence presented to it in each specific case that:" (numbers and emphasis provided).

A close analysis of the criteria for the grant of a variance is both warranted and necessary.

As noted from the underscored provisions of Section 24-113 above, the Planning Board may

grant a variation upon finding any of the following situations to exist:

- 1. When an extraordinary hardship <u>may</u> result <u>or</u>;
- 2. When practical difficulties <u>may</u> result.

In each of these instances the Planning Board is not required to find that extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties <u>will</u> result but rather, <u>may</u> result from strict compliance with the Subtitle. Therefore, the Planning Board's findings are not mandatory in the sense that the Planning Board must not find that extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties <u>shall</u> result from strict conformance with the Ordinance. The Planning Board is only required to find either that extraordinary hardship <u>or</u> practical difficulties <u>may</u> result from strict application of the Subtitle.

3. In addition, the Planning Board may grant a variance if it finds that the purposes of Subtitle 24 may be served to a greater extent by an alternative proposal. Therefore, a separate ground for approval exists independent of extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties.

Section 24-113(a) goes on to note that a variation may be approved in order that "... substantial justice may be done and the public interests secured" as long as granting the variation shall not "have the effect of nullifying the intent and purpose of this Subtitle and Section 9-206 of the Environment Article".

In summary, an analysis of the appropriate statutory provision leads to the inescapable conclusion that a variation may be approved when the Planning Board finds:

- 1. An extraordinary hardship <u>may</u> result from strict compliance with the Subtitle; or
- 2. That practical difficulties <u>may</u> result from strict compliance with the Subtitle; <u>or</u>
- 3. The purposes of the Subtitle <u>may</u> be served to a greater extent by an alternative proposal.

In each of the above instances, a variation may be approved so "that substantial justice may be

done and the public interest served". Section 24-113(a) also notes that the Planning Board must make specific findings based upon evidence presented in each specific case. Those findings are set forth in five subparagraphs which will be quoted and analyzed hereinafter.

The structure of Section 24-113 is interesting in that it uses the words "extraordinary hardship or practical difficulties", language often associated within the context of a variance. The Court of Special Appeals has noted that in proving "practical difficulty" to justify a variance, an applicant need only show that requiring strict conformance with the terms of the restriction in question (1), "... would unreasonably prevent an owner from using the property for a permitted purpose or would render conformity with such restrictions unnecessarily burdensome", (2) whether grant of the variance applied for would do substantial justice to all involved, and (3) whether relief can be provided so that the spirit of the ordinance in question can be observed.

Anderson v. Board of Appeals, Town of Chesapeake Beach, 22 Md. App. 28, 39, 322 A.2d 200, (1974).

However, Section 24-113 is not a provision governing the grant of a variance. Rather, it is a standard governing the grant of a variation. Variances and variations are very specific terms of art and are different from one another. The fact that variances and variations are two specific and different applications, was discussed by the Court of Special Appeals in Colao v. Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 167 Md. App. 194, 892 A.2d 579 (2005). In Colao, parties who had opposed the grant of a variation before the Planning Board within the context of a preliminary subdivision plan application argued on appeal that a variation was tantamount to a variance and that the judicially articulated standard of review for the grant of a variance would apply. The Court of Special Appeals disagreed and held:

"The word 'variation' is not a mere homespun curiosity of Prince George's County

dialect. It is, in Prince George's County land planning law, a precise term of art. It is, moreover a term of art separate and distinct from the different term of art 'variance'. We are not dealing with variances in this case." <u>Colao</u> at 215.

The Court of Special Appeals went on to discuss the difference between variance findings and variation findings. In <u>Colao</u>, the Court upheld the Planning Board's approval of a variation to disturb sensitive environmental features when the Planning Board found that to deny the variation would result in a substantial loss of lots. The Court opined on the facts of that case that the loss of lots which the property owner would experience if the variation were not granted outweighed the value of preserving the specific environmental features proposed to be disturbed. <u>Colao</u>, 217-218.

While ZP asserts that it could in fact carry the practical difficulty standard applied to variances, as articulated in **Anderson**, that burden is not required as we are dealing with a variation and not a variance.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF VARIATION

As noted above, the variation requested by ZP was requested, fully analyzed and approved with Preliminary Plan 4-10019. The justification for the variation remains the same. As the Planning Board found previously, the subject site is not currently served by access driveways to Adelphi Road. This right of way is an existing arterial facility and, as quoted above, Section 24-121 of the Subdivision Regulations provides that lots that front on arterial roadways shall be developed to provide direct vehicular access to either a service road or an interior street.

In this case, the site is surrounded on all sides by public roadways. By itself, this situation lends uniqueness to the site. In addition, the site is triangular in shape, impacted by

regulated environmental features, and only four acres in size. Any development of the property would be severely impacted if a public street were to be platted into or through the property.

Two points of access are proposed, one from MD 212 and the restricted access to Adelphi Road. Safe access from Edwards Way is not possible, as environmental features prohibit access at the northern end and the southern end is too close to the intersection of Riggs Road to provide safe access. The middle of the property frontage on Edwards Way is too steep to provide safe access.

A full movement access is proposed along Riggs Road (MD 212) opposite the Metzerott Plaza Shopping Center driveway on the south side of Riggs Road. No variation is required for this access, which will serve as the main entrance/exit point for the proposed retail based on the traffic study. This entrance will also take pressure off the requested Adelphi Road right-in/right-out access point.

The Applicant is requesting a variation for a single right-in/right-out vehicular access point on Adelphi Road, which is a divided four lane roadway with a median along the property's frontage. The subject property has 650 feet of frontage on Adelphi Road. The proposed access point is in the same location as previously approved and has been located to provide a safe distance from the intersection of Adelphi Road and Riggs Road. The planned traffic signal at Adelphi Road and Edwards Way will provide gaps in the north section of the site and topographical conditions (hill slopes and an environmental feature) along Edwards way present challenges to an entrance on Edwards Way on the west side of the property. The two access points will work together to ensure safe access to the site. Two access points will also provide better on-site circulation and reduce traffic conflicts on all three adjacent roadways, especially given the nature of the proposed use. If the variation were not granted, these conditions would

result in a hardship by limiting access to the site.

For these reasons, granting this variation meets all requirements of Section 24-113(a), as the approval will not have the effect of nullifying the intent and purpose of the Subdivision Regulations. As the Planning Board found in approving the variation in 4-10019, strict compliance with the requirements of Section 24-121(a)(3) of the Subdivision Regulations could result in inadequate access and circulation for the proposed development. A specific review of each of the criteria which the Planning Board must address follow:

1. The granting of the variation will not be detrimental to the public safety, health, or welfare or injurious to other property;

The property is zoned L-A-C, a primarily commercial zone. By zoning the property to the L-A-C zone, the District Council determined that new commercial uses will significantly benefit the surrounding area. Of the three street frontages, only two (Riggs Road and Adelphi Road) can accommodate an entrance. Failure to approve the requested variation, and thereby limiting the points of access, may cause a detrimental impact to the public safety, health, or welfare.

2. The Conditions on which the variation is based are unique to the property for which the variation is sought and are not applicable generally to other properties:

The triangular shape of the property and its location at the convergence of three different rights-of-way, its small size, the topographical and environmental features and its infill location make the subject property unique and directly impact the need for this variation. Environmental constraints, including stream and nontidal wetlands combined with the topography of the property from Edwards Way to Adelphi Road are unique and do not allow for an entrance onto Edwards Way. The small size of the property prevents two points of access onto Riggs Road.

Given these circumstances, the Planning Board can find that the variation sought is not applicable to other properties due to its size and unique condition.

3. The variation does not constitute a violation of any other applicable law, ordinance, or regulation; and

Requesting a right-in/right-out access point onto Adelphi Road only conflicts with the general guidelines set forth in Section 24-121(a)(3). The access point can be designed so as to comply with all other applicable laws, ordinances and regulations. Indeed, the access was previously approved with a finding that the entrance can be constructed to meet or exceed all applicable laws and safety regulations of the federal, state and county governments via the permit review process.

4. Because of the particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of the specific property involved, a particular hardship to the owner would result, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, if the strict letter of these regulations is carried out.

Strictly enforcing Section 24-121(a)(3) would limit the property to a single entrance since the particular physical surroundings (roads on all sides), shape (small triangular property) and topographical conditions (that prevent access to Edwards Way) prevent safely doing so. The Planning Board has previously found that for uses that generate less peak hour trips that the proposed use, strictly enforcing this regulation could result in inadequate access and circulation for the proposed development. On site circulation and safe ingress and egress must be provided. Denying the requested variation and creating a site which cannot provide adequate access and

circulation would jeopardize the ability to attract any use to the site and would result in a particular hardship to the owner.

5. In the R-30, R-30C, R-18, R-18C, R-10A, R-10 and R-H Zones, where multifamily dwellings are proposed, the Planning Board may approve a variation if the applicant proposes and demonstrates that, in addition to the criteria in Section 24-113(a), above, the percentage of dwelling units accessible to the physically handicapped and aged will be increased above the minimum number of units required by Subtitle 4 of the Prince George's County Code.

This section is inapplicable since the subject property is zoned L-A-C.

CONFORMANCE WITH PURPOSES OF SUBTITLE 24

The grant of this variation request will also serve the purposes of the Subdivision Ordinance to a greater extent than the alternate proposal of having all access occur via Riggs Road. The purposes of the Subdivision Ordinance are set forth in Section 24-104(a). Those purposes are as follows:

(1) To protect and provide for the public health, safety and general welfare:

As has been discussed in detail above, allowing a right-in/right-out access point from Adelphi Road will actually improve public health, safety and welfare from a transportation standpoint. As noted earlier, the right-in/right-out access can be provided without causing any adverse traffic impacts on Adelphi Road. Allowing the right-in/right-out access point will improve site access and circulation and ensure that the site can operate safely.

(2) To guide development according to the General Plan, area master plans, and their amendments:

The Subject Property is located within Planning Area 65 and is covered in the 1989

Approved Master Plan and the 1990 Adopted Sectional Map Amendment for Langley Park
College Park-Greenbelt. While the 1989 Master Plan recommended single-family detached residential uses for the Subject Property, the 1990 Sectional Map Amendment placed an asterisk on the property that recommended that the comprehensive design technique be used for development of the Subject Property. Further, in adopted the SMA, Section 2 of CR-39-1990 stated:

SECTION 2. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the District Councl considers the Comprehensive Design Zone process the appropriate way to address concerns related to the 4.1+ acre Edwards property bounded by Adelphi Road, Riggs Road, and Edwards Way, although the Sectional Map Amendment retains R-R zoning for this property. The District Council is specifically concerned about preservation, to the greatest possible extent, of the existing woodland and control of access to the property. A sensitive approach to site development is warranted and should be facilitated through the CDZ process. Accordingly, the SMA text should incorporate this expression of intent and the SMA map should be annotated to reflect the potential for a Comprehensive Design Zone. While the above statement is silent on the recommendation of a specific comprehensive design zone category for the subject site, it is clear that the current R-R Zone is a holding zone.

Based upon this guidance, the property was the subject of a Zoning Map Amendment Application in 2002, which was ultimately approved by the District Council in 2004 with the approval of the L-A-C zone. It was determined that the L-A-C zone was the appropriate Comprehensive Design Zone for the Subject Property because it is partially covered by the floating village activity center symbol that covers Metzerott Plaza, the existing shopping center at the intersection of Riggs Road and Adelphi Road. Thus, the subject property, and the proposed commercial development, was approved as a supplemental retail area to the larger village activity center.

Development of the Subject Property is consistent with the General Plan. The Subject Property was placed in the Developed Tier with the adoption of the 2002 General Plan, and is located within the Established Communities designation in Plan 2035. Based upon the above, the proposed development is in conformance with both the recommendations of the adopted and approved Master Plan and with the General Plan. Granting the variation is necessary to ensure safe ingress and egress to the site, the development of which conforms to the Master Plan recommendations.

(3) To facilitate public and private actions in order to provide adequate and efficient transportation, water and sewerage facilities, schools, parks, playgrounds, recreation, police facilities, fire and rescue facilities, and other public facilities.

As has been discussed above, providing the right-in/right out access point will promote adequate and efficient transportation connectivity.

(4) To provide the most beneficial relationship between the subdivision of land and the circulation of traffic, having particular regard fo the avoidance of congestion on the streets and highways and the pedestrian movements appropriate to the various uses of land and buildings, and to provide for the efficient and appropriate locations and widths of streets:

The right-in/right out access point being proposed will have the direct effect of improving traffic circulation. It will also promote the avoidance of congestion on streets and will also promote safe pedestrian movements. As noted above, requiring all access for the proposed commercial development to occur via Riggs Road will cause internal site operations to be inefficient for the proposed use including, but not limited to, awkward truck turning movements and conflicting vehicular movements navigating a single entrance and potentially causing traffic to back up within the site.

(5) To insure proper legal descriptions and monumenting of subdivided land and to help County officials in securing adequate records of land title;

This purpose is inapplicable to this variation.

(6) To establish reasonable standards of design and to establish procedures for subdivision and resubdivision;

For all of the reasons set forth above, the variation being requested represents a reasonable design standard for the resubdivision of this property.

(7) To enure that public facilities will be available and will have sufficient capacity to serve the proposed subdivision;

Again, the requested right-in/right out turning movement has no adverse impact on public facilities. In fact, the right-in/right-out access point will provide for a smoother access and circulation arrangement.

(8) To prevent the pollution of the environment; to provide for conceptual review by other agencies, when appropriate, of drainage, stormwater management, site stabilization and sediment control; and to encourage the wise use and management of nature resources throughout the Regional District in order to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the County, and the value of the land;

This purpose is inapplicable to this variation request.

(9) To provide for open space through the efficient design and layout of land, including the use of cluster development, while preserving the residential densities established in the Zoning Ordinance;

The variation being requested has no impact on open space being provided. In addition, this purpose is inapplicable as it is oriented toward residential development.

(10) To encourage creative residential subdivision design that accomplishes thee purposes in a more efficient, attractive, and environmentally sensitive manner than would be otherwise accomplished, through the provisions of the operational residential design approach; and

This purpose is inapplicable to this variation request.

(11) To protect historic resources listed on the Inventory of Historic Resources of the adopted and approved Historic Sites and Districts Plan.

This purpose is inapplicable to this variation request.

(12) To protect archeological sites that are significant to understanding of the history of human settlement in Prince George's County.

This purpose is inapplicable to this variation request.

In view of the above, ZP submits that the variation being requested is justified as both a practical difficulty may result from strict compliance with the Subtitle and the fact that the purposes of the Subdivision Ordinance will be served to a greater extent by allowing the right-in/right-out access. In addition, allowing the right-in/right-out movement will promote substantial justice and will protect public interest. All of the findings which the Planning Board are required to make in order to approve a variance are supported by substantial factual evidence in this case and, in fact, were previously found for a use that generates less peak hour trips than the proposed use. In view of all of the above, ZP submits that the variation to allow a single and limited right-in/right-out access point into the property from Adelphi Road should be approved as requested.

Respectfully submitted,

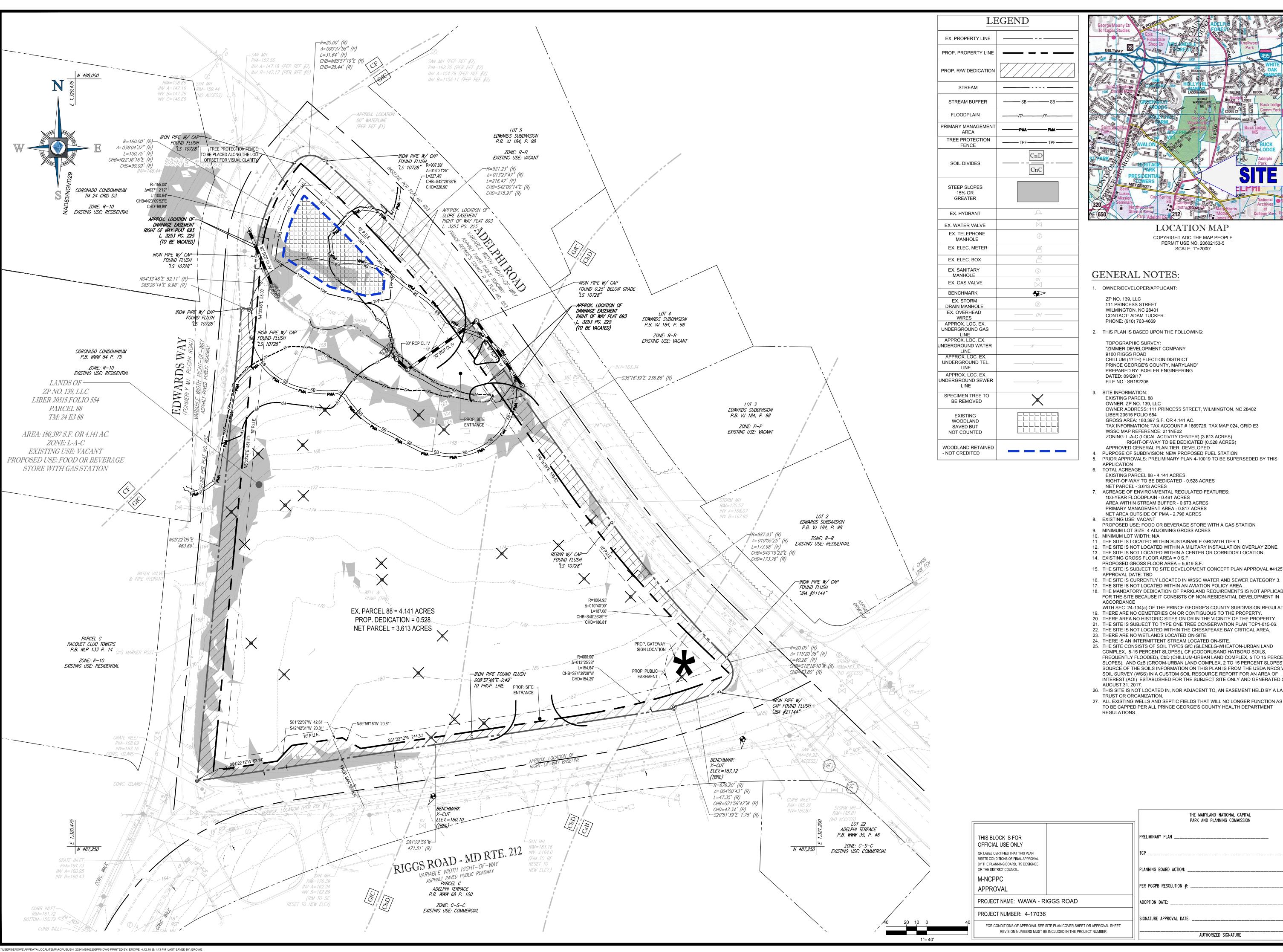
Thomas H. Haller

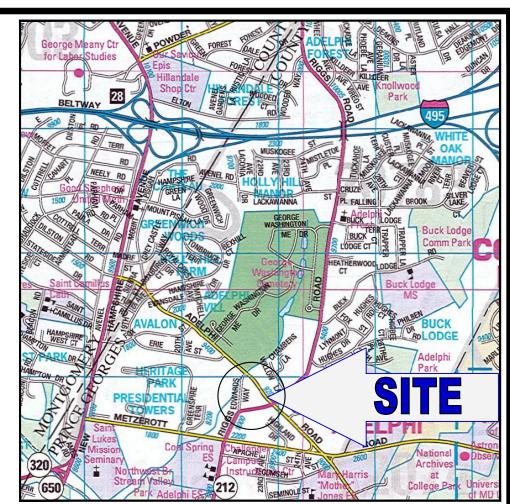
GIBBS AND HALLER

1300 Caraway Court, Suite 102

Largo, Maryland 20774

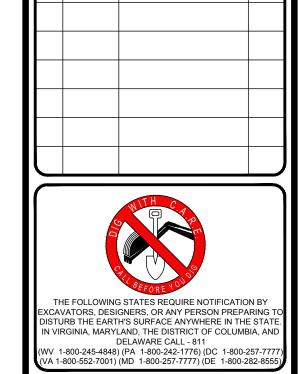
(301) 306-0033





LOCATION MAP COPYRIGHT ADC THE MAP PEOPLE PERMIT USE NO. 20602153-5

- TAX INFORMATION: TAX ACCOUNT # 1869726, TAX MAP 024, GRID E3
- PURPOSE OF SUBDIVISION: NEW PROPOSED FUEL STATION PRIOR APPROVALS: PRELIMINARY PLAN 4-10019 TO BE SUPERSEDED BY THIS
- RIGHT-OF-WAY TO BE DEDICATED 0.528 ACRES
- 7. ACREAGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATED FEATURES: AREA WITHIN STREAM BUFFER - 0.673 ACRES
- PROPOSED USE: FOOD OR BEVERAGE STORE WITH A GAS STATION
- 12. THE SITE IS NOT LOCATED WITHIN A MILITARY INSTALLATION OVERLAY ZONE.
- 13. THE SITE IS NOT LOCATED WITHIN A CENTER OR CORRIDOR LOCATION.
- 15. THE SITE IS SUBJECT TO SITE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT PLAN APPROVAL #41257-201
- 17. THE SITE IS NOT LOCATED WITHIN AN AVIATION POLICY AREA 18. THE MANDATORY DEDICATION OF PARKLAND REQUIREMENTS IS NOT APPLICABLE FOR THE SITE BECAUSE IT CONSISTS OF NON-RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN
- WITH SEC. 24-134(a) OF THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS 19. THERE ARE NO CEMETERIES ON OR CONTIGUOUS TO THE PROPERTY.
- 20. THERE AREA NO HISTORIC SITES ON OR IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROPERTY.
- 21. THE SITE IS SUBJECT TO TYPE ONE TREE CONSERVATION PLAN TCP1-015-06. 22. THE SITE IS NOT LOCATED WITHIN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY CRITICAL AREA.
- 24. THERE IS AN INTERMITTENT STREAM LOCATED ON-SITE
- 25. THE SITE CONSISTS OF SOIL TYPES GfC (GLENELG-WHEATON-URBAN LAND COMPLEX, 8-15 PERCENT SLOPES), CF (CODORUSAND HATBORO SOILS,
- FREQUENTLY FLOODED), CbD (CHILLUM-URBAN LAND COMPLEX, 5 TO 15 PERCENT SLOPES), AND CzB (CROOM-URBAN LAND COMPLEX, 2 TO 15 PERCENT SLOPES). THE SOURCE OF THE SOILS INFORMATION ON THIS PLAN IS FROM THE USDA NRCS WEB SOIL SURVEY (WSS) IN A CUSTOM SOIL RESOURCE REPORT FOR AN AREA OF INTEREST (AOI) ESTABLISHED FOR THE SUBJECT SITE ONLY AND GENERATED ON 26. THIS SITE IS NOT LOCATED IN, NOR ADJACENT TO, AN EASEMENT HELD BY A LAND
- 27. ALL EXISTING WELLS AND SEPTIC FIELDS THAT WILL NO LONGER FUNCTION AS SUCI
- TO BE CAPPED PER ALL PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT



REVISIONS

04/12/18 REV PER MNCPPC

COMMENT

REV DATE

NOT APPROVED FOR CONSTRUCTION

DRAWN BY:

SCALE:

PRELIMINARY PLAN OF SUBDIVISION 4-17036 WAWA

RIGGS ROAD ZP NO. 319, LLC

LOCATION OF SITE 9100 RIGGS ROAD PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY HYATTSVILLE, MARYLAND 20783 CHILLUM (17TH) ELECTION DISTRICT EDWARDS PROPERTY



TM 24 GRID E3 PARCEL 88

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PRELIMINARY PLAN OF

SUBDIVISION