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Special Exception

Departure from Parking and Loading Standards

Departure from Sign Design Standards

SE-4757

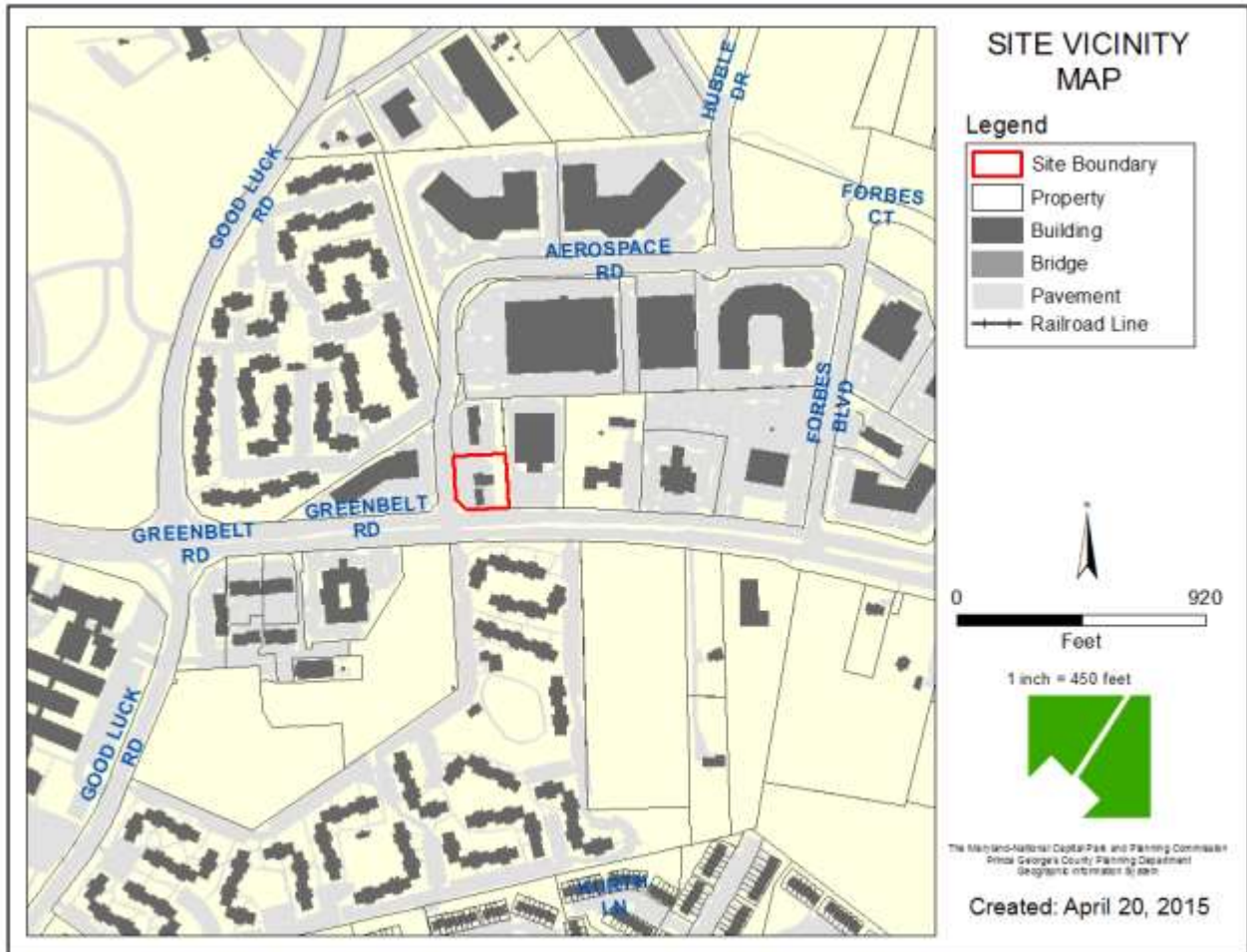
DPLS-415

DSDS-688

Application	General Data	
Project Name: Potomac Energy Holdings, LLC Location: On the north side of Greenbelt Road (MD 193) at its intersection with Aerospace Drive. Applicant/Address: Potomac Energy Holdings, LLC P O Box 2810 LaPlata, MD 20646 Property Owner: Ten Thousand Greenbelt Road, LLC P O Box 2810 LaPlata, MD 20646	Planning Board Hearing Date:	05/07/15
	Staff Report Date:	04/22/15
	Date Accepted:	02/05/15
	Planning Board Action Limit:	N/A
	Plan Acreage:	0.897
	Zone:	I-1
	Gross Floor Area:	3,180 sq. ft.
	Lots:	N/A
	Parcels:	1
	Planning Area:	70
	Council District:	04
	Election District	14
	Municipality:	N/A
	200-Scale Base Map:	210NE09

Purpose of Application	Notice Dates	
SE-4757 —Raze and rebuild existing gas station and to add a food or beverage store and a car wash.	Informational Mailing	09/22/14 & 12/04/14
DPLS-415 —Departure of five spaces of the required 24 parking spaces.	Acceptance Mailing:	01/30/15
DSDS -688 —Departure of five feet from the required ten-foot setback for a freestanding sign.	Sign Posting Deadline:	04/07/15

Staff Recommendation		Staff Reviewer: Tom Lockard Phone Number: 301-952-3410 E-mail: Thomas.Lockard@ppd.mncppc.org	
APPROVAL	APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS	DISAPPROVAL	DISCUSSION
	X		



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

TO: The Prince George's County Planning Board
The Prince George's County District Council

VIA: Jimi Jones, Supervisor, Zoning Review Section, Development Review Division

FROM: Tom Lockard, Planner Coordinator, Zoning Review Section, Development Review Division

SUBJECT: **Special Exception Application No. SE-4757**
Departure from Parking and Loading Standards Application No. DPLS-415
Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. DSDS-688
Potomac Energy Holding, LLC (Dash-In/Shell Aerospace Drive)

REQUEST: **SE-4757:** To raze and rebuild a gas station with a car wash and food or beverage store in the I-1 Zone.

DPLS-415: Departure of five of the required 25 parking spaces.

DSDS-688: Departure of five feet from the required ten-foot setback for a freestanding sign.

RECOMMENDATION: **Approval with Conditions**

NOTE:

The Planning Board has scheduled this application for a public hearing on the agenda date of May 7, 2015. The Planning Board also encourages all interested persons to request to become a person of record for this application.

Requests to become a person of record should be made in writing and addressed to The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Development Review Division, 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD 20772. Please call 301-952-3530 for additional information.

FINDINGS

- A. **Location and Field Inspection:** The subject property is a square-shaped parcel at the northeast corner of the intersection of Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Road. The 0.9-acre parcel is zoned Light Industrial (I-1) and is improved with an existing gas station with three service bays and a small convenience store. Additional structures on the site include two concrete pump islands, four gasoline pump dispensers, one canopy, three underground storage tanks, one freestanding sign, and 21 surface parking spaces. The property has direct vehicular access via four driveway cuts, two each on Aerospace Road and Greenbelt Road.

B. **Development Data Summary:**

	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Zone(s)	I-1	I-1
Use(s)	Gas Station (8 fueling positions) with 3 Service Bays	Gas Station (12 fueling positions) Food or Beverage Store and Car Wash
Acreage	0.9	0.9
Parcels	1	1
Square Footage/GFA	2,188	4,524

- C. **History:** The subject property was rezoned to the I-1 Zone pursuant to Zoning Map Amendment Application No. A-7677 on August 28, 1970. The existing gas station was built several years later as a permitted use in the I-1 Zone. In 1998, the District Council, pursuant to County Council Bill CB-40-1998, amended the County Ordinance to require a special exception for a gas station in the I-1 Zone. The existing gas station has remained in its current configuration since the time it was first built.
- D. **Master Plan Recommendation:** *The Plan Prince George's 2035 Approved General Plan (Plan Prince George's 2035)* was approved May 2014, and defers to the *2010 Approved Glenn Dale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and Sectional Map Amendment (Glenn Dale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA)* for specific land use recommendations at this location. The SMA recommends commercial and light-industrial uses for the subject property. The site was retained in the I-1 Zone by the Glenn Dale-Seabrook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA.
- E. **Request:** The applicant is proposing a major revision to an existing gas station. The project will entail the complete removal of all of the existing structures on the property and the new construction of a 3,180-square-foot food or beverage store; a 1,344-square-foot car wash; a canopy; and six multi-product fuel pump dispensers that provide a total of 12 fueling positions. Both the gas station and the food or beverage store require approval of a special exception in the I-1 Zone, while a car wash is a permitted use.

The applicant has also requested a Departure from Parking and Loading Standards (DPLS-415) from Section 27-582(a) of the Zoning Ordinance for five of the required 24 off-street parking spaces.

The applicant has also requested a Departure from Sign Design Standards (DSDS-688) from Section 27-614(a)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance, which requires freestanding signs in all commercial and industrial zones (except the I-3 Zone) to be located at least ten feet behind the street line. The existing sign, which the applicant wishes to retain, is located five feet from the right-of-way.

- F. **Neighborhood and Surrounding Uses:** The subject property, 10000 Greenbelt Road, is located in the Glenn Dale neighborhood. Nearby development has been historically linked to the NASA Goddard complex to the north and west along Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Good Luck Road. The Glenn Dale Business Campus, the Maryland Corporate Center, and Goddard Corporate Park are all found within the immediate neighborhood. Although some of this land is now planned for a mixed-use development including residences (Glenn Dale Commons), a significant number of offices, auto-related commercial, and warehouse uses remain. The general neighborhood is bounded to the north and east by Northern Avenue, to the west by Good Luck Road, and to the south by Greenbelt Road. The uses immediately surrounding the proposed special exception are as follows:

North—	A car wash, beyond which is a large office building/warehouse, both in the I-1 Zone. To the northwest is a large apartment complex (The Glenn Dale) in the Multifamily Medium Density Residential (R-18) Zone.
East—	Mini-storage, a church, and a credit union all in the I-1 Zone.
West—	Across Aerospace Road is a strip-commercial center (Aerospace Plaza) in the I-1 Zone.
South—	Across Greenbelt Road is a large multifamily apartment complex (Woodland Landing) in the R-18 Zone.

- G. **Specific Special Exception Requirements:** A car wash is a permitted use in the I-1 Zone. The gas station and the food and beverage store require approval of a special exception. Section 27-358(a) of the Zoning Ordinance provides the specific special exception requirements for a gas station as follows:

- (a) **A gas station may be permitted, subject to the following:**
- (1) **The subject property shall have at least one hundred and fifty (150) feet of frontage on and direct vehicular access to a street with a right-of-way width of at least seventy (70) feet;**
 - (2) **The subject property shall be located at least three hundred (300) feet from any lot on which a school, outdoor playground, library, or hospital is located;**
 - (3) **The use shall not include the display and rental of cargo trailers, trucks, or similar uses, except as a Special Exception in accordance with the provisions of Section 27-417;**
 - (4) **The storage or junking of wrecked motor vehicles (whether capable of movement or not) is prohibited;**

- (5) Access driveways shall be not less than thirty (30) feet wide unless a lesser width is allowed for a one-way driveway by the Maryland State Highway Administration or the County Department of Public Works and Transportation, whichever is applicable, and shall be constructed in compliance with the minimum standards required by the County Road Ordinance or Maryland State Highway Administration regulations, whichever is applicable. In the case of a corner lot, a driveway may begin at a point not less than twenty (20) feet from the point of curvature (PC) of the curb return or the point of curvature of the edge of paving at an intersection without curb and gutter. A driveway may begin or end at a point not less than twelve (12) feet from the side or rear lot line of any adjoining lot;
 - (6) Access driveways shall be defined by curbing;
 - (7) A sidewalk at least five (5) feet wide shall be provided in the area between the building line and the curb in those areas serving pedestrian traffic;
 - (8) Gasoline pumps and other service appliances shall be located at least twenty-five (25) feet behind the street line;
 - (9) Repair service shall be completed within forty-eight (48) hours after the vehicle is left for service. Discarded parts resulting from any work shall be removed promptly from the premises. Automotive replacement parts and accessories shall be stored either inside the main structure or in an accessory building used solely for the storage. The accessory building shall be wholly enclosed. The building shall either be constructed of brick (or another building material similar in appearance to the main structure) and placed on a permanent foundation, or it shall be entirely surrounded with screening material. Screening shall consist of a wall, fence, or sight-tight landscaping material, which shall be at least as high as the accessory building. The type of screening shall be shown on the landscape plan.
 - (10) Details on architectural elements such as elevation depictions of each façade, schedule of exterior finishes, and description of architectural character of proposed buildings shall demonstrate compatibility with existing and proposed surrounding development.
- (b) In addition to what is required by Section 27-296(c), the site plan shall show the following:
 - (1) The topography of the subject lot and abutting lots (for a depth of at least fifty (50) feet);
 - (2) The location and type of trash enclosures; and
 - (3) The location of exterior vending machines or vending area.
- (c) Upon the abandonment of a gas station, the Special Exception shall terminate and all structures exclusively used in the business (including underground storage tanks), except buildings, shall be removed by the owner of the property. For the

purpose of this Subsection, the term “abandonment” shall mean nonoperation as a gas station for a period of fourteen (14) months after the retail services cease.

(d) When approving a Special Exception for a gas station, the District Council shall find that the proposed use:

(1) Is necessary to the public in the surrounding area; and

(2) Will not unduly restrict the availability of land, or upset the balance of land use, in the area for other trades and commercial uses.

Comment: The applicant’s proposal generally complies with the above criteria. The site is currently developed with an existing gas station which has been on the site since the mid-1970s. The proposal is to redevelop the gas station to add a convenience store, car wash, and two additional gasoline dispensers. There is no vehicle repair service proposed. The property has 159 feet of frontage, direct access, and over 100 feet of right-of-way on Greenbelt Road (MD 193). The proposed two-way access from Aerospace Road is curbed and 35 feet wide, and the right-in/right-out entrances to Greenbelt Road are 25 feet wide. The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) agrees to the retention of the two access points along Greenbelt Road, but is considering design changes that will make them more channelized to keep them from being used as full-movement driveways. Gasoline pumps and other service appliances are more than 25 feet away from the streetline. As required, the site plan shows the topography of the subject property as well as the abutting properties. The location of the trash enclosure is also shown. There are no vending machines proposed.

The exceptions to compliance are:

1. Section 27-358(a)(7) requires a five-foot-wide sidewalk along areas of pedestrian traffic. An existing sidewalk is found along Aerospace Road, but none is shown along Greenbelt Road.
2. Section 27-358(a)(10) states that the architectural elements and character of the proposed buildings shall demonstrate compatibility with existing and proposed surrounding development. The applicant has provided architectural details and an elevation of the proposed building on the site plan which will be compatible with the surrounding development and conform to the design elements of the site plan. The Urban Design staff has suggested improvements to the building design. Appropriate conditions have been recommended to require staff approval of the architectural elevations prior to certification of the special exception site plan.

The proposed redevelopment is a continuation of an existing use. The need for this gas station is evident in the 40 years it has existed in the same configuration on this property. The proposed redevelopment of this facility will not unduly restrict the availability of land, or upset the balance of land use, in the area for other trades and commercial uses.

Section 27-355(a) of the Zoning Ordinance provides the specific special exception requirements for a food or beverage store as follows:

(a) A food or beverage store may be permitted, subject to the following:

(1) The applicant shall show a reasonable need for the use in the neighborhood;

Comment: The finding required for reasonable need is that the applicant show the use is “reasonably convenient or expedient” as opposed to showing an actual deficit of this type of use. The convenience store will serve residents in apartments to the northwest along Aerospace Road and across Greenbelt Road, as well as employees in nearby office buildings and the travelling public. The integration of food or beverage stores with gas stations has become mandatory in redevelopment plans for sites and is an expected part of modern convenient gas stations.

- (2) **The size and location of, and access to, the establishment shall be oriented toward meeting the needs of the neighborhood;**

Comment: The site will have access to both Aerospace Road and Greenbelt Road. It will be convenient to both neighborhood residents from nearby apartments, workers in the adjoining office buildings, and commuters along Greenbelt Road.

- (3) **The proposed use shall not unduly restrict the availability of land, or upset the balance of land use, in the area for other allowed uses;**

Comment: The continuation of the gas station with a larger food or beverage store and ancillary car wash will not restrict the availability of land or upset the balance of land use in the area. Although there is a car wash adjoining the site to the north, the proposed car wash is a permitted use in this zone and not subject to the required findings for a special exception.

- (4) **In the I-1 and I-2 Zones, the proposed use shall be located in an area which is (or will be) developed with a concentration of industrial or office uses;**

Comment: The subject property is located amongst the Glenn Dale Business Campus. Although some of the adjoining vacant office and warehouse units are proposed for future mixed-use development including residences, the surrounding properties remain in industrial and office uses.

- (5) **The retail sale of alcoholic beverages from a food or beverage store approved in accordance with this Section is prohibited; except that the District Council may permit an existing use to be relocated from one C-M zoned lot to another within an urban renewal area established pursuant to the Federal Housing Act of 1949, where such use legally existed on the lot prior to its classification in the C-M Zone and is not inconsistent with the established urban renewal plan for the area in which it is located.**

Comment: The applicant does not propose the sale of alcoholic beverages.

H. **General Requirements for a Special Exception:** Section 27-317(a) of the Zoning Ordinance provides the following required findings for approval of a special exception:

- (a) **A Special Exception may be approved if:**

- (1) **The proposed use and site plan are in harmony with the purposes of this Subtitle;**

Comment: With the recommended conditions, the proposed use as a gas station, convenience store, and car wash, and the site plan are in harmony with the purposes of this Subtitle.

(2) The proposed use is in conformance with all the applicable requirements and regulations of this Subtitle;

Comment: The redevelopment of this site will bring the subject property into conformance with current requirements and development standards. The applicant is requesting approval of departures from the number of parking spaces and the sign location, and the proposed redevelopment of the site meets the standard zoning requirements of the I-1 Zone. With the requested departures and the recommended conditions of approval, the proposed use will be in substantial conformance with all of the applicable requirements and regulations of this Subtitle.

(3) The proposed use will not substantially impair the integrity of any validly approved Master Plan or Functional Master Plan, or, in the absence of a Master Plan or Functional Master Plan, the General Plan;

Comment: The proposed redevelopment of the property with commercial uses conforms to the land use designation in the Glenn Dale-Seabook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA. The sector plan recommends a commercial land use for the subject property, and the proposed use conforms to the Plan Prince George's 2035 vision. Therefore, the proposed use will not substantially impair the integrity of any validly approved master plan or functional master plan, or, in the absence of a master plan or functional master plan, the General Plan.

(4) The proposed use will not adversely affect the health, safety, or welfare of residents or workers in the area;

Comment: A gas station has been in continuous operation on this property for more than 40 years and it has had no adverse effects on the health, safety, or welfare of residents or workers in the area. The proposal is designed to provide for the safe internal flow of pedestrians and vehicles on-site and for the safe ingress and egress of vehicles.

(5) The proposed use will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood; and

Comment: The proposed use will not be detrimental to the use or development of adjacent properties or the general neighborhood. The redevelopment of the existing gas station mirrors the redevelopment of the adjacent properties and the general neighborhood.

(6) The proposed site plan is in conformance with an approved Tree Conservation Plan.

Comment: The site plan is in conformance with the approved Standard Letter of Exemption (S-096-14) from the Prince George's County Woodland and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Ordinance and expires on June 2, 2016. Because the site is less than 40,000 square feet in size and has no previous approved tree conservation plans, a

standard exemption letter was issued by the Environmental Planning Section. No other environmental issues relate to the applicant's proposal.

(7) The proposed site plan demonstrates the preservation and/or restoration of the regulated environmental features in a natural state to the fullest extent possible in accordance with the requirement of Subtitle 24-130(b)(5).

Comment: There are no regulated environmental features on the subject property that would require preservation and/or restoration.

- I. **Parking and Loading Regulations:** Based on the gross floor area of the proposed food or beverage store (3,180 square feet) and car wash (1,344), a total of 24 parking spaces and one loading space are required to serve the property. The proposed site plan shows 19 parking spaces and one loading space. The applicant has requested a departure (DPLS-415) for the five required parking spaces not provided. The departure is discussed in greater detail in Finding O of this staff report.
- J. **2010 Prince George's County Landscape Manual Requirements:** The application to modernize an existing gas station involves new construction and is subject to the requirements of the 2010 *Prince George's County Landscape Manual* (Landscape Manual). The application is in general conformance with Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.9 of the Landscape Manual. However, there are some technical corrections that need to be made and will be addressed through conditions.
- **Section 4.2, Requirements for Landscaped Strips along Streets**—The proposal is subject to Section 4.2, Requirements for Landscaped Strips along Streets, along both its Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Drive frontages. The submitted plan provides the appropriate schedules, which show that the requirements are being met with the proposed development. However, the Section 4.2 schedule for Aerospace Road includes one typographical error stating that five shrubs are required per 35 linear feet, whereas ten are required when using Option 1. This should be corrected. In addition, alternative compliance should be requested for the three shade trees that are shown outside of the subject property and within the Aerospace Road right-of-way. The applicant should approach the appropriate agency regarding the possibility of obtaining an easement for the landscaping. Otherwise, the tree trees must be shown on the subject property.
 - **Section 4.3, Parking Lot Requirements**—The proposal is subject to the requirements of Section 4.3, Parking Lot Requirements, because it involves a new parking area in excess of 7,000 square feet. The submitted plan provides the appropriate schedule, which shows that the requirements are being met by the proposed development.
 - **Section 4.4, Screening Requirements**—The submitted site plan indicates a new exterior trash facility that is shown to be screened on the rear and sides with masonry in a design and in colors that complement the proposed buildings. A sight-tight composite plank board gate is also proposed. Color details of the enclosure should be provided, including materials.
 - **Section 4.5, Stormwater Management Facilities**—The subject special exception site plan indicates proposed stormwater management facilities that should be landscaped as per the requirements of the Prince George's County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T).

- **Section 4.7, Buffering Incompatible Uses**—The special exception site plan is subject to the requirements of Section 4.7 because it involves a new building. The submitted plan provides the appropriate schedules, which show that the adjacent uses are compatible with the proposed use and, therefore, a Section 4.7 bufferyard is not required along the northern or eastern property lines.
- **Section 4.9, Sustainable Landscaping Requirements**—The special exception is subject to the requirements of Section 4.9 for all of the proposed plantings. The plan includes the appropriate schedule demonstrating conformance to its requirements including percentage of native plant species, exclusion and removal of invasive plant species, and the location of plantings on amenable slopes. However, the native plant material has not been identified as required in the planting schedule. The plan should be revised accordingly.

Tree Canopy Coverage

This application is subject to the Tree Canopy Coverage Ordinance, as it proposes disturbance of 5,000 square feet or greater. The special exception area of 0.89 acre, or 38,768 square feet, is zoned I-1 and is required to provide ten percent, or 3,877 square feet, of tree canopy coverage (TCC). A TCC worksheet should be provided on the landscape plan indicating compliance with this requirement.

- K. **Zone Standards:** The applicant's proposal appears to be in compliance with the requirements of Section 27-474, I-1 Zone (Light Industrial), of the Zoning Ordinance. In accordance with Section 27-469(b)(1) and (2) of the Zoning Ordinance, at least ten percent of the net lot area shall be maintained as green area. Any landscape strip adjacent to a public right-of-way required pursuant to the provisions of the Landscape Manual shall not be considered part of the required green area. Green area calculations should be added to the plan.
- L. **Signage:** The applicant is proposing building, canopy, and freestanding signage that are prototypical franchise-style for Dash-In and Shell. The building signs and window stickers will be the red and green Dash-In logos, while the canopy sides and canopy signage will be the red and yellow logos that are typical for Shell. The freestanding sign will be a combination of both and will include three types of gasoline price signs. The signage appears to be within the allowed square footage, although the height is shown to be 26.5 feet, which exceeds the permitted height of 25 feet. A departure for the placement of the sign, per Section 27-614(a)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance, is requested.
- M. **Required findings for Departures from Sign Design Standards (DSDS-688):**
Section 27-614(a)(4) of the Zoning Ordinance requires freestanding signs in all commercial and industrial zones (except the I-3 Zone) to be located at least ten feet behind the street line. The existing sign, which the applicant wishes to retain, is located five feet from the right-of-way.

Section 27-239.01(a)(4), Required Findings, of the Zoning Ordinance provides that, in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

- (i) **The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant's proposal.**

Comment: In general, the purposes of the Sign Ordinance are to regulate unsightly and hazardous signs, to provide adequate identification and advertisement, to promote the general welfare of the residents of the county, and to foster the appropriate use of land, buildings, and structures. Although the required ten-foot setback is not being met, the applicant's goal is to retain the existing sign, which is set back more than 18 feet from the existing edge of pavement. The sign location for the use becomes all the more important due to the realignment of the building and the applicant's proposed closing of the second driveway to Aerospace Road. The height and area of the sign meet the requirements of the Code. Retention of the existing sign would provide necessary visibility for the use in an appropriate manner.

(ii) The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.

Comment: The applicant wishes to simply retain the long-existing sign. It has provided appropriate identification for Shell for many years at this location. When the sign was originally placed here, it met the setback requirement. It is because of the widening of the right-of-way for Greenbelt Road (MD 193) that it is now out of compliance. If permitted to stay, the five-foot departure is the minimum necessary.

(iii) The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site or prevalent in areas of the County developed prior to November 29, 1949.

Comment: The freestanding sign has existed on this property for many years, yet remains attractive and recognizable. It is in an older area of Prince George's County developed with old commercial uses. The applicant has come to the conclusion that a complete modernization is in order to present a new image to their customers and improve the overall character of the commercial corridor. The sign is set back more than 18 feet from the existing edge of pavement, meeting the intent, if not the letter, of the requirement. Therefore, the departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site and prevalent in older areas of the County.

(iv) The departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

Comment: A freestanding sign is necessary to further provide adequate identification for the use. A freestanding sign has existed on the site for many years, and the applicant is not proposing any changes. The replacement of the sign, the redevelopment of the site with a larger modern structure, and the removal of the service bays will improve the visual quality of the site. As such, the proposed departure will not impair the visual, functional, or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood. The Community Planning Division suggests that a monument-type sign would be appropriate for the site, although this is not discussed as a strategy in the Glenn Dale-Seabook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA. Given that the existing sign and location are proposed to be retained, staff would recommend that, at a minimum, a brick base similar to the brick used on the proposed buildings be employed at the base of the freestanding sign.

- N. **Required findings for Departures from Parking and Loading Standards (DPLS-415):** The applicant has requested a departure from Section 27-568 of the Zoning Ordinance, which requires the provision of 24 off-street parking spaces for the subject use. The applicant is providing 19 spaces; therefore, a departure of five spaces is sought.

Section 27-588. Departures from the number of parking and loading spaces required.

27-588(b)(7) Required Findings:

(A) In order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:

(i) The purposes of this Part (Section 27-550) will be served by the applicant's request;

Section 27-550. Purposes

(a) The purposes of this Part are:

- (1) To require (in connection with each building constructed and each new use established) off-street automobile parking lots and loading areas sufficient to serve the parking and loading needs of all persons associated with the buildings and uses;**
- (2) To aid in relieving traffic congestion on streets by reducing the use of public streets for parking and loading and reducing the number of access points;**
- (3) To protect the residential character of residential areas; and**
- (4) To provide parking and loading areas which are convenient and increase the amenities in the Regional District.**

Comment: The purposes of the parking and loading regulations will be served by the applicant's request. The applicant seeks to ensure sufficient parking and loading to serve the needs of the patrons of this proposed gas station, convenience store, and car wash, and to relieve on-site traffic and circulation congestion through the elimination of what are probably unnecessary parking spaces on this property. In practice, many of the patrons will leave their cars at one of the 12 fueling positions while entering the store to make a purchase. In addition, many of the patrons will walk to the store from the nearby apartment complexes and office buildings, further lessening the need for parking.

(ii) The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request;

Comment: The departure is not the minimum necessary per the site plan conditions, as discussed later in this section. Two additional parking spaces could easily be provided.

(iii) The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are special to the subject use, given its nature at this location, or alleviate circumstances which are prevalent in older areas of the County which were predominantly developed prior to November 29, 1949;

Comment: The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are special to the subject use, given its nature at this location. The site is adjoined by office and apartment uses which will result in many patrons walking to the store. Additional parking along the front of the convenience store would interfere with the stacking lane for the car wash. The purposes of the Parking and Loading Regulations will be served by the request.

- (iv) **All methods for calculating the number of spaces required (Division 2, Subdivision 3, and Division 3, Subdivision 3, of this Part) have either been used or found to be impractical; and**

Comment: All methods of calculation have been fully applied to this site. The applicant has applied the correct method for calculating the number of parking spaces required. The applicant is not permitted to use the 20 percent reduction for shared use because one of the uses (the food or beverage store) requires more than 20 parking spaces.

- (v) **Parking and loading needs of adjacent residential areas will not be infringed upon if the departure is granted.**

Comment: The applicant submits that the parking and loading needs of the residential areas will not be infringed upon if this request is granted. The nearest residentially-zoned properties are across both Aerospace Road and Greenbelt Road; they are apartment complexes which have adequate on-site parking.

(B) In making its findings, the Planning Board shall give consideration to the following:

- (i) **The parking and loading conditions within the general vicinity of the subject property, including numbers and locations of available on- and off-street spaces within five hundred (500) feet of the subject property;**

Comment: There is no indication of a shortage of parking within the general vicinity of this facility. The area within 500 feet of the subject property is characterized by commercial, office, and multifamily residential development. All such uses have adequate parking.

- (ii) **The recommendations of an Area Master Plan, or County or local revitalization plan, regarding the subject property and its general vicinity;**

Comment: The proposed use is consistent with the plan recommendations and will not impair the integrity of the master plan.

- (iii) **The recommendations of a municipality (within which the property lies) regarding the departure; and**

Comment: The subject property is not located within a municipality.

- (iv) **Public parking facilities which are proposed in the County's Capital Improvement Program within the general vicinity of the property.**

Comment: There are no public parking facilities proposed for this area.

(C) In making its findings, the Planning Board may give consideration to the following:

(i) Public transportation available in the area;

Comment: Public transportation is available at this location. However, this is an automobile-related use, as such it is not anticipated that many patrons will use public transportation. Many patrons are likely to walk to the site from the nearby apartments.

(ii) Any alternative design solutions to off-street facilities which might yield additional spaces;

Comment: The applicant is not taking advantage of the use of compact parking spaces and is showing three excessively-wide spaces (13 feet) in a nine-space parking area along the eastern property line. These nine spaces could be redesigned to be seven compact spaces and four regular spaces. This would decrease the departure from five spaces to three.

(iii) The specific nature of the use (including hours of operation if it is a business) and the nature and hours of operation of other (business) uses within five hundred (500) feet of the subject property;

Comment: The gas station, convenience store, and car wash will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The proposed development is within 500 feet of residential and retail uses. The use as a gas station has existed since the mid-1970s and is compatible with the nature and operation of other uses in the area.

(iv) In the R-30, R-30C, R-18, R-18C, R-10A, R-10, and R-H Zones, where development of multifamily dwellings is proposed, whether the applicant proposes and demonstrates that the percentage of dwelling units accessible to the physically handicapped and aged will be increased over the minimum number of units required by Subtitle 4 of the Prince George's County Code.

Comment: The subject property is located in the I-1 Zone and, therefore, is not subject to this provision.

P. Referrals: The following comments were received for the special exception application.

1. **Transportation**—The impact of a new gas station with food and beverage service and a car wash is estimated using trip rates from the *Trip Generation Manual* (Institute of Transportation Engineers). According to surveys published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, a high percentage of trips are expected to be pass-by and diverted trips, which would be made by motorists already on the adjacent roadways of Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Road. For this site, it was assumed that 75 percent of the trips would be pass-by or diverted trips. Using trip rates as described above, the trip impact is as follows:

Comparison of Estimated Trip Generation, SE-4757								
Zoning or Use	Units or Square Feet	(AM) Peak-Hour Trips			(PM) Peak-Hour Trips			Daily Trips
		In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
Existing Use								
Gas Station	4 dispensers (8 vehicle positions) 2,200 sq.ft.	50	50	100	62	63	125	1,350
Total New Trips	Total trips x (0.25)	6	7	13	15	16	31	
Proposed Use								
Gas Station	6 dispensers (12 vehicle positions)	80	80	160	87	88	175	1,835
Food/Beverage	3,180 sq.ft.							
Car Wash	1,344 sq.ft.							
Total New Trips	Total trips x (0.25)	20	20	40	22	22	44	
Difference		14	13	27	7	6	13	485

The trips generated by the proposed uses pose very little change from the approved existing uses. The change does not appear to be sufficient to trigger the need for additional studies of traffic impacts. Outside of special exception cases where studies are required, traffic studies have rarely been deemed necessary, and then only for uses generating over 50 new trips. The critical intersection for this site is the intersection of Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Road. Recent traffic counts indicate that the intersection operates adequately. There are no apparent safety issues that would result from the expansion of the uses. It is important to remember that adequacy of transportation facilities is not an issue in the review of this use; review is strictly within the required findings of health, safety, and welfare.

The site is adjacent to MD 193. This roadway is listed in the Glenn Dale–Seabook-Lanham and Vicinity Sector Plan and SMA as an arterial roadway with 120 to 200 feet of right-of-way.

The proposed gas station complies with Section 27-358 of the Zoning Ordinance. It has direct access to a street with adequate right-of-way, the two-way driveway on Aerospace Road is more than 30 feet wide, the driveways are curbed, a sidewalk of five feet is provided, and the gasoline pumps are more than 25 feet behind the street line.

Access and Circulation

The existing gas station has four access/egress driveways. The proposed gas station will have one two-way driveway on Aerospace Road and two one-way driveways on MD 193. The proposed car wash is located behind the food and beverage store with 295 feet of queuing space. This should prevent any vehicles from queuing onto MD 193). It is deemed that access for the proposed uses on the site is acceptable in consideration of the scope of the facility and the traffic to be generated.

2. **Urban Design**—The architecture for the proposed food and beverage store utilizes a red/brown-colored exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS) product as its primary architectural material, though brick is used on the front (south) and the right-side elevations. EIFS is not a favored material in Prince George’s County due to its lack of

durability. It is easily punctured and should not be used within easy reach of pedestrians on any building. The front façade includes a red painted canopy in its center topping a large area of storefront glass, in which the two front entry doors are set. A tower feature, located on the southwestern corner of the building and visible from both the front and right side elevations, includes the applicant's corporate logo signage on both sides. The tower, clad in white metal panels, scored by rectilinear grey mullion-type detailing, and topped by an angled cornice, provides a measure of visual relief from the monotonous EIFS walls and otherwise flat roof of this structure. The entire watertable is clad in red split-face block which provides a measure of additional texture. Except those noted above, architectural detail is absent from the structure. Downspouts, which are not architectural features, are evident on the rear façade and light fixtures are provided on the sides and front of the building.

The architecture of the car wash is similar in color and design to the food and beverage store, though brick is utilized as the primary material on all the façades. A split or ground face block is similarly provided on the water table, though it is highlighted by a different color and textural band on the car wash. The car wash is rectilinear and flat-roofed, employing the same color brick on the elevations as on the food and beverage store, and accented by a complementary red color on the watertable and the entry doors. The vinyl bay doors are a contrasting blue that complements a royal and light blue banner, with what appear to be pictured soap bubbles on it, that runs around the building just under the roofline. The banner includes signage on the front (west) elevation stating "Splash in Eco Car Wash" and "Enter" and "Exit" over the appropriate windowed bay doors that provide ingress and egress to the car wash. Other signage is noted on the left side (north elevation). Utilitarian access doors are provided on the front (west) elevation and the left side (north) elevation. A single band of un-mullioned windows are included above the water table of the elevation. Details have been included for the signage.

The Urban Design Section finds that site design and signage are generally acceptable. With respect to architecture, the Urban Design would suggest additional architectural detail and ornamentation such as faux windows or other vertical elements to break up the horizontal massing and enhance the design of the structure due to the site's visibility from the various roadways. The specific recommendations for the upgrades to the proposed architecture are noted as conditions.

4. **Subdivision**—Pursuant to Section 24-111(c)(2) of the Subdivision Regulations, a site is exempt from the requirement of filing a preliminary plan of subdivision if the total development proposed for the final plat does not exceed 5,000 square feet of gross floor area. As previously discussed, the special exception indicates that the proposed construction will not exceed 5,000 square feet of gross floor area, which meets the requirements of the exemption. The development of more than 5,000 square feet on the subject site will require a preliminary plan and a new final plat. Failure of the site plan and record plat to match (including bearings, distances, and lot sizes) will result in permits being placed on hold until the plans are corrected.

CONCLUSION

The applicant has met their burden of proof in this instance. Based on the preceding analysis and findings, staff recommends APPROVAL of Special Exception Application No. SE-4757, Departure from Parking and Loading Standards Application No. DPLS-415, and Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. DSDS-688, Potomac Energy Holdings, LLC, subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to approval of the special exception site plan, the following revisions shall be made:
 - a. The reconfiguration of the entrances along Greenbelt Road (MD 193) shall be shown, if required by the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA).
 - b. Label the roadways on the landscape plan.
 - c. The required five-foot-wide sidewalk should be shown along the site's frontages on Greenbelt Road (MD 193) and Aerospace Drive.
 - d. Revise the planting schedule to identify native plant material.
 - e. Provide color details of the trash enclosure.
 - f. Provide a brick base for the proposed freestanding sign. The brick to be applied at the sign base shall be the same brick as on the proposed building.
 - g. The applicant shall revise the architecture to create more visual interest by providing more architectural detail and ornament such as faux windows, decorative brickwork (if the amount of exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS) is to be reduced and replaced with brick), or concrete masonry unit pilasters (to match the water table) on the side and rear façades of the buildings to break up the horizontal mass.
 - h. Light fixtures should be downward facing and shielded so as to prevent light spillage on adjacent properties.
 - i. Provide a sidewalk within the right-of-way of Greenbelt Road (MD 193), unless prohibited by SHA.
 - j. Add signage calculations to the plan that show the proposed and allowed height and amounts of building and canopy signage, in accordance with Section 27-613(c) of the Prince George's County Zoning Ordinance.
 - k. Green area calculations, in accordance with the requirements for the I-1 Zone, shall be provided in the general notes.
 - l. The nine parking spaces along the eastern property line shall be redesigned to be seven compact spaces and four regular parking spaces.
2. Prior to certification of the special exception, a copy of an approved stormwater management concept plan and letter from the Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) shall be submitted to the Environmental Planning Section.

3. Prior to approval of building permits, alternative compliance should be requested for the three shade trees that are shown outside of the subject property and within the Aerospace Road right-of-way, and an easement should be obtained from the appropriate agency, if possible.