

# Franklin Township

Somerset County, New Jersey



## Technical Review Committee

### MEMORANDUM

Municipal Building  
475 DeMott Lane  
Somerset, NJ 08873  
732.873.2500  
Fax: 732.873.0844  
[www.franklintwpnj.org](http://www.franklintwpnj.org)

To: Zoning Board of Adjustment

From: Technical Review Committee

Date: June 25, 2020

Re: Somerset Group Hospitality, LLC – Parking Variance (ZBA-20-000011)  
60 Cottontail Lane (Block 530.04; Lot 1.01)

---

As requested, we have reviewed the submitted application materials listed below and issue the following report for the Board's consideration.

### Site and Project Description

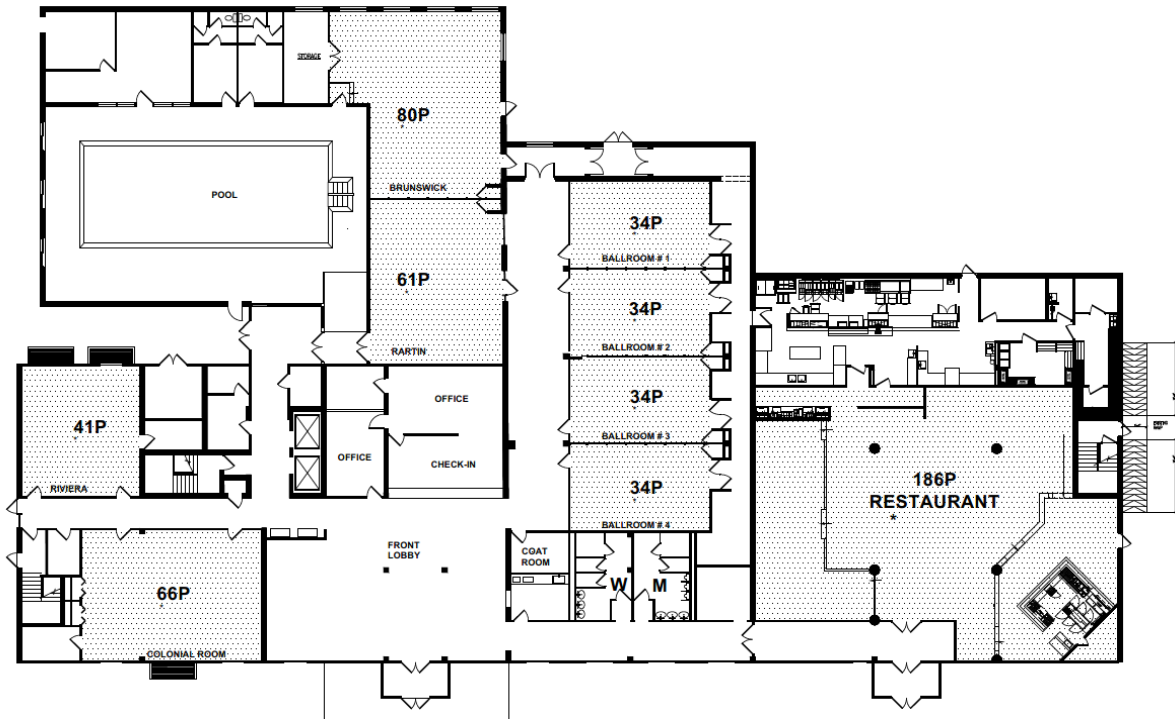
The subject 3-acre site is located at the southeast corner of the Cottontail Lane/ Weston Canal Road intersection and adjoins interchange 12 of I-287. The 3-acre site is currently occupied by a 126-room hotel with banquet facilities and a restaurant (Hooters) on the first floor.

The applicant requests a parking variance as explained below. The applicant describes the proposal as follows:

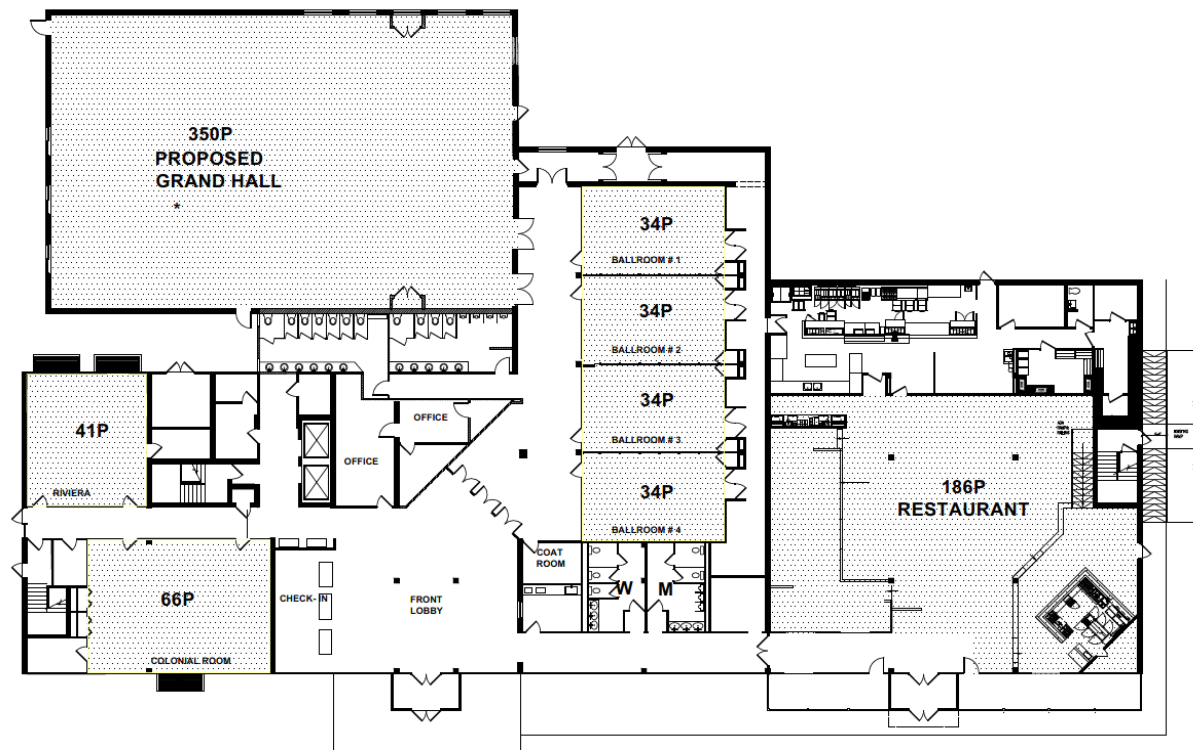
**Explain, in detail sufficient for the Board to understand the nature of the proposal, the exact nature of the proposed application and proposed physical modifications to be made to the site, building(s) and/or signage including the proposed use of the premises.**

The applicant proposes to perform interior renovations to an existing hotel to eliminate the pool and two conference/meeting rooms in favor of a banquet center. The property can accommodate this change of use because (a) there is more than ample parking at present; (b) the improvements will be an attractive improvement to the hotel; (c) the same patrons will be occupying the rooms as are using the ballroom; (d) the smaller ballrooms will be used in concert with the main ballroom; and (e) the meeting rooms will not be used at the same time as the main ballroom.

The existing floor plan, with current occupancy levels of the banquet rooms and restaurant (totaling 570 persons), is shown below:



The proposed floor plan, with proposed conversion of the pool area and two meeting rooms into a “grand hall”, is shown below. The proposed occupancy levels of the banquet rooms and restaurant would total 779 persons.



The table below, provided by the applicant, provides the existing versus proposed occupancy levels. The "Parking Requirements" portion accurately reflects existing versus proposed parking requirements. Since the proposal will increase the parking requirement for the site a **parking variance** is required (217 spaces existing and proposed versus 329 currently required and 398 required for the proposed reconfiguration).

### **OCCUPANCY CHART**

<b>SPACE</b>	<b>EXISTING OCCUPANCY</b>	<b>PROPOSED OCCUPANCY</b>	<b>NET CHANGE</b>
BALL ROOM SEC 1	34	34	0
BALL ROOM SEC 2	34	34	0
BALL ROOM SEC 3	34	34	0
BALL ROOM SEC 4	34	34	0
COLONIAL ROOM	66	66	0
RIVAIR ROOM	41	41	0
BRUNSWICK ROOM	80	0	-80
RARITAN ROOM	61	0	-61
RESTAURANT	186	186	0
GRAND BALLROOM	0	350	350
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>570 P</b>	<b>779 P</b>	<b>210 P</b>

### **Parking requirements**

126 hotel rooms (1.1/RM)	138.6	138.6	0
Ball Rooms + restaurant (1 per 3 Persons)	190	259.3	70
<b>Total parking spaces</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>70</b>

Number of parking spaces available

217 space

As no exterior modifications to the site are proposed, no site plan approval is required.

## VariANCES - Overview

### 'C' VariANCES

With respect to the 'c' variances, the applicant needs to demonstrate whether each would satisfy the c-1 (hardship) and/or c-2 (advancement of the MLUL) criteria.

With respect to the c-2 criteria, the applicant would need to demonstrate that the proposed variances would represent a better zoning alternative than compliant development such that the purposes of the MLUL would be advanced. Alternatively, the applicant would need to prove that a hardship (C-1) exists such that the application cannot be made to comply.

With respect to the negative criteria, the applicant must demonstrate that the variances would not result in substantial detriment to the public good ("1st prong" of negative criteria) and will not substantially impair the intent and purpose of the zone plan and zoning ordinance ("2nd prong of negative criteria). Finally, the applicant must prove that benefits of granting the variances would substantially outweigh any detriments resulting from grant of the variances.

## Review Comments

1. The applicant needs to provide quantitative proof in support of the claim that there is "more than adequate parking at present." Further, it is noted that the above statement indicates that there is "more than adequate parking *at present*" (emphasis added). The applicant will obviously need to demonstrate that there will be adequate parking with the 200+ person increase in occupancy proposed on the site.

For example, it is noted that an applicant for a similar parking variance for a nearby hotel site (Somerset Hotel ZBA-18-00003) employed a traffic engineer to provide a report (and associated testimony) in support of the parking variance based upon the engineer's: experience/ expertise, observations of on-site parking demand, and presentation of parking demand figures provided by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). It is *strongly recommended* that this applicant present similar proof and testimony.

2. In support of the variance the application, the applicant indicates that "the same patrons will be occupying the rooms as are using the ballrooms." The applicant needs to explain this statement and demonstrate the extent to which it would reduce parking demand. It is noted that the proposed occupancy of the banquet and restaurant spaces would be 779 people (versus 126 hotel rooms).
3. The applicant has indicated that "the smaller ballrooms will be used in concert with the main ballroom." The applicant needs to explain this statement and demonstrate the extent to which it would reduce parking demand.
4. In support of the variance the application, the applicant indicates that "the meeting rooms will not be used at the same time as the main ball room." The applicant needs to explain this

statement and how this would be enforced by the applicant and the Township (should it be a condition of approval).

5. Would the existing kitchen be capable of handling the increase? Is all food cooked on-site or is any catering brought in?

