

LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, February 15, 2017

Present: Joseph Blaney
Sheila Grant (arrived at 7:09 pm)
Christina Hultholm
Jeffrey Johnson
Bruce Kmosko
Peter F. Kremer, Chairperson

Absent: William B. Holmes
Samuel Pangaldi

Excused Absence: Charles Lavine

Also Present: Brenda Kraemer, P.E., Assistant Municipal Engineer
Brian Slaugh, Planning Consultant
Edwin Schmierer, Zoning Board Attorney
Susan Snook, Recording Secretary

Statement of Adequate Notice:

Adequate notice of this meeting of the Lawrence Township Zoning Board has been provided by filing the annual meeting schedule with the Municipal Clerk as required by law; by filing the agenda and notice with the Municipal Clerk, posting prominently in the Municipal Building and mailing to the Trenton Times and the Trentonian newspapers.

Public Participation (for items not on agenda): None

Resolutions:

Resolution of Memorialization 10-17z; Bulk Variance Application No. ZB-8/16; **Robert Mason**; 2800 Princeton Pike; Tax Map Page 35.02, Block 3508, Lot 13 was approved per unanimous vote.

Applications:

Use Variance Application No. ZB-7/16 and Major Site Plan – Preliminary & Final Approval Application No. SP-11/16; **First Baptist Church**; 121 Hillcrest Avenue; Tax Map Page 23.01, Block 2321, Lots 1 -5 and Block 2322, Lots 1.01 & 11.01. The Board took jurisdiction.

Christopher Costa represented the applicant and stated the Church was constructed at this site in the 1940's and the new structure that was approved in 2012 and completed in 2015. One of the challenges the Church encountered after the approval in 2012 was due to the water table on the property it could not construct the Fellowship Hall that it wanted to build in the basement of the sanctuary. This proposed a challenge due to the narrow constraints of the property, there was no other place to the put this Fellowship Hall. The church was able to purchase the property adjacent to its parking area to the south. This additional land allowed it to reduce many of the variances and also put a place on the property for the Fellowship Hall. Due to the unusual shape and size of this lot, this Church requires a number of bulk variances.

Witness #1 – Pastor Burnett testified that there are 130 on the roll, 95 active members; hold weekly Sunday morning service as well as Bible study on Tuesday night; choir rehearsal; funerals; vacation bible school in the summer time; trying to set up in the future for tutoring in the after school and several organizations that the Church is involved with.

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There is a secretary, Church clerk, personnel secretary and financial secretary; they are occupying the Baptism room which is an 8 x 6 room and there office would have been downstairs which makes it pressed for room. The Fellowship Hall will hold three offices; a dining facility; holding Sunday school classes; vacation bible school and the bible study on Wednesday and several other events that are held during the week.

Vacation Bible school consists of 70 children and runs for a week from 9:00 to 3:00 in the summer. The Fellowship Hall would also hold weddings and will not be used for any other organizations. The maximum people it will be able to hold is 125 people and the Church is about 150. The two will never be used simultaneously event that would fill each building and no commercial use like a day care center.

Ms. Kraemer asked regarding the parking lot being filled when Church services are going on; meeting with other organizations attendance; bible study groups attendance. Pastor Burnett stated about 43 spaces currently and when filled to capacity there might be one or two parking the street; there are about 20 passengers from the surrounding area and one Friday a month; about 25.

Ms. Kraemer asked if the members would use the kitchen facilities to bring food and warm it up in ovens or caterer. Pastor Burnett stated it will be a buffet kitchen where you heat up the food.

Witness #2 – Robert Korkuch, PE who summarized the property using Exhibit A1-Aerial Exhibit Plan, dated 2012 which shows the properties currently owned by the Church. The only people going on Hillcrest Avenue will be going to the Church or they are going into the rear of their property, other than that there is no reason any other people will be going down Hillcrest Avenue. The Church congregation purchase the arrow shaped piece of property to the north because it became available.

Exhibit A2-Aerial Exhibit Plan from 2015 that shows the property lines being a little different only in that the Church petitioned the Township to vacate the right-of-way between the existing house and the existing Church building, so they were able to add to the real estate. The approved plan back in 2012 is partially constructed, showing the building and the parking lot is partially constructed; and there will be banked parking spaces. The existing house has been removed.

Exhibit A3-Aerial Exhibit Plan, dated 2016 shows nothing has been changed. The 2012 approval included consideration of a Fellowship Hall and the basement, which was not built. The lack of the Fellowship Hall has compromised some of the activities of the Church and Congregation. The Church wanted to construct the Fellowship Hall and have a significant amount of space for the ministry to the congregation as well as to the community, as well as to add parking and handicap parking; and provide an appropriate buffer to the adjoining residence. There is no new signage proposed for this project because there is no need for it.

Mr. Slauch asked if the applicant is proposing to construct the banked parking and the nine spaces for more convenience. Mr. Korkuch testified no they are not.

Exhibit A4-Perspective View and Rendering of the Churches' Campus in the location of immediately around the Church building and the proposed Fellowship Hall. The additional property that they own which shows the banked parking to the north and the location of the Fellowship Hall is where the house has been and removed when purchased. The plan shows the construction of the 2012 approval and the intent is to show the parking exists, between the two structures.

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The building is going to be one story, approximately 3,500 sf; there will be some meeting space, gathering space; restrooms, offices, storage and aesthetics to the new Church building itself. It will be primarily served from the parking field which already exists. Chairperson Kremer asked if it was discovered after the approval that the water table was too high. Mr. Korkuch stated when it came to putting in the elevator shaft, it would have to go even lower, it was discovered that some of the site soils were not suitable for supporting the building itself and other complications that drove the price to be not to pursue. Mr. Costa stated the other property became available.

Exhibit A5-Landscaping & Lighting Plan which shows a cleaned up version of the landscaping and lighting which has some material removed from it. This is depicting just the new lot and the area around the proposed Fellowship Hall and the parking lot. The dumpster is on the south side of the building and the dumpster on the approved plan is on the north side of the building. The use would make it closer to where the kitchen would be; there is a driveway access back to the kitchen area and to the dumpster that runs along the south side of the building; there are parking spaces that are shown heading directly off of Hillcrest Avenue that are shown in front of the building.

There is a subsurface water management with piping underground; foundation landscaping; Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission regulations state if you create more than a ¼ acre of improvements, then you need to do full storm water management for the entire property and on this site it would be a very expensive undertaking because most of the property is developed with buildings, parking lots and other things. The Church has proposed and different than what is in the application, that these spaces along the front and the driveway being reinforced grass and stabilized stone underneath and would be available for use, and would not be counted as impervious coverage.

Mr. Slauch asked how would the spaces be delineated and overflow spaces. Mr. Korkuch stated there are two ways that it can be done and the primary way would be plastic reinforcement with white stones in rows and plant the grass in the other ones and for overflow and would be constructed. The applicant would like to leave in the application so that in the future to possibly pave those spaces. Ms. Kraemer stated while under construction we will perform a proof roll and typically they are done for a fire lane and get a design based on a 30-ton loading because Public Safety would require that anyway.

Mr. Korkuch described the shed on the property, which the Church would like to keep because they do not have any other place to put barbeque equipment, landscaping, tables and equipment. They would like to move it to the rear of the building in addition to an accessory use. Ms. Kraemer asked where the doors were and Mr. Korkuch stated they are the end, pointing out (south) toward the trash enclosure. Ms. Kraemer stated it would need a proper foundation.

Exhibit A6-Township's Zoning Map showing the area being on the border of Lawrence and Ewing. The ordinance requires 7,500 sf and House of Worship would be about eight of those lots. The existing site plan was approved with variances which was for the new Church building, the basement, Fellowship Hall, for parking (on-site and off-site) with lighting and landscaping, storm water management and that approval from 2012 included conditional use variance similar to what is being presented tonight because the property does not meet the conditions of the conditional use, including lot size and setbacks, for parking configuration, impervious coverage and all things related to that.

Mr. Korkuch described the variances and waivers and summarized the application. Chairperson Kremer asked if there is anything else new. Mr. Korkuch stated is the reduction of the shed in the rear of the building and the adjoin residents, the screening would block the trash enclosure as well.

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Mr. Slauch pointed out the lot size variance is lessening and discuss Comment 4.4C which shows one property adjacent to this application and if there was any outreach to the neighbor for screening. The Board was informed that Mr. Chester reached out to them and they were satisfied with the plan as presented and the impact upon them.

Mr. Slauch also asked about the sidewalk that was connected separating the two properties and was the sidewalk being proposed to be eliminated for impervious coverage limits. Mr. Korkuch stated the sidewalk is lined to the Church property and as a banked sidewalk to go along with the bank parking.

Mr. Slauch referred to lighting and made a recommendation for the reduction that would limit impacts, see Comment 6.6. Mr. Korkuch will look at that again. Mr. Slauch also asked about landscaping and it would be addressed and accepted as a conditional use. Mr. Korkuch responded it would be fine. Mr. Slauch also commented that the architecture of the building and the Church has a shingle roof and has a brick base that goes up to the bottom of the windows, the plan has a metal roof and has a stone that does not go up to the windows; so would the Church be willing to match the existing material of the Church. Mr. Korkuch stated the Church would match and would be on two sides.

Ms. Kraemer stated the only thing is the setbacks for the shed and looking for it to be 3; however, 5' would be better for space to get around it for painting it and mowing the grass. Mr. Korkuch stated when the new Church was constructed, there had been an expectation of the Fellowship Hall would be in the basement on the north side of the building there was a set of stairs down to the lower level and when the decision was made not to build the lower level, the Church took the opportunity to bump that wall out, the four-feet it would have been for the stairwell and allow them to enlarge their baptismal area and the sanctuary and that results in that building setback being less than what it was proposed to be and what was approved to be.

Public:

Freena Johnson, 405 Eggert Crossing Road stated the Church is in the back yard of her home and did not get a chance to review all the plans and layout for addition of the property and wanted to have an opportunity to look at it. She wanted to see where the layout would be in accordance with her home. Mr. Korkuch showed her the plan and this does not affect her property.

Mr. Schmierer stated the conditions.

Adjournment:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Digital audio file of this meeting is available upon request.

Respectfully submitted,



Susan J. Snook
Recording Secretary

Minutes approved: 4/19/17