


TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE
Division of Planning and Redevelopment

TO: File

FROM:  Brenda Kraemer, Assistant Municipal Engineer

SUBJECT: Bulk & Use Variance Application No. ZB-5/20
Preliminary & Final Site Plan Approval Application No. SP-8/20
Islamic Circle of Mercer County, 330 – 336 Lawrence Station Road
Tax Map Page 42, Block 4201, Lots 13.01 and 15

DATE: January 15, 2021

General:

The applicant, Islamic Circle of Mercer County, has requested approvals to construct a new parking lot on Lot 15, adjacent to the existing facility on Lot 13.01. Additional parking is needed due to significant expansion of the membership. A house of worship is a permitted use in the MX-2 Zone; however, the parking lot expansion is proposed on the adjacent lot without consolidation of the parcels. A parking lot is not permitted as a principal use per §422.C. and §530.B of the Lawrence Township Land Use Ordinance; therefore, a "D" variance is required.

Our primary concerns are:

1. The applicant shall explain why the two parcels cannot be consolidated. We will defer to the Board Attorney regarding whether it would be appropriate to note Lot 15 cannot be sold as a stand alone parking lot in a deed restriction.
2. There has been environmental work on the property. The status of site remediation shall be discussed.
3. Although the plans maximize the number of new parking spaces, the layout and alignment of the easterly area appears congested. An alternate layout shall be explored for better traffic flow. We request comments from the Planning Consultant and Traffic Consultant on this issue.

1.00 Site Layout

- 1.01 The parking lot expansion significantly increases the number of available parking spaces. The applicant shall provide testimony regarding the increase in membership and use.

Parking lot layout revisions shall be considered in the easterly section of the project. The one-way aisle and proximity of several access points to the main circulation aisle is awkward and may lead to vehicle conflicts or impede proper circulation.

- 1.02 The properties will be connected internally to facilitate traffic flow between the parking lots. Further testimony shall be provided regarding the need to maintain two separate parcels instead of consolidating. Cross access declarations will be needed.

As noted above, we will defer to the Board Attorney regarding the necessity for a deed restriction to prevent selling lots separately.

- 1.03 There has been on-going environmental investigation work on Lot 15. The status of any necessary site remediation shall be provided. We note monitoring wells are shown on the plans. A no further action letter from New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection is required prior to any land disturbance.

- 1.04 A waiver is required from §530.N.2 of the Lawrence Township Land Use Ordinance which states curb shall be provided in all parking lots. Appropriate testimony shall be provided.
- 1.05 A storage building is present on Lot 13.01. It shall be shown on the plan with a reference to the permit date.
- 1.06 It is unclear whether the three new parking spaces, to be constructed when the driveway is removed on Lot 13.01, will have proper clearance from the utility vault. The utility vault shall be shown. Grading shall be provided in this area.
- 1.07. Additional landscape islands are recommended in the parking lot to comply with §525.L.5. of the Lawrence Township Land Use Ordinance.
- 1.08 The site plan shows a proposed gazebo in the rear of the Lot 15. Additional information shall be provided.
- 1.09 A conservation easement shall be provided to encompass environmentally sensitive areas.
- 1.10 Four (4) trees (8", 10", 12" and 15") were removed when the current temporary parking area was installed. Replacement landscaping is required.
- 2.00 Stormwater Management
- 2.01 Lawrence Township adopted a revised Stormwater Control Ordinance on December 15, 2020. The applicant's engineer shall demonstrate compliance with the new ordinance, which was revised per state stormwater guidelines. Generally, 4,000 sf of new impervious coverage requires stormwater management.
- 2.02 The post development drainage area map shows runoff onto Lawrence Station Road. There are no drainage facilities along the road so any direct runoff contribution will be an impact. Drainage controls are required to address this comment, Comment 2.01 and Comment 3.01 below. We recommend consideration of porous pavement. Porous pavement is ideal for large parking lots that are not impacted by truck traffic. Porous pavement would address several issues and improve the water quality and stormwater management aspects of this proposal.
- 2.03 The drainage pipes under the driveways shall be connected along Lot 15 frontage. The area is too flat for proper swale flow.
- 3.00 Grading
- 3.01 Parking lots are required to have 1.5% slope overland and 0.75% slope along curblines. The applicant's engineer shall address this requirement.
- 4.00 Miscellaneous
- 4.01 The parking lot lights shall be noted to be on a timing device. Lights shall be turned off one hour after closing or before midnight, whichever is earlier.
- 4.02 The following revisions to the construction details are required:
 - a. The detectable warning surface shall be "brick red" as manufactured by ADA Solutions or approved equal.

4.02 Continued:

- b. The pavement detail for any necessary pavement repair along Lawrence Station Road (due to curb installation) shall be added to the plans.
- c. A pipe bedding detail shall be added.

4.03 Bonding and inspection fees will be required.

4.04 Other permits / approvals:

- a. Mercer County Planning Board
- b. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
- c. Lawrence Township Public Safety
- d. Lawrence Township Soil Disturbance Permit (prior to construction)

BK/sjs

g:\engineering\Islamic circle zb-5/20 & sp-8/20\review.doc

Documents Reviewed:

- Cover Letter from The Spadaccini Law Firm, dated November 25, 2020
- Application Nos. ZB-5/20 and SP-8/20 with Checklist
- Witness List, undated
- Parking and Trip Generation Evaluation, dated August 7, 2020
- Stormwater Management Report, dated July 2020
- Title Sheet, Sheet 1 of 9, revision dated November 4, 2020
- Demolition Plan, Sheet 2 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Overall Site Plan, Sheet 3 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Site Plan, Sheet 4 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Grading & Drainage Plan, Sheet 5 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Landscaping Plan, Sheet 6 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Lighting Plan, Sheet 7 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Construction Details, Sheets 8 of 9 and 9 of 9, dated June 24, 2020

MEMORANDUM

Clarke Caton Hintz
Architecture
Planning
Landscape Architecture

To: Lawrence Township Zoning Board

From: Brian Slaugh, PP, AICP
Donna Miller, PP, AICP, CFM

Re: **Islamic Circle of Mercer County, Inc.**
Bulk and Use Variances and Preliminary and Final Major Site Plan
Block 4201, Lots 13.01 and 15
336 Lawrence Road
I-1 Limited Industrial Zoning District
Application ZB-5/20 and SP-8/20

Date: February 16, 2021

100 Barrack Street
Trenton NJ 08608
clarkecatonhintz.com
Tel: 609 883 8383
Fax: 609 883 4044

1. **Materials Reviewed**

The following materials were reviewed in the preparation of this report:

- Application ZB-5/20 and SP-8/20, certifications dated April 11, 2020.
- *Site Plans*, prepared by Mohammed Q. Husain, PE, Invision Engineers, PC, dated January 20, 2020 and last revised November 4, 2020, consisting of 9 sheets.
- *Parking and Trip Generation Evaluation*, prepared by Heather M. Balgowan, PE, PTOE, of McMahon Associates, Inc., dated August 7, 2020, consisting of 30 sheets.

2. **Application Description**

- 2.1 Applicant's Proposal. The applicant is proposing to demolish the existing office building and parking facilities on Lot 15 in order to construct a new 186 space parking lot and create an internal connection to the existing parking facilities on Lot 13.01, where the applicant's existing mosque is located. New lighting, landscaping and stormwater upgrades are also proposed to Lot 15. On Lot 13.01, the eastern driveway will be closed off and new parking spaces created there, while rearrangement of parking spaces in the western part of the parking lot will accommodate the interconnection to Lot 15. There will be 54 parking spaces on Lot 13.01 as a result of the rearrangement of the parking facilities, for an overall total of 240 parking spaces. As the two lots are to remain separate and not consolidated into a single tax lot, the parking facilities on Lot 15 would be the

John Hatch, FAIA
George Hibbs, AIA
Brian Slaugh, AICP
Michael Sullivan, AICP
Michael Hanrahan, AIA
Mary Beth Lonergan, AICP



ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF MERCER COUNTY | USE AND BULK VARIANCES
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN

Clarke Caton Hintz

principal use of the property. A use variance is required as parking facilities are only permitted as accessory uses of land in the I-1 District.

- 2.2 Existing Conditions. The site is located on Lawrence Station Road, just west of I-295 and Youngs Road. Lot 15 contains approximately 5.17 acres and is currently developed with a dilapidated one story office/industrial building with an asphalt parking lot that is accessed via a single driveway from Lawrence Station Road. The property also contains forested wetlands, part of a JCPL power line easement and lies within a flood hazard area. Lot 13.01 is currently developed with the Islamic Circle of Mercer County mosque, which consists of the mosque building, parking and stormwater facilities. The property contains approximately 4.5 acres and is also affected by the presence of wetlands, flood hazard areas and the power line easement. The wetlands on both lots that have been verified by NJDEP, although only the wetlands on Lot 13.01 have been preserved via conservation easement on that lot.
- 2.3 Adjacent Land Use. Surrounding and nearby land uses include the Dempster Fire Training School to the north and east, a trucking company and self-storage facility to the west, and vacant land and a single family residence across the street. The Liberty Green neighborhood is located approximately one quarter mile northeast of the site.



Aerial of Subject Property

NTS



**ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF MERCER COUNTY | USE AND BULK VARIANCES
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN**

Clarke Caton Hintz

3. Use Variance Issues

- 3.1 Inherently Beneficial Use. Houses of worship are an institution of society that are considered necessary for its proper function as constituted under the laws of the United States. This class of uses is called “inherently beneficial”, and such uses are assumed to serve the zoning purpose of promoting the general welfare and therefore presumptively satisfy the positive criteria for grant of a use variance. Uses that are not directly related to the worship function, such as soup kitchens and thrift shops, are also considered to be inherently beneficial. Generally, use variance applicants are required, in a legal sense, to prove to the Board that they meet both the positive criteria (show how the general public is served by this use) as well as the negative criteria (show how the impacts from the land use can be satisfactorily mitigated).

In the *Sica v. Twp. of Wall Bd. of Adjustment* court decision in 1992, a four step process in examining the evidence for the grant or denial of the use was set out for Zoning Boards considering inherently beneficial uses. These are listed below:

- A. Identify the public interest which is at stake;
- B. Identify the detrimental effect that will ensue from the grant of the variance;
- C. Reduce the detrimental effect by imposing reasonable conditions on the use; and
- D. Weigh the positive and negative criteria and determine whether, on balance, the grant of the variance would cause a substantial detriment to the public good.

The Board Attorney should be consulted for the evidence and testimony that needs to be submitted by the applicant in order to undertake this four-step analysis. The fact that the applicant seeks to keep the properties legally distinct does not affect the analysis of inherently beneficial use of the separate lot because the parking lot will be used to support religious activities whether a principal or accessory use. So even if the lots were consolidated, the same weighing of facts would take place.

- 3.2 Negative Criteria. There are a few areas that the applicant will need to address to demonstrate that the negative impacts of the proposed use do not substantially affect the zone plan and zoning ordinances.

- A. Potential impact of parking adequacy for the mosque. Should the property no longer be owned by the mosque, it could create significant impacts to the function of Lawrence Station Road by members trying to

ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF MERCER COUNTY | USE AND BULK VARIANCES
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN

Clarke Caton Hintz

access the insufficient parking on Lot 13.01. A permanent cross access easement which assigns rights for the mosque to use the parking on Lot 15 could offset these concerns.

- B. Visual impacts along the public right-of-way. We note in Sections 4 and 5 of this report that the design of the site and the proposed landscaping do not fully address the visual impact of the parking facilities along Lawrence Station Road due to insufficient setbacks, buffer plantings and loss of existing large trees. The Board should consider whether additional landscaping and efforts to preserve existing trees should be made to improve the visual appearance of the site from the street.
- C. Environmental impacts. Lot 15 contains a significant area of freshwater wetlands. It appears that much of the proposed redevelopment of Lot 15 will take place within required transition area buffers from the wetlands. Additional information from NJDEP may aid in resolving concerns about these impacts.

4. Bulk Variances and Exceptions

- 4.1 Minimum Lot Width Variance – Lot 15. Lot 15 is deficient for minimum lot width. As the lot will be developed without consolidating it with adjoining Lot 13.01, which would make it conforming, a variance is required.
- 4.2 Parking Lot Setback Exceptions. Both Lots 13.01 and 15 will require design exceptions from §530.F which require parking lots to be set back from streets and property lines at least 25 feet. The proposed reconfiguration of the parking lot on Lot 13.01 will result in new parking spaces to be located within approximately nine feet of Lawrence Station Road. On Lot 15, the new parking lot will be as close as 10.3 feet to Lawrence Station Road, in the southwest corner of the property, and within 2.5 feet of the shared property line between Lots 13.01 and 15.
- 4.3 Access Drive Length Exception. Access drives connecting parking lots to streets shall be designed to avoid direct access to parking or intersection with internal parking lot collectors per §530.I.2. Parking lots with between 100 and 250 spaces are required to have a driveway length of 75 feet before an intersection with an internal collector or parking space. The proposed access drives on Lot 15 provide between 23 and 30 feet of driveway length.
- 4.4 Curbing Exception. Only a small amount of the proposed parking lot will be curbed as required by §530.N.2. Most of the northerly parking lot boundary and all of the southerly and westerly parking lot boundary on Lot 15 will not be curbed.

ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF MERCER COUNTY | USE AND BULK VARIANCES
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN

Clarke Caton Hintz

Additionally, no street curbing is proposed along the frontage of Lot 15, except to define the proposed entrance and exits driveways. This is consistent with the level of development of the original house of worship application.

- 4.5 Maximum Lighting Exception. The ratio of average to minimum illumination shall not exceed 4:1 per §527.C.3. The lighting plan indicates a ratio of 7.5:1.
- 4.6 Tree Retention Exception. Parking facilities are required to be designed to minimize the removal of any tree 8 inches in caliper or larger (§530.I.7). There are ten trees greater than 8 inches in caliper on Lot 15 which will be removed in order to accommodate the proposed parking lot as currently designed. There do appear to be minor adjustments in the layout that could be made to retain three of these trees.
- 4.7 Parking Lot Planter Island Exception. No more than 20 parking spaces may be placed in one row of parking without an intervening landscape island per §525.L.5. There are five rows of parking with at least twenty spaces that do not provide an intervening landscape island.
- 4.8 Street Tree Exception. The landscape plan does not indicate any street trees to be planted along the street frontage of Lot 15. §525.C.2 requires seven street trees, based on a minimum 40 foot spacing for the lot's 300-foot frontage.
- 4.9 Sidewalk Exception. Sidewalk is required to be provided along the frontage of the site (§533.A.1). No sidewalk is provided.
- 4.10 Minimum Buffer Planting Exceptions. There are no plantings proposed within the required buffer area alongside the truck terminal use to the west. §525.L.2 requires at least 20 large trees, 32 small or ornamental trees, 60 evergreen trees and 120 shrubs to be planted along the 400 foot long buffer required along the western property line adjacent to Lot 16.
- 4.11 Stormwater Basin Perimeter Landscaping Exception. §525.J.1.e requires the perimeter of stormwater basins to be planted with deciduous and evergreen trees and to have landscaping around the perimeter of the basin to screen drainage structures and create visual interest. Three "rain gardens" are proposed to address the stormwater management requirements of the proposed parking lot. These features do not include the planting of evergreen trees and there are no plantings which screen the spillways that direct run-off into the rain gardens.

ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF MERCER COUNTY | USE AND BULK VARIANCES
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN

Clarke Caton Hintz

5. Site Plan Comments

- 5.1 Wetlands. The layout of the proposed parking facility is significantly constrained by wetlands. The plan indicates the wetland limits and a transition area, or buffer, as verified by NJDEP. Substantial portions of the proposed parking facilities and rain gardens, however, will be located within the freshwater wetlands transition area. Additionally, a gazebo appears to be proposed within an area surrounded by wetlands, but no means of access is noted. Even to construct the gazebo would require wetlands disturbance, let alone use it. Typically, when encroachments are proposed within a transition area, the applicant is required by NJDEP to provide an offset, to mitigate the encroachment. The offset does not allow for a transition buffer width to be less than 10 feet, yet the parking lot is located immediately adjacent to the wetlands line. It does not appear that the property has sufficient area onsite to mitigate the amount of the proposed encroachment. This could affect the number of parking spaces that can be developed on the property. Additionally, the wetlands and transition area should be placed within a conservation easement, as has been done on Lot 13.01. The applicant or its professionals should indicate whether an application for transition area waiver has been made and if so, the status of the request and the manner in which it intends to satisfy the mitigation and conservation easement requirements.
- 5.2 Striped Parking Lot Planter Islands. There are four shade trees proposed to be planted within the parking lot that are not within curbed planter islands. It appears that striping is proposed which depicts the typical size and shape of a planter island, however the area within the striping is paved. Trees planted in these locations will not have physical protection from vehicles and have deleterious planting conditions. The planting details for these trees should comply with soil volumes specified at §525.C.1 and be properly mulched and incorporated into curbed planter islands that are at least 8 feet in width.
- 5.3 Curbed Parking Lot Planter Islands. There are two shade trees proposed within curbed planter islands that also contain sidewalks. The location of the proposed trees conflicts with the sidewalk location through these islands. The location of the trees should be adjusted to that there is at least three feet between the edge of sidewalk and the centerline of the tree. The islands may have to be widened.
- 5.4 Parking Lot Screening. We recommend that the frontage along the new parking lot be bermed 2-3 feet above the parking lot elevation with the landscaping placed on top or in front as a mitigation measure for the parking lot being located closer to the road than permitted by ordinance. This may affect some of the rain garden design, as does the hedge proposed (see Comment 5.5).

ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF MERCER COUNTY | USE AND BULK VARIANCES
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN

Clarke Caton Hintz

- 5.5 Rain Garden Design. There are three rain gardens proposed to address stormwater run-off from the parking area on Lot 15. The plans contain a sample planting plot, however there is insufficient detail concerning their design. For example, the detail uses a typical 20-foot wide planting module, however all of the proposed rain gardens have freeform designs that do not correlate to a 20-foot wide planting scheme. The layout of the plant materials within the module do not correspond with the proper hydrologic zone for those plants. Finally, the plan and details specify the gardens to be one-foot deep without an outlet. A properly designed rain garden is between six and nine inches deep and includes an overflow area that is designed to prevent erosion and saturation from rain events which cannot be infiltrated within 24 hours. The applicant should consult the *Rain Garden Manual of New Jersey*, published by Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experimentation Station, 2015, for guidance on how to properly design these features. The plans indicate a hedge row along the property frontage between Lawrence Station Road and the proposed parking lot. A portion of this hedge lies within the bottom of the rain garden at the southeast corner of the property. The location and shape of the rain garden should be modified so that the parking area can be properly screened by the hedge along the street frontage.
- 5.6 Plant Materials. The landscape schedule contains a number of minor discrepancies as well as plants proposed which are either inappropriate for the setting or are considered invasive. The following plants should be replaced accordingly:
- A. Hedge maple, *Acer campestre*, is noted as an emerging invasive species and is too small to be used for parking lot shading. The number of Japanese scholar tree, or, sophora, *Styphnolobium japonicum*, may be increased to replace these maples or an alternative plant such as thornless honey locust, *Gleditsia triacanthos* 'inermis' would be suitable.
 - B. Hawthorn, *Crataegus viridis*, is also too small to be used for parking lot shading and unless a specific thornless variety is specified, is covered with long sharp thorns. Its use along a walkway through the parking lot is not recommended. Again, the use of additional scholar trees or honey locust is recommended as an alternate.
 - C. All varieties of *Spirea japonica* are considered invasive. Alternatives include Rose Creek abelia, *Abelia x chinensis* 'Rose Creek' or Snippet weigelia, *Weigelia florida* 'Vukozlyra'.
- 5.7 Lighting Plan. The lighting plan does not provide a detail of the iso-footcandle plots for the proposed light fixtures nor specifies the color temperature of the



**ISLAMIC CIRCLE OF MERCER COUNTY | USE AND BULK VARIANCES
PRELIMINARY AND FINAL SITE PLAN**

Clarke Caton Hintz

lighting. As such, it cannot be determined from the photometric layout where hotspots and levels of insufficient lighting may occur and to what extent. It appears that there is excess lighting, including spillage into the Lawrence Station right-of-way from fixture C-2. As noted in Comments 4.5 and 4.6, design exceptions are required for excess illumination and lighting design that is not consistent throughout a site. The applicant should provide a complete lighting package that resolves the inconsistencies and deficiencies for both sites.

We would be pleased to answer any questions concerning this review.

Cc. Brenda Kraemer, PE, PP, Zoning Board Engineer and Secretary

W:\5000's\Lawrence\5110.212\Islamic Circle Rev. 1.docx

TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE
Division of Planning and Redevelopment

TO: Brenda Kraemer, Assistant Municipal Engineer
Brian Slaugh, Planning Consultant
James L. Kochenour/ Jeffrey L'Amoreaux, Traffic Consultant
Michael Rodgers, Construction Official
Public Safety Coordinating Committee – Edward Tencza
Environmental Resources Committee
Shade Tree Advisory Committee
Carol Chamberlain, Health Officer
Greg Whitehead, Director of Public Works

FROM: Susan Snook, Administrative Secretary *sj*

SUBJECT: Bulk & Use Variance Application No. ZB-5/20
Preliminary & Final Site Plan Approval Application No. SP-8/20
Islamic Circle of Mercer County, 330 – 336 Lawrence Station Road
Tax Map Page 42, Block 4201, Lots 13.01 and 15

DATE: January 13, 2021

Attached are the following documents with regard to the above-referenced variance and site plan application for the proposed additional parking on a portion of Lot 13.01 with auxiliary parking on Lot 15:

- Cover Letter from The Spadaccini Law Firm, dated November 25, 2020
- Application Nos. ZB-5/20 and SP-8/20 with Checklist
- Witness List, undated
- Parking and Trip Generation Evaluation, dated August 7, 2020
- Stormwater Management Report, dated July 2020
- Title Sheet, Sheet 1 of 9, revision dated November 4, 2020
- Demolition Plan, Sheet 2 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Overall Site Plan, Sheet 3 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Site Plan, Sheet 4 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Grading & Drainage Plan, Sheet 5 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Landscaping Plan, Sheet 6 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Lighting Plan, Sheet 7 of 9, dated June 24, 2020
- Construction Details, Sheets 8 of 9 and 9 of 9, dated June 24, 2020

This application is scheduled for review by the Zoning Board in the near future.

Please review these documents and submit your report to this office as soon as possible, but **no later than Wednesday, February 17, 2021** so that reports may be provided to the applicant and Board members prior to the meeting.

SJS

g:engineering/Islamic circle zb-5/20 & sp-8/20/doc. Distribution letter.doc

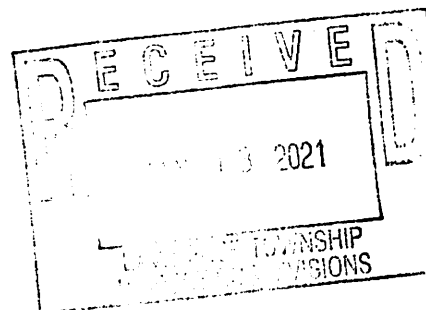
Attachments

cc: Edwin Schmierer, Zoning Board Attorney (w/atts.)

NO Bldg Comments 1/13/21 MR
NO Fire Comments 01/13/2021 SA

NO PUBIC Comments 1/14/21 JD

**** ELECTRICAL 1/30/2021 *Submit***
SUBMIT BLDG & ELECTRICAL PERMITS
WHEN READY – NO TRENCHING WITHOUT
PERMIT



Township of Lawrence
ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

From ~~TO:~~ Susan McCloskey, Tax Collector
To ~~FROM:~~ Susan Snook, Administrative Secretary *SS*
SUBJECT: Verification of Current Tax and Sewer Payment Status
DATE: January 13, 2021

Please update the status of taxes and sewer payments with regard to the following application:

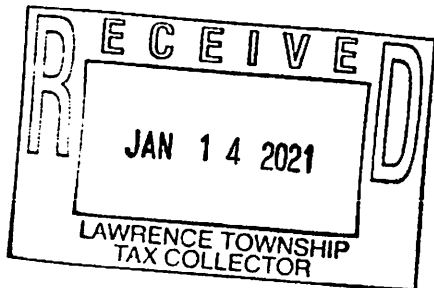
Application No(s): ZB-5/20 & SP-8/20
Application Name: **Islamic Circle of Mercer County**
Street Address: 330 – 336 Lawrence Station road
Tax Map Page(s): 42
Block: 4201
Lot(s): 13.01 and 15

Thank you for your anticipated assistance and response.

SJS
g:\engineering\tax request.doc

*Taxes on lot 15 are current
Sewer on lot 13.01 is current,
lot 13.01 is tax exempt.*

[Signature]
McCloskey



TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE

P.O. Box 6006
Lawrenceville, New Jersey 08648

Department of Community Development
609-844-7087

Lawrence Township Shade Tree Advisory Committee

REPORT, Application SP-8/20, 2/10/2021

Committee members David Bosted (chair), Ed Sproles, Pam Mount and Ed Brzoza contributed to this report.

- **Islamic Circle of Mercer County, 330-336 Lawrence Station Road.** We have reviewed these plans. We find that there is a need to **(a) plant additional trees, (b) provide a tree-shaded sidewalk, and (c) install some pervious paving in the less-frequently-used parking areas.** Large parking areas without shade trees create a wasteland of asphalt and impermeable surface. They are heat islands in the Summer.

This facility is nowhere near the recommended 15 trees per acre in the Township's Comprehensive Forestry Plan. The overall environmental impact of the proposed large asphalt parking area is negative. The rear parking areas appear to be used much less intensively than the front parking areas (near the multiple front entrances). Therefore we suggest using **permeable pavers that allow water to infiltrate into the soil**, plus planting additional water-tolerant trees in the rear parking areas.

Lawrence Township has an existing problem of wet areas and runoff in the Lawrence Station Road area. Planting trees can help to reduce stormwater runoff and flooding. **The successful recent tree plantings at Costco on Quakerbridge Road near Lawrence Station Road can be a model** for the benefits of tree planting in and around large parking areas. Some trees may need to be planted on **raised islands** due to the high water table here. The drainage plans are not clear.

Lawrence Township has lost an enormous number of trees due in part to the infestations of emerald ash borers and spotted lanternfly. Loss of tree canopy is a Township-wide problem. **Our conclusion = Plant more trees in the large rear parking areas, and also along Lawrence Station Road.**

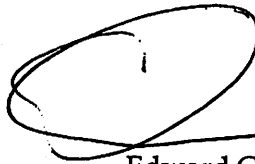
Also, the applicant should **install a tree-shaded sidewalk / bikeway along the frontage** on Lawrence Station Road. Plant small to medium sized trees to provide shade and create a visual cue to drivers to SLOW DOWN. Lawrence Station Road is evolving into a dangerous speedway. The multiplicity of proposed entrances and exits at this facility creates a confusing situation, exacerbated by the high speed driving. This area of roadway needs to be made safe for bicyclists, joggers and walkers who are banned from nearby Route 1. Trees tolerant of high water table will be needed along the walkway. --Respectfully submitted, David Bosted, STAC Chair

TOWNSHIP OF LAWRENCE

**Department of Public Safety
Division of Code Enforcement
Edward Tencza, Fire Marshal**

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Edward Tencza
SUBJECT: Islamic Circle of Mercer County
DATE: February 17, 2021

With the increase in additional parking capacity, the building's original Certificate of Occupancy and room capacities must be maintained in accordance with the original building plans and original approvals from Construction Official.



Edward C. Tencza
Fire Marshal/ Public Safety



SURINDER S. ARORA, PE
President

ARORA and ASSOCIATES, P.C.

Consulting Engineers

Princeton Pike Corporate Center
1200 Lenox Drive, Suite 200, Lawrenceville, NJ 08648
(609) 844-1111 • Fax (609) 844-9799

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 17, 2021

TO: Lawrence Township Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment

FROM: Jeffrey A. L'Amoreaux, P.E. *JAL*
Traffic Consultant

SUBJECT: Islamic Circle of Mercer County, 330-336 Lawrence Station Road
Bulk & Use Variance Application No. ZB-5/20
Preliminary & Final Site Plan Approval Application SP-8/20
Planning Board Memorandum #1
Lawrence Township Mercer County, New Jersey
Tax Map Page 42, Block: 4201, Lots: 13.01 and 15

We are in receipt of the following information for review pertaining to the submission of Bulk and Use Variance Application and Preliminary and Final Site Plan Approval for the Proposed House of Worship (Mosque) Parking Lot to be located along Lawrence Station Road:

- One bound set of Site Plans for Proposed House of Worship Parking Lot (9 sheets), prepared by Mohammed Q. Husain, PE of Invision Engineers, P.C. dated November 4, 2020
- One Parking and Trip Generation Evaluation prepared by Heather M. Balgowan, PE, PTOE of McMahan Associates, Inc. dated August 7, 2020
- One Stormwater Management Report prepared by Joseph A. Mancini, PE of TriState Engineering & Surveying, Inc. dated July, 2020
- One Witness List with four identified witnesses and an estimate of how long each will testify
- One Lawrence Township Land Use Ordinance Submission Checklist Table 8.2, undated, which identifies five requested waivers
- One Township of Lawrence, Department of Community Development, Use Variance Form (Form U-1), undated.
- One Township of Lawrence, Department of Community Development, Bulk Variance (Parcel) Form (Form B-1) annotated "See Zoning Performance Schedule on Page 1 of Plans", undated
- One completed Township of Lawrence, Department of Community Development, Certification of Applicant Form (Form C-1), dated 4/11/20
- One Township of Lawrence, Department of Community Development, General Information Form (Form G-1) filled out, undated.
- One Township of Lawrence, Department of Community Development, Land Use Application Master Checklist, filled out (though it says "See Cover Letter" under Description), undated, with attached Rider to Application.
- One Cover Letter from the Spadaccini Law Firm, LLC to Brenda Kraemer, PE, Secretary to the Zoning Board, Township of Lawrence dated November 25, 2020
- One Transmittal Letter from Susan Snook, Administrative Secretary dated January 13, 2021, for reports due Wednesday February 17, 2021

Bulk & Use Variance Application No. ZB-5/20
Preliminary and Final Site Plan Application SP-8/20
Islamic Circle of Mercer County
Planning Board Memorandum #1
Township of Lawrence, Mercer County, New Jersey
February 17, 2021
Page 2 of 3

The Proposed House of Worship Parking Lot in the MX-2, Mixed Use Zoning District, calls for the construction of 183 new parking spaces, mostly in Lot 15, expanding the existing parking of 57 spaces in Lot 13.01 to a new total of 240 spaces for the Islamic Circle of Mercer County.

The site is located within Block 4201, Lots 13.01 and 15 on two parcels of land. Lot 15 is approximately 5.17 acres in size. Lot 13.01 (formerly known as Lots 13 & 14) is approximately 4.54 acres in size. The site is bounded by Lawrence Station Road to the south, the fire academy to the east and adjacent parcels in the MX-2 Zone to the north and west.

The rider to the application describes that they previously demolished the mosque and built a new three-story one in 2010. At that time, variances were granted for Lot 15 allowing the setback to be encroached by 12 feet from 50 feet required to 38 feet currently existing. The mosque membership would like to get a variance to encroach it further to 10.3 feet. The membership also needs a variance for the lot usage as a parking lot as the existing zoning allows parking as a secondary use, and they would be using it as a principal use. The rider further explains that the membership would like to keep the parcels separate rather than combining them. The plans presented show an existing one-story block building on Lot 15, but a field visit confirmed that it has already been demolished.

We offer the following comments.

Preliminary and Final Major Site Plans

1. The Sign Details on Sheet CD-1 (Sheet 8 of 9) require corrections. Directional Sign Details, Detail Number 4/C2.1 the R1-1 Sign should read STOP and the R5-1 Sign should read "DO NOT ENTER". The Handicap Sign (Wall Mount) Detail, also designated as Detail 4/C2.1, two signs are shown incorrectly. The Van Accessible Plaque is R7-8P, not R7-8V per MUTCD and it is supposed to be 18" wide by 9" tall per MUTCD standard. The New Jersey penalty plate is R(NJ)7-8A, not R7-8P, which is correctly shown to be 10" wide by 12" tall. Please revise both signs in the details to show them proportionately to scale with the R7-8 sign, which is 12" wide by 18" tall.
2. The membership is proposing to change the existing access to the site. They want to go from three "ins"/two "outs" (an ingress only and two full accesses) to three "outs"/two "ins" (removing the ingress only, adjusting one of the full accesses and adding an egress only). This change may, but not definitely, cause congestion, if any, to occur more frequently on Lawrence Station Road rather than in the proposed parking lots. See comment 5 regarding congestion.
3. We do not see the required "15' x 60' Loading Space" per §530.K.1.c of the Lawrence Township Zoning Code. This space may be needed in case of emergency at the mosque but defer to the Township emergency officials on the matter.
4. Per §533.C there should be ten bicycle spaces for the first 100 car parking spaces and 2% thereafter. Please provide or designate thirteen bicycle spaces based on 240 parking spaces.

Bulk & Use Variance Application No. ZB-5/20
Preliminary and Final Site Plan Application SP-8/20
Islamic Circle of Mercer County
Planning Board Memorandum #1
Township of Lawrence, Mercer County, New Jersey
February 17, 2021
Page 3 of 3

Parking and Trip Generation Analysis

5. McMahan Associates prepared a thorough explanation in the Parking and Trip Generation Evaluation describing what is expected and justifying the need for 240 spaces. During the Friday afternoon (PM Generator Peak), all 240 parking spaces will become filled in one half hour between 12:30 PM and 1:00 PM for the 1:00 PM to 1:30 PM service and all 240 parking spaces will quickly empty in one half hour between 1:30 PM and 2:00 PM. However, McMahan used an AM Generator Peak Hour split of 67% Entering and 33% Exiting, which we are not sure describes the projected operation. We recommend developing a simple analysis empirically using the parking spaces to reflect demand. Although we believe the operation will be acceptable, we would like to examine a worst-case scenario to have a better level of confidence, or to determine if short-term traffic control to manage flows in or out is desirable.

This completes our comments at this time. Additional comments will be provided as this project moves forward.

CC: James Kochenour, PE, PP