



Rockland County

Ed Day, Rockland County Executive

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

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Douglas J. Schuetz
Acting Commissioner

Arlene R. Miller
Deputy Commissioner

March 11, 2019

Ramapo Planning Board
237 Route 59
Suffern, NY 10901

Tax Data: 56.07-4-38

Re: GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW REVIEW: Section 239 L and M

Map Date: 1/3/2019

Date Review Received: 1/11/2019

Item: *2 HOPAL LANE/CONGREGATION BETH ROCHEL OF MONSEY (R-2661A)*

Site plan to allow a single-family dwelling to be converted to a local house of worship with a Rabbi's residence. The .2434-acre site is in an R-15C zoning district. The net lot area is .2326 acres. Variances were previously granted for lot area, lot width (Blauvelt Road), front setback (Hopal Lane and Blauvelt Road), front yard (Hopal Lane and Blauvelt Road), side setback, rear setback, parking and entrance distance from an intersection.

Northwest corner of Hopal Lane and Blauvelt Road

Reason for Referral:

Village of Kaser, NYS Route 306

The County of Rockland Department of Planning has reviewed the above item. Acting under the terms of the above GML powers and those vested by the County of Rockland Charter, I, the Commissioner of Planning, hereby:

****Disapprove***

1 The subject site is significantly undersized for both the existing residential use and the proposed house of worship. A minimum lot area variance of close to 33 percent is required. The parcel is further constrained by a 25-foot wide drainage easement along the Blauvelt Road frontage that comprises 2,375 SF. This land area includes 1,885 SF that is beyond the designated street line. A house of worship is a more intensive land use that is not consistent with the established pattern of development and character of the neighborhood. It is also inappropriate to locate a facility that will generate additional vehicular and pedestrian traffic on a cul-de-sac.

More intense land uses are not appropriate in an established neighborhood characterized by one- and two-family dwellings. As noted above, a local house of worship with 30 congregants will increase vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Hopal Lane. Residents of Hopal Lane and Blauvelt Road have expressed serious misgivings about the increased residential densities proposed in the cul-de-sac, and have requested that the original R-15 zoning designation be restored to this area. This department did not support the recommendation of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan to extend the boundaries of the R-15C zoning district and to allow accessory apartments in this zone. We opposed the zoning code amendment that increased the allowed number of accessory units from one to three. The ensuing density has given rise to traffic congestion, pedestrian injuries, insufficient parking,

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sewer capacity issues and water pressure problems. The Town must undertake a thorough evaluation of the existing land use pattern, and balance the need for denser housing and religious facilities with the expectation of current homeowners that the character of their community will be protected. A land use moratorium was proposed in the R-15C zoning district for this purpose but not adopted. We recommend that the Town proceed with the moratorium since proposals such as this will have a deleterious effect on the surrounding neighborhood. Until the comprehensive analysis is undertaken, the site plan to permit a more intensive use on an undersized parcel must not be permitted.

2 In his July 2, 2018 denial letter for 3 Hopal Lane, the Building Inspector noted that a variance will be required if there are more than nine families living on the cul-de-sac. The land use data available to this department indicates that two-family dwellings are located on five of the six lots fronting on Hopal Lane. The site at 3 Hopal Lane contains a two-family dwelling. The sixth lot contains a single-family dwelling. An application for a three-family dwelling with three accessory apartments is currently pending for that property. This department has cautioned the Town against approving the six units proposed on Lots 56.07-4-37. We pointed out that the proposed residential development was a significant departure from the existing community character. The Town's Department of Public Works and their Planning Consultant share these same concerns, as noted in their respective memos of January 8, 2018 and January, 10, 2018. We also recommended that the variances for 3 Hopal Lane be denied.

With these two applications, 12 additional units are proposed, or three more than the permitted maximum number of units served by a cul-de-sac. A total of 20 residential units on Hopal Lane raises serious concerns about emergency access, pedestrian safety and traffic congestion. A house of worship with 30 congregants will exacerbate traffic congestion. Given the short length of Hopal Lane and that eleven residential units are currently fronting on the cul-de-sac, we recommend that the site plan required for the local house of worship be denied.

3 Increased residential density and more intensive land uses on a cul-de-sac raise safety concerns about insufficient parking, and access for emergency vehicles and delivery trucks. The minimum on-site parking requirement is not achieved for the proposed house of worship. Given the one space per unit parking requirement in the R-15C zoning district, we are concerned that additional household vehicles, as well as congregant vehicles, will park along the curb and in the cul-de-sac bulb of Hopal Lane. This department has noticed this trend in other residential developments with similar minimal on-site parking requirements. Several fire districts have cautioned the Town about their inability to access residential units in an emergency due to the abundance of vehicles parked along curbs and in cul-de-sacs. Aerial and street side photography available to this department shows vehicles parked along Hopal Lane and perpendicular to the curb in the cul-de-sac bulb. Increased residential density and a house of worship will result in additional vehicles parked in this manner. This will create an unsafe condition and must not be permitted. The site plan for the house of worship shall be denied.

4 Permitting development that does not comply with the applicable bulk standards can set an undesirable land use precedent and result in the overutilization of individual sites. The applicant is seeking a 33 percent reduction in the minimum lot area requirement, as well as lot width, yard and setback variances. The driveway is 21.5 feet closer to the intersection than allowed, raising additional safety concerns. The ability of the existing infrastructure to accommodate nonconforming facilities on undersized parcels is a countywide concern and must be evaluated. This evaluation must consider whether local roads will become more congested and the sewer system, stormwater management systems and the public water supply will be overburdened. The Town must consider the cumulative and regional impacts of permitting such development. The site plan for the house of worship shall not be approved.

The following comments address our additional concerns about this proposal.

5 The applicant must comply with the conditions of the Rockland County Health Department's letter of January 16, 2019.

6 The applicant must comply with the conditions of the Rockland County Sewer District #1's letter of February 18, 2019.

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7 The Rockland County Sewer District #1's February 28, 2019 letter references a February 18, 2019 site plan. This department has not been provided with the February 18, 2019 maps. If the most recent revisions are substantial, the revised drawings must be submitted for our review.

8 The proposed residential building must comply with all requirements of the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code.

9 A review must be completed by the Rockland County Office of Fire and Emergency Services, the Town of Ramapo Fire Inspector, or the Monsey Fire Department to ensure that there is sufficient maneuverability on site for fire trucks, in the event an emergency arises.

10 The Village of Kaser is one of the reasons this proposal was referred to this department for review. The municipal boundary is approximately 165 feet east and 275 feet south of the site. New York State General Municipal Law states that the purposes of Sections 239-l, 239-m and 239-n shall be to bring pertinent inter-community and county-wide planning, zoning, site plan and subdivision considerations to the attention of neighboring municipalities and agencies having jurisdiction. Such review may include inter-community and county-wide considerations in respect to the compatibility of various land uses with one another; traffic generating characteristics of various land uses in relation to the effect of such traffic on other land uses and to the adequacy of existing and proposed thoroughfare facilities; and the protection of community character as regards predominant land uses, population density, and the relation between residential and nonresidential areas. In addition, Section 239-nn was enacted to encourage the coordination of land use development and regulation among adjacent municipalities, and as a result development occurs in a manner which is supportive of the goals and objectives of the general area.

The Village of Kaser must be given the opportunity to review the proposal and its impact on community character, traffic, water quantity and quality, drainage, stormwater runoff and sanitary sewer service. The areas of countywide concern noted above that directly impact the Village of Kaser must be considered and satisfactorily addressed, as well as any additional concerns about the proposal.

11 A review must be completed by the New York State Department of Transportation, and any required permits obtained.

12 It will difficult for a vehicle parked in space 1 or 4 to maneuver out of the spot without a turnaround area. The proximity of the staircase is also a concern. The potential for traffic conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles is great. A congregant descending the stairs will walk directly behind a parked vehicle. A turnaround area must be provided so that vehicles do not have to back out into the roadway, and the stairs should be re-oriented so that they do not descend directly into the parking area, behind a parked vehicle.

13 It will be difficult for sanitation workers to access the refuse area if a vehicle is parked in space 1. The refuse area must be moved to a more accessible location.

14 Areas designated for snow removal must be clearly delineated on the site plan so that the plow drivers will know where to place the snow piles. This will help to protect the proposed landscaping from damage due to the weight of the snow and salt intrusion. In addition, providing specific locations on the site for the snow piles will reduce the loss of available parking spaces meant to be used by congregants, especially since the minimum on-site parking requirement is not achieved.

15 Existing trees to be removed must be clearly indicated on the site plan. A 12-foot beech tree is shown immediately west of parking space 2. Is that tree to remain?

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16 Water is a scarce resource in Rockland County; thus proper planning and phasing of this project are critical to supplying the current and future residents of the Villages, Towns, and County with an adequate supply of water. The water system must be evaluated to determine if the additional water supply demands of the proposed development can be met. Domestic and fire demands of the project must be determined by a Licensed Professional Engineer and provided to the supplier of water for analysis. Demand calculations and results of the analysis must be provided to the Rockland County Department of Health for review.

17 Prior to the start of construction or grading, all soil and erosion control measures must be in place for the site. These measures must meet the latest edition (November 2016) of the New York State Guidelines for Urban Erosion and Sediment Control.

18 There shall be no net increase in the peak rate of discharge from the site at all design points.

19 Map Note 10 must be corrected to indicate that water will be supplied by SUEZ.

20 The missing information about the variances granted must be provided in Map Note 15.

21 Pursuant to General Municipal Law (GML) Section 239-m and 239-n, if any of the conditions of this GML review are overridden by the board, then the local land use board must file a report with the County Commissioner of Planning of the final action taken. If the final action is contrary to the recommendation of the Commissioner, the local land use board must state the reasons for such action.

22 In addition, pursuant to Executive Order 01-2017 signed by County Executive Day on May 22, 2017, County departments are prohibited from issuing a County permit, license, or approval until the report is filed with the County Commissioner of Planning. The applicant must provide to any County agency which has jurisdiction of the project: 1) a copy of the Commissioner report approving the proposed action; or 2) a copy of the Commissioner of Planning recommendations to modify or disapprove the proposed action, and a certified copy of the land use board statement overriding the recommendations to modify or disapprove, and the stated reasons for the land use board's override.



Douglas J. Schuetz
Acting Commissioner of Planning

- cc: Supervisor Michael B. Specht, Ramapo
- New York State Department of Transportation
- Rockland County Department of Health
- Rockland County Sewer District #1
- New York State Department of State
- Rockland County Office of Fire and Emergency Services
- Monsey Fire District
- Anthony R. Celentano P.E.
- Village of Kaser

Congregation Beth Rochel of Monsey

Mona Montal, Chief of Staff
Rockland County Planning Board Members

**NYS General Municipal Law Section 239 requires a vote of a 'majority plus one' of your agency to act contrary to the above findings. The review undertaken by the Rockland County Planning Department is pursuant to, and follows the mandates of Article 12-B of the New York General Municipal Law. Under Article 12-B the County of Rockland does not render opinions, nor does it make determinations, whether the item reviewed implicates the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act. The Rockland County Planning Department defers to the municipality forwarding the item reviewed to render such opinions and make such determinations if appropriate under the circumstances.*

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In this respect, municipalities are advised that under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, the preemptive force of any provision of the Act may be avoided (1) by changing a policy or practice that may result in a substantial burden on religious exercise, (2) by retaining a policy or practice and exempting the substantially burdened religious exercise, (3) by providing exemptions from a policy or practice for applications that substantially burden religious exercise, or (4) by any other means that eliminates the substantial burden.

Proponents of projects are advised to apply for variances, special permits or exceptions, hardship approval or other relief.

Pursuant to New York State General Municipal Law §239-m(6), the referring body shall file a report of final action it has taken with the Rockland County Department of Planning within thirty (30) days after final action. A referring body which acts contrary to a recommendation of modification or disapproval of a proposed action shall set forth the reasons for the contrary action in such report.

