

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

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Douglas J. Schuetz
Acting Commissioner

Arlene R. Miller
Deputy Commissioner

April 17, 2019

Ramapo Planning Board
237 Route 59
Suffern, NY 10901

Tax Data: 49.07-1-38

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

Map Date: 1/27/2019

Date Review Received: 3/13/2019

Item: *BNOS SCHOOL/261 ROUTE 306 (R-2510D)*

Final site plan and special permit application to allow the existing modular structures to be used as a permanent school building. The 1.2-acre site is in an R-40 zoning district. Variances were previously granted for minimum lot area, side setback, total side setback, side yard, rear setback, maximum development coverage, floor area ratio, courtyard width, on-site parking and parking in the front and side yards

West side of Route 306, approximately 225 feet north of Viola Road

Reason for Referral:

NYS Route 306, Village of New Hempstead, Viola Road (CR 74)

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 As noted previously, on July 29, 2015, this department issued comments on the site plan proposal for a permanent school at this location. The plans for the temporary structures currently in place were not submitted for our review. It is unclear when the modular buildings were installed, or whether their temporary status has expired. Based on aerial photography flown in April of 2016, these structures have been in place for approximately two years. We question whether this permanent proposal is an attempt to circumvent the time limits in place at the time of installation, as well as the recently adopted local law prohibiting the use of temporary modular buildings for schools. These issues must be clarified.

2 By definition, special permit uses are subject to a higher standard of review. In addition to complying with the general conditions outlined in Section 376-120, the proposal must conform to the requirements of Section 376-1216. The proposal fails to meet several of these standards including the recreation area requirement for 320 students, safe bus pick up and drop off, site perimeter plantings, proper access for fire and emergency equipment and vehicles, and conformance with the Town's Fire Prevention Chapter. The special permit shall not be granted.

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3 While the lot is undersized, the June 3, 2015 site plan for the permanent school more closely complied with the R-40 bulk standards than the current proposal. In addition to the minimum lot area variance of 35 percent, the applicant is seeking a 175 percent increase over the maximum permitted development coverage, and a 37.5 percent variance for maximum allowable floor area ratio. The on-site parking is now deficient by 37.5 percent because the student body has increased from 256 to 320. The Planning Board is limited to granting a 25 percent waiver for parking so a variance is required. Several significant yard and setback variances are also required. The current layout plan results in a gross overutilization of the site as evidenced by the number and magnitude of the variances required. The overall building footprint must be reduced, and one or more modular buildings removed, to more closely conform to the applicable bulk requirements. In a memorandum dated, March 25, 2019, the Town's Planning Consultant also recommended that one modular building be eliminated for "a much improved traffic scenario with room for the stacking of many more buses."

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. As noted above, the applicant is seeking several substantial variances for this proposal. The ability of the existing infrastructure to accommodate oversized schools 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 shall consider the cumulative and regional impacts of permitting such development. The building footprint must be reduced, and one or more modular structures removed, to more closely comply with the R-40 bulk standards.

The following comments address our additional concerns about this proposal.

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

6 The Planning Consultant for the immediately adjacent Village of New Hempstead issued comments on this proposal in a letter dated April 25, 2018. Specific concerns include traffic and circulation, as well as site plan issues. The applicant must satisfactorily address these concerns in accordance with New York State General Municipal Law Sections 239-L, M and NN.

7 The applicant must comply with the conditions of the Rockland County Health Department's March 21, 2019 letter.

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

9 The applicant must comply with the conditions of the Rockland County Highway Department's March 22, 2019 letter.

10 The school structures must comply with all requirements of the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code.

11 The Town of Ramapo Building, Planning & Zoning Department's August 9, 2017 denial letter includes fifteen comments from the Fire Inspector that must be satisfactorily addressed. In addition, any concerns raised by the Rockland County Office of Fire and Emergency Services or the Monsey Fire Department with regard to access or maneuverability must be considered.

12 The July 28, 2017 project narrative revision indicated that the existing modular buildings have an 8,800 SF building footprint. One story modular buildings are depicted on the map. The bulk table now specifies that the provided floor area ratio (FAR) is .55, or 38 percent greater than allowed. A .55 FAR corresponds to a 28,708 SF building. By our estimates, the building footprint is close to 9,600 SF. The total floor area of the modular structures must be provided, as well as the FAR calculation.

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13 Calculations must also be provided for development coverage. The bulk table on earlier versions of the site plan specified that the proposed development coverage and floor area ratio were .70 requiring variances of 250 and 75 percent respectively. It is unclear how the extent of these variances has decreased when the site plan features have not changed. Clarification must be provided.

14 The recreation area calculation must be updated to reflect the increased number of students. A minimum of 9,600 SF of recreation space is required for 320 students.

15 The application materials submitted to this department for review specify only one parcel, Lot 49.07-1-38. The actual site plan includes the subject site and a portion of the parcel to the north, Lot 49.07-1-37. A connection between the two parcels is proposed. This connection is not adequately addressed in the project narrative. An explanation must be provided as to the access and circulation link between these two parcels, and how the school on Lot 49.07-1-37 relates to the subject school. In addition, a site plan that shows both lots must be submitted for our review. The bulk table must include what it proposed, and any additional variances that may be required, for both parcels.

16 A narrow macadam drive is shown along the northern property line, and to the north of the modular structures. It appears to serve as a pedestrian access leading to the individual modular buildings. A fire lane is proposed immediately south of the macadam drive. This is an unsafe arrangement due to the potential for traffic conflicts between pedestrians and emergency vehicles. The fire lane must be relocated.

17 As mentioned above, the northern driveway on Lot 49.07-1-37 is serving as the access for the school on Lot 49.07-1-38. A driveway easement is no longer shown on Lot 49.07-1-37 in favor of Lot 49.07-1-38. All required easements must be shown on the map.

18 While the proposed on-site circulation is indicated, it must also be demonstrated that emergency vehicles and fire trucks have sufficient maneuverability to navigate between the two parcels.

19 As noted in our last review, the southern driveway and the access to the parking area have been modified. Vehicle circulation and turning movements are improved, as a result. However, seven parking spaces have been eliminated, and the size of the student body has increased, resulting in the need for a 37.5 percent parking variance. The bus drop off area has been relocated. While it is closer to the building entrance, it coincides with the parking lot access. This raises concerns about student safety. The proposed use of traffic cones to block the parking lot access must be closely monitored by school personnel.

20 Only 62.5 percent of the required on-site parking is provided. As a result, a parking variance is now required, rather than a 25 percent waiver from the Planning Board. A revised application must be submitted to the ZBA, and referred to this department for review.

21 This department is not in favor of granting parking variances for sites with frontage on a state highway. Insufficient on-site parking has the potential to negatively affect the safe and efficient flow of traffic along Route 306. Special events, such as parent-teacher conferences and assemblies, will require more than 25 parking spaces for a student body of 320. Off-site parking arrangements must be in place for large gatherings at the school. A reduction in the building footprint will result in fewer required parking spaces for daily operation of the school.

22 A turnaround area must be provided at the southern end of the parking lot. As currently configured, it will be difficult for a vehicle parked in space 12 to exit this space, or for a garbage truck to maneuver.

23 Parked vehicles must not impede access to the garbage enclosure.

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24 All proposed walkways must be clearly delineated on the site plan demonstrating that they will not impact vehicle movement and parking maneuverability on the site. A walkway must be installed on the east side of the building and crosswalks provided from the building to the parking area. The current drawing now includes a "proposed walk" label over what appears to be a raised island at the northeast corner of the parking lot. Several signs are also located on this feature making it unlikely that a walkway is feasible. Clarification must be provided.

25 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 staff and visitors.

26 The landscaping plan must conform to the special permit standards outlined in Article XII, particularly Section 376-1216.A.(3), as it relates to perimeter, parking lot and building plantings required for schools. No landscaping is shown along the western property line or most of the southern property line.

27 The Lighting Plan must demonstrate that the intensity of the candle lumens is less than 0.1 at the property line.

28 A scale must be provided on the vicinity map.

29 Map Note 16 is incomplete. The variances granted, as well as the meeting date and resolution number must be specified.

30 A revision block must be provided on each sheet with the revision dates listed chronologically. The current arrangement of revision dates on the Title Plan is difficult to follow.

31 The detail notes on the Site Plan (Sheet 2 of 5) are illegible. A clearer sheet must be submitted for review.

32 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.

33 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 V. Schuetz
Acting Commissioner of Planning

cc: Supervisor Michael B. Specht, Ramapo
New York State Department of Transportation
Rockland County Department of Highways
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 New Hempstead

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Congregation Divrei Chaim

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.

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.

